HR IN TRANSITION

Insights from a transnational research on emerging needs and skills requirements for the HR professionals of the future

Transnational Research Report

HR+ WP2 DELIVERABLE (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4)

Deliverable:

Project Ref.	HR+ - Innovative competencies for HR manager among twin and social transition in knowledge intensive industries (2024-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000254093)
Related WP/Task	WP2 (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4)
Dissemination level	Public
Deliverable leader	Veneto Lavoro
Document status	Final Report

"HR+ – Innovative competencies for HR manager among twin and social transition in knowledge intensive industries" (https://www.hrplusacademy.eu/) *is a 20 month Erasmus+ project dedicated to redefining the role of the HR Manager in Knowledge-Intensive (KI) organisations through the co-creation of an innovative, transnational training programme. This programme aims to equip HR professionals with the advanced skills, knowledge, and competencies essential to meeting the evolving demands within KI organisations across Italy, Spain, Hungary, and Portugal.*

Credits

Project title
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Title
HR in Transition: Insights from a transnational research on emerging needs and skills requirements for the HR professionals of the future

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Report Summary

Introduction – An overview on the research activities

This report is the product of a joint investigative effort of the HR+ Consortium, with the WP2 – Training Need Analysis. The aim of the transnational research was to detect and analyse the need for new skills and competences for the HR professional profiles, to develop some pilot trainings for HR roles in the different territorial context involved in the HR+ partnership.

Each partner focused their activities on their specific national and regional contexts:

- **Fòrema (https://www.forema.it/it/) – Italy, Veneto region;**
- **FAV (https://www.fav.it/) – Italy, Emilia Romagna region;**
- **PC Trend (https://pctrend.hu/) – Hungary, Central Hungary region;**
- **Previform (https://www.previform.pt/) – Portugal, Norte region;**
- **Gdoce (https://gdoceformacion.es/) – Spain, Galicia region;**
- **EVTA (https://www.evta.eu/) – France and Belgium.**

The investigation was carried out through the following steps, which corresponded to specific research activities:

1. **Activity 2.1 Desk research** → Defining how the professional profile of the HR manager within different types of organisations (especially the Knowledge Intensive ones) is formally described in different territorial contexts and mapping what competences, skills and knowledge are already codified in the professional repertoires and other official sources (e.g. registers of professional standards, labour atlas, national collective bargaining agreements, online job descriptions). The final aim was to highlight relevant gaps and peculiarities across regions and countries.

2. **Activity 2.2 Field research** → The field research was conducted at local level by each partner, with the aim of assessing the impact of the twin transition, demographic changes and people shortage on HR management, in terms of new challenges, opportunities and needs for new and innovative competences. It consisted of a **transnational survey** aimed at HR professionals, a series of **focus groups** and **in-depth interviews**.

3. **Activity 2.3 Collection of case studies** → Identification of a set of good HR practices (in terms of knowledge management, reskilling/upskilling, diversity/complexity management)

at a regional/national/European level and development of video-interviews on the practices selected.

4. Elaboration of the overall results and development of an innovative Skill Matrix for the HR professionals.

The research activities formally started in November 2024 and ended in April 2025.

Fig.1 – The transnational research path
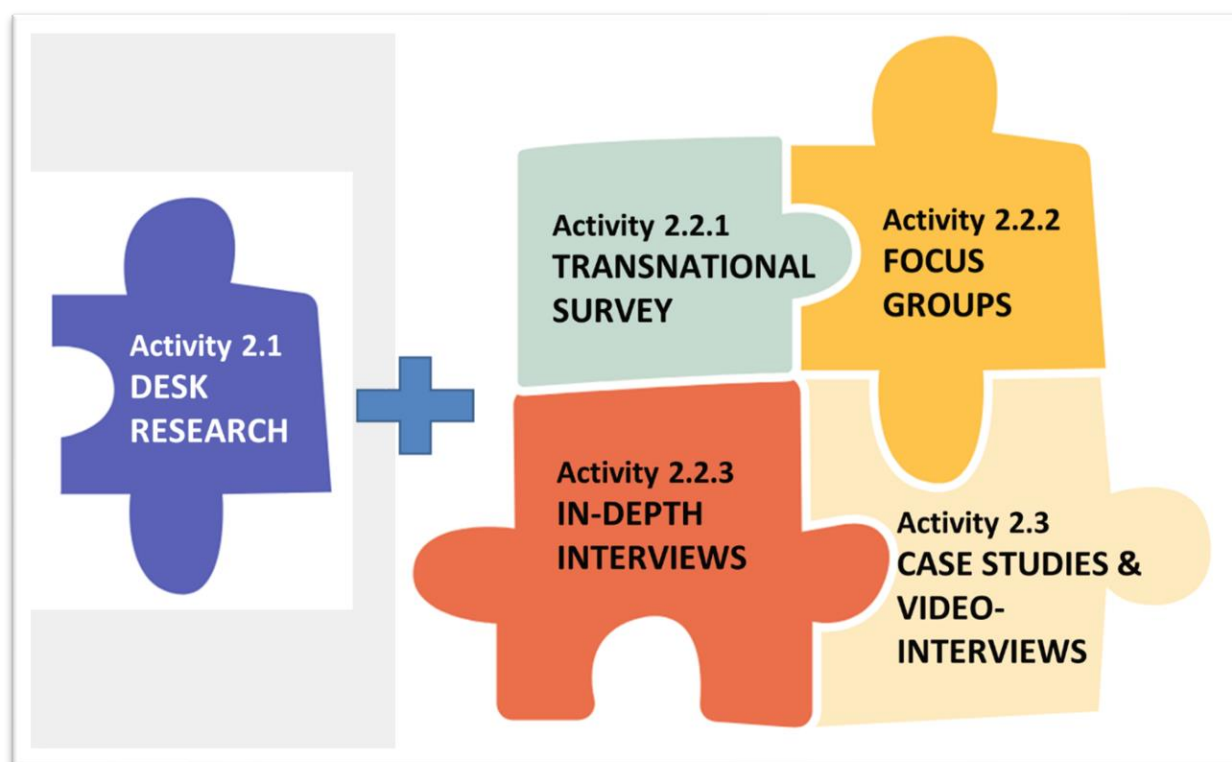
CHAPTER 1

The state of the art on HR codified competences and professional profiles

Key evidence from the desk research

1.1 Exploring the HR role across different countries and regional contexts: codified competences and professional profiles

This chapter presents the findings from the desk research phase conducted by each project partner at the territorial level, encompassing both regional and national contexts. The research draws on a variety of sources[1], to provide a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of HR management practices. The goal of this analysis was to establish a baseline understanding of existing HR roles, professional profiles and competences across different EU territorial contexts, taking a first step in the identification of emerging skill needs and gaps, which will inform the development of future HR strategies and professional training initiatives.

Here below is presented a simplified version of each project partner's desk research on its national and regional context: Portugal, Italy, Hungary, Spain, France and Belgium.

1.1.1 Portugal
Overview of the role of HR
Human resources management in Portugal has significantly evolved over the past decades, transitioning from a low-status administrative function in the 1960s to a key strategic area. This shift was influenced by political, economic, and social transformations, such as the April Revolution of 1974 and Portugal's accession to the European Community in 1986. The increasing need for competitiveness led to greater flexibility and strategic adaptation in people management practices.   According to Geert Hofstede's studies, Portugal's cultural traits, such as collectivism and high power distance, have shaped human resources management, fostering autocratic leadership and centralised decision-making. Over time, different professional profiles have emerged, with roles varying based on organisational context and economic sector. Official sources, such as the National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ), the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), and the Directorate-General for Employment and Labour Relations (DGERT), outline various HR-related positions, including Human Resources Manager, Human Resources

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[1] The main sources of information used by the project partners are: national/regional repertoire of competences, official registers of professional standards, labour atlas, national collective bargaining agreements, online job descriptions.

Technician, Human Capital Development Officer, Personnel Manager, HR Consultant, and HR Director.

Operational roles like HR Technicians are predominant in SMEs, particularly in services, healthcare, education, and tourism. In contrast, strategic roles such as HR Managers and Human Capital Development Officers are more common in large companies and innovative sectors like finance and technology. Personnel Managers are found in labour-intensive industries, while HR Consultants serve large organisations and specialised firms. HR Directors hold leadership positions mainly in the financial, industrial, and public sectors.

The evolution of HR management in Portugal reflects the complexity of the modern labour market and the need for companies to adapt. The diversity of professional roles highlights the multifaceted nature of people management, which varies by sector and is shaped by the country's cultural and historical characteristics. Today, HR management plays a crucial role in fostering competitive and innovative work environments, contributing to organisational development and human capital enhancement, particularly in dynamic and innovation-driven industries.

Professional profiles related to HR management

According to official sources of information, such as the National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ), the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) and the Directorate-General for Employment and Labour Relations (DGERT), there are several professional profiles linked to human resources management in Portugal, with responsibilities that vary according to the economic sector and the level of complexity of the function. The most common profiles include the Human Resources Manager, the Human Resources Technician, the Human Capital Development Officer, the Personnel Manager, the Human Resources Consultant, and the Human Resources Director. The more operational profiles, such as the Human Resources Technician, are predominant in small and medium-sized companies, especially in the services, health, education and tourism sectors, while more strategic profiles, such as the Human Resources Manager and the Human Capital Development Officer, are common in large companies and in innovative sectors, such as finance and technology. The Personnel Manager, on the other hand, is found more prominently in companies with a larger number of employees, such as industries, and the Human Resources Consultant is often sought after by large organisations and specialised consultancies. The Director of Human Resources, in turn, occupies leadership positions in large companies and is mainly present in the financial, industrial and public sectors. The differences between economic sectors are reflected in the demands for more administrative profiles in more traditional sectors, while more dynamic and

innovative sectors require profiles with strategic skills focused on people development and change management.

Each professional profile identified plays a specific role and contributes in a different way to the strategic and operational functioning of organisations. Here are the detailed and integrated descriptions of each profile:

- **Human Resources Manager.** The Human Resources Manager is an essential strategic professional for the organisation, responsible for aligning people management policies with the company's global objectives. This profile plans, organises and directs practices such as recruitment, training, evaluation, development and retention of talent. According to Murphy & Southey (2003), the Human Resources Manager has a significant ability to influence contextual dimensions that determine the adoption of new management practices, such as high-performance work. Predominant in large companies and innovative sectors, such as finance and technology, this professional makes strategic decisions that directly impact the organisation's competitiveness. In addition, the HR Manager promotes an organisational environment that encourages innovation, flexibility, and continuous development, aligning employee objectives with the company's strategic goals.

- **Human Resources Technician.** The Human Resources Technician performs key operational and administrative functions in people management, including recruitment, payroll processing, benefits management, and contract administration. This profile is more common in small and medium-sized companies, in sectors such as services, health, education and tourism. According to Gary Dessler, in the work Fundamentals of Human Resource Management, the HR Technician is more focused on the execution of policies defined by higher levels. It ensures the proper functioning of HR operational practices, being essential for the fulfillment of administrative and legal obligations, in addition to supporting the implementation of strategies designed by managers.

- **Responsible for Human Capital Development.** The Human Capital Development Officer has a strategic role focused on talent management and the continuous development of employees' skills. This profile is common in large companies, especially in the financial and technology sectors, where qualification is crucial for organisational growth. According to Gary Dessler, this professional adopts a holistic view of the potential of employees, planning and coordinating training and development programmes that boost the organisation's competitiveness. It helps companies

maximise their competitive advantage by investing in talent and constantly evolving team skills.

- **Personnel Manager.** The Personnel Manager is responsible for overseeing administrative and operational activities, such as payroll processing, benefits management, and fulfilling employment obligations. This profile is often found in large industries or organisations, where the volume of employees requires efficient management of bureaucratic aspects. According to Gary Dessler, in Fundamentals of Human Resource Management, the role of the Personnel Manager is to ensure that HR administrative processes are carried out efficiently and in compliance with current legislation. Although the focus is operational, this professional also plays an important role in ensuring consistency of HR practices and minimising legal risks.

- **Human Resources Consultant.** The Human Resources Consultant is a specialist, internal or external, who advises companies on the implementation of people management policies and practices, such as organisational transformation, leadership development, and improvement of the organisational climate. This profile is in demand among companies that need specific solutions to strategic challenges. According to Ana Beatriz Ferreira Barbosa, in her thesis Development of a performance evaluation system for the role of human resources consultant in a temporary work company, the HR Consultant combines technical, interpersonal and analytical skills to offer personalised solutions that respond to the needs of organisations. This professional acts as a strategic partner, contributing to the continuous improvement of HR practices.

- **Human Resources Director.** The Human Resources Director occupies a leadership position and coordinates the HR team, ensuring that people management policies are aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives. This profile is predominant in large companies, especially in the financial, industrial and public sectors. According to Armstrong (2014), in A Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice, the Director of Human Resources defines and supervises the implementation of major people management strategies, promoting organisational efficiency and the development of human capital. In addition, this professional is responsible for managing the organisational culture and creating an environment that favors the well-being and performance of employees.

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1.1.2 Italy – Focus on regional peculiarities

Overview of the role of HR

In the Italian context, the HR Manager is a multifaceted figure, whose tasks range from developing/implementing policies and procedures in personnel management, recruiting and talent acquisition, to fostering business climate. His role, however, has undergone considerable changes over time. Its responsibilities may vary depending on the organisation, but usually include planning/implementation of HR policies and strategies, recruitment and selection of staff, employee training and development, performance management, compensation and benefits, conflict management and labour relations, welfare and occupational health and safety policies, and compliance with labour regulations and laws.

According to the activities' focus and the needed expertise, two families of profiles related to HR management emerged in the sources analysed:

1) Human Resource Administration: Profiles who oversee effective, compliant and strategic management of personnel-related administrative activities;

2) Human Resource Management and Development: Professional profiles who work to ensure the strategic, organisational management and development of human resources, consistently with business objectives and market needs.

Professional profiles related to HR management

Among the various sources of information taken into account, the Labour Atlas and Regional Registers of Professional Standards have been considered the most relevant ones for the purpose of the research. The Regional Registers analysed were those of the following Italian regions: **Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Piemonte, Lombardia.** According to the information sources, the following professional profiles have been detected in the two areas identified:

1) **Personnel Administration**

- *Expert in Personnel Administration* (Veneto): he/she manages and supervises the entire personnel administration system, draws up the budget and ensures regulatory compliance, coordinating the internal and external resources involved.

- *Human Resources Administration Manager* (Lombardia): he/she operates with greater autonomy in the management of legal, tax and contribution aspects, supporting cost control and regulatory compliance, often in collaboration with HR management.

- *Technician of Personnel Administration* (Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Piemonte, Lombardia): he/she carries out operational and accounting activities, from payroll management to tax and contribution records, applying predetermined procedures and dedicated management software.

- *Technician for Personnel Management* (Friuli Venezia Giulia): he/she contributes to the oversight of personnel administrative and management processes; he/she uses digital tools for data management, producing reports and monitoring required results; he/she handles personnel contractual and fiscal documentation management, including payroll processing and periodic compliance; he/she organises and optimises corporate communication and information flows, making use of web-based platforms; he/she implements continuous improvement procedures and supports the implementation of the quality system, ensuring accuracy and regulatory compliance.

2) **Human Resources Management and Development:**

- *Technician in HR management and development* (Emilia Romagna, Piemonte, Lombardia): technical profiles, with focus on operational aspects (needs detection, selection and training, practical management of resources using company procedures).

- *Expert in HR management and development* (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto)*, HR area management expert* (Lombardia): profiles with a more strategic role, integrating operational functions with development policies/programmes, ensuring coordination between functions and promoting organisational change.

There are also two profiles in the Labour Atlas (ALQ) and Lombardia Regional Standards (QRSP) dedicated to welfare management (ALQ: "Implementation and development of corporate welfare plans" sequence) and organisational diversity:

- *Welfare Manager* (Lombardia): professional who designs, manages, monitors, and evaluates corporate and territorial welfare programmes; he/she supports HR managers on welfare, smart working, and union bargaining; he/she provides specialised training, counseling, and professional development for employees; he/she supports HR managers in implementing welfare measures and agile work experiments;

- *Diversity Manager* (Lombardia): a figure who promotes innovative human resource management practices with the aim of valuing diversity and fostering a culture of

inclusion; he/she manages differences in gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origins, physical abilities and other personal and professional diversities, integrating them into organisational processes; he/she deals with staff planning, selection, development and retention, promoting corporate welfare measures, work-life balance and flexible arrangements.

1.1.3 Hungary – Focus on Budapest and Pest County

Overview of the role of HR

Human resource management in Hungary has experienced significant changes, particularly after the transition to a market economy in 1989. Under the communist regime, HR roles were administrative, focusing on labour management with little emphasis on innovation or strategic initiatives. Following the end of the Iron Curtain, Hungary's adoption of Western business practices introduced competitiveness, flexibility, and innovation into HR functions. EU accession in 2004 further aligned Hungarian HR practices with European standards, emphasising employee development, talent management, and strategic workforce planning.

In Budapest and Pest County, the economic and social changes have catalysed the professionalisation of HR roles. The region's dynamic economy, including IT, manufacturing, and service sectors, has shaped specific HR profiles and practices tailored to sectoral needs.

In Hungary, despite recent developments, including innovative advancements, the HR profession is still not formally defined in official information sources as Labour Atlas, Registers of Professional Standards and Competences Repertoires. The main official source is represented by the Hungarian Labour Code, which provides a comprehensive framework outlining the rights and responsibilities of HR professionals, as well as labour-related regulations. However, it presents these professional profiles in a rather traditional way, primarily focused on administrative and managerial tasks. Most details are derived from the description of the HR Manager profile found in online job vacancies on recruitment platforms, which reflect a more strategic role of the HR role within companies.

Therefore, there have been highlighted a significant gap between officially documented competences and those actually needed in the workforce, particularly due to rapidly changing market demands. Many essential skills—especially innovative, non-traditional, or emerging ones in fields like HR—are not adequately reflected in existing professional registries, making them outdated and less relevant. The lack of official recognition for these in-demand competences highlights the need to modernise competency frameworks to align with industry

needs. This insight guided field research within the project, aiming to identify and refine the new skills required for future HR managers to effectively navigate evolving trends and challenges.

Professional profiles related to HR management

Based on the information sources available, the following job titles reflect HR roles in the region:

- **HR Manager:** Responsible for strategic workforce planning, recruitment, and employee engagement.

- **HR Specialist:** Focuses on operational HR tasks such as payroll, employee relations, and compliance.

- **Recruitment and Selection Specialist:** Manages end-to-end recruitment processes, including employer branding.

- **Training and Development Manager:** Oversees employee learning programmes and competency development.

- **Labour Relations Specialist:** Handles employee relations, union negotiations, and compliance with labour laws.

- **Digital HR Transformation Specialist:** Drives the adoption of HR technology solutions and process automation.

Some peculiarities have been found across different economic sectors:

- **IT and Technology:** Strong demand for digital transformation specialists who leverage HRIS systems and analytics to optimise workforce planning.

- **Manufacturing:** Emphasis on labour law compliance, health and safety standards, and managing industrial relations.

- **Services:** Focus on customer-oriented training, employee engagement, and retention strategies.

- **Green Economy:** Integration of sustainability principles into HR policies, such as green recruitment practices and energy-efficient workplace planning.

1.1.4 Spain
Overview of the role of HR

HR management in Spain has evolved beyond administrative functions like payroll, contracts, and compliance to focus on strategic workforce planning, digital transformation, employee engagement, and diversity management.

Nowadays, in Spain, the role of the HR Manager is formally recognised within the Repertorio Nacional de Certificados de Profesionalidad (National Repertoire of Professional Certificates), a comprehensive catalog that organises professional certificates across 26 professional families and three qualification levels.

An HR Manager in Spain is responsible for a broad spectrum of functions aimed at optimising human capital within an organisation. Key responsibilities include:

- **Recruitment and selection**: Developing strategies to attract and select qualified personnel, ensuring alignment with organisational needs.

- **Training and development**: Identifying training needs and organising programmes to enhance employee skills and competences, thereby promoting career development and organisational growth.

- **Performance management**: Implementing systems to assess and improve employee performance, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

- **Compensation and benefits administration**: Managing salary structures and employee benefits to ensure competitiveness and compliance with legal standards.

- **Legal compliance**: Ensuring that all HR practices adhere to current labour laws and regulations, mitigating legal risks for the organisation.

- **Employee relations**: Acting as a liaison between management and staff to address concerns, resolve conflicts, and maintain a positive work environment.

Professional profiles related to HR management

According to the sources of information available, there have been identified the following professional profiles related to HR management in the Spanish context.

- **Director de RRHH (HR Director)**

His/her objective is to develop and implement policies that help people in the company to advance and improve their position in the organisation. It is a position with a strategic position and vision that addresses the whole of HR. The HR director must also work closely with other departments in the company to establish policies, promote corporate values, administer payroll,

negotiate salaries and working conditions, implement social benefits, and develop and implement policies that help people advance and improve their position in the organisation.

- **Técnico de selección (Recruiter)**

A recruiter is a professional specifically in charge of recruitment processes. It is a key position, as they are in charge of filling vacancies according to corporate needs. These vacancies can be filled by incorporating new talent into the company or by detecting employees who can adapt to the vacancy. Sometimes, when a small company cannot afford this profile, there is the possibility of having independent recruitment consultants to carry out these tasks.

- **Técnico de formación (Training Technician)**

The person in charge of the professional development and learning of employees. He or she must analyse the training needs of the team and, based on these needs, develop training programmes with specific objectives. He/she is also in charge of budgets and course subsidies.

- **Técnico de comunicación interna (Internal Communication Technician)**

Although it is not one of the most well-known profiles, it is a crucial role to improve employee engagement. This person is in charge of keeping the whole organisation up to date and an important part of their job is to use appropriate channels to do so. More traditional channels such as an informative newsletter or tools such as internal management software or applications can be used.

- **Administrador de personal (Staff Manager)**

This is the person who focuses on the most administrative part of Human Resources: managing payroll, labour legislation, contracts, employee renewals, etc. The tools used by the HR department are also very important for this role.

1.1.5 France

Overview of the role of HR

Human resources management in France has undergone significant evolution over the past decades. Initially, HR functions were largely administrative and compliance-driven, reflecting hierarchical decision-making typical of French organisations in the 20th century. However, as global trends such as digitalisation, sustainability, and changing workforce expectations have reshaped the economic landscape, HR management has transitioned into a strategic function integral to organisational success. This shift is seen across the entire country, given the diverse

economic sectors that span urban and rural regions, from tourism and technology to energy, logistics, agriculture, and services, each with distinct HR demands.

In France, HR management has increasingly adopted strategic frameworks to respond to economic and technological challenges. The national emphasis on equal opportunities, employee rights, and social responsibility, combined with regional initiatives, has influenced the development of specialised HR roles. National policies like France Compétences, APEC, and OREF guide HR practices and influence the skills development and professional standards for HR managers across the country. This national emphasis is exemplified by the major economic regions, with each sector contributing to the demand for specialised HR management.

Professional profiles related to HR management

The Human Resources roles in France are diverse and align with the country's multifaceted economic sectors.

- **HR Manager (Responsable RH)**

The HR Manager is responsible for aligning HR policies with the organisation's strategic objectives. This role involves talent acquisition, training, workforce planning, and change management.

In tourism and hospitality, HR managers handle high seasonal employment needs, requiring agility and expertise in workforce planning; in technology HR managers focus on digital HR transformation, upskilling employees, and retaining specialised talent.

Key responsibilities:

- Recruitment, employee relations, training strategies, legal compliance.

- Supporting digital and green transitions.

- **HR Director (Directeur des Ressources Humaines)**

The HR Director operates at the executive level, managing HR teams and ensuring HR strategy aligns with broader organisational goals.

Found in large organisations across sectors like logistics, energy, and healthcare. It plays a key role in digital transformation and implementing sustainability strategies within the workforce.

Key responsibilities:

- Oversight of HR policies, organisational culture development, and leadership in HR initiatives.

Co-funded by
the European Union

- Balancing workforce demands with regulatory compliance (Labour Code).

- **HR Technician (Technicien RH)**

HR Technicians are responsible for operational tasks such as payroll management, employee contracts, and administrative compliance.

Predominantly employed in SMEs and sectors with high administrative demands, such as hospitality, tourism, and small healthcare providers. In smaller businesses, HR Technicians play a dual role, handling recruitment alongside administrative duties.

Key responsibilities:

- Payroll, benefits administration, employment contracts, employee record management.

- **Human Capital Development Manager (Responsable Développement des Compétences)**

Focuses on employee training, skills development, and succession planning to enhance organisational capacity.

It plays a key role in technology and healthcare sectors, where continuous upskilling is necessary to retain a competitive workforce. They emphasise on aligning workforce development with regional employment trends and digital transformation goals.

Key responsibilities:

- Designing training plans, organising upskilling programmes, fostering career growth, and addressing skills gaps.

- **HR Consultant (Consultant RH)**

External or internal advisors who support organisations in addressing specific HR challenges and implementing strategic HR solutions.

Currently, there is a growing demand in SMEs and sectors undergoing digital and green transitions. HR Consultants assist companies in complying with regulations, adopting HR technologies, and improving employee engagement.

Key responsibilities:

- Organisational development, HR process optimisation, leadership coaching, and digital HR solutions.

- **Personnel Manager (Gestionnaire du Personnel)**

Oversees administrative HR processes, focusing on compliance and efficiency in employee management systems.

It is common in industrial sectors and logistics hubs, particularly around ports, where large workforces require effective operational management.

Key responsibilities:

- Managing attendance, payroll processing, labour compliance, and ensuring adherence to collective agreements.

1.1.6 Belgium

Overview of the role of HR

The professional profiles related to human resources management in Belgium have evolved significantly, influenced by both global trends and specific national reforms. A pivotal moment in this evolution was the introduction of the Copernicus reform in 1999, which aimed to modernise the Belgian federal administration by emphasising competency management.

Prior to the late 1990s, the Belgian public sector's HR practices were largely traditional, focusing on administrative tasks with limited strategic involvement. The need for modernisation became evident due to various crises and a desire to enhance governmental legitimacy. In response, the Copernicus plan was launched in 1999, marking a shift towards modern HR practices within the federal government. This reform underscored the importance of aligning HR functions with organisational strategic objectives, introducing competency management as a cornerstone of this transformation.

The adoption of competency management led to the diversification of HR roles, moving beyond traditional administrative functions to more specialised and strategic positions. Key professional profiles that emerged include individuals responsible for attracting and selecting candidates whose skills align with company needs, identifying competency gaps and implementing programmes to enhance employee performance, ensuring that employee contributions align with business objectives through appraisal systems, and designing remuneration packages that reflect employees' competences and contributions.

Professional profiles related to HR management

The primary HR roles identified include HR Managers, HR Assistant, Recruitment and Training Manager and Payroll Officer. Each of these profiles has specific functions and responsibilities that vary depending on the economic sector.

- **HR Manager**

HR Managers ensure that HR policies align with the company's strategic objectives. This includes recruitment, training, employee well-being, and compliance with labour laws.

Key Responsibilities:

- Workforce planning, recruitment, and employee engagement.
- Managing HR policies, training strategies, and compliance with labour laws.

- **HR Assistant**

HR Assistants support the daily HR operations by handling personnel administration, payroll coordination, and employee onboarding. They ensure smooth communication between employees and external social secretariats. In multinational companies, HR Assistants facilitate onboarding and training logistics for large teams; in SMEs, they often take on a broader role, managing contracts, payroll, and compliance with social legislation.

Key Responsibilities:

- Managing personnel administration and maintaining employee records.
- Coordinating with external social secretariats for payroll and legal compliance.
- Supporting recruitment logistics, onboarding, and employee training programmes.
- Providing guidance on employment laws, benefits, and social legislation.

- **Recruitment and Training Manager**

This role focuses on talent acquisition and workforce upskilling to meet business needs.

Key Responsibilities:

- Identifying talent needs, recruitment, and conducting interviews.
- Designing and implementing training programmes for workforce development.

- **Payroll Officer (Collaborateur Salaires)**

Payroll Officers oversee salary processing, tax compliance, and social security contributions.

> **Key Responsibilities:**
>
> - Payroll processing, employee benefits administration, and tax declarations.
>
> - Ensuring compliance with Belgian social security laws and payroll regulations.

1.2 The HR manager role as currently codified in formal frameworks

This chapter aims at highlighting how the role of the HR Manager is formally described in official sources across the different countries analysed, synthesising the findings that emerged. The objective was to understand how the HR functions are conceptualised within formal models and to identify the codified competences that define professional HR roles.

Based on collected data, a **Skill Matrix** has been developed to map the core competences associated with the HR functions, detailing the **technical and soft skills** required for each competency. Additionally, the **level of codification**[2] for each competency was assessed, providing a comparative synthesis of how HR roles are structured across the various national frameworks.

The overarching goal of this analysis was to establish a baseline reference to support further research steps on the evolving skill requirements in the HR field. This baseline serves as a foundation for fieldwork investigations aimed at identifying new competency needs and assessing the adequacy of existing training programmes.

1.2.1 Key areas of codified competences for HR management

1. **HR administration and accounting management.** The formal definition of the HR Manager places significant weight on administrative and accounting management,

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[2] The level of codification refers to the extent to which a competency is formally recognised and structured within the official competency frameworks of the countries analysed. This classification helps assess how clearly a competency is defined and integrated into national standards.
- A **high** level of codification means that the competency is well-defined in official frameworks, with detailed descriptions and established reference standards.
- A **medium** level indicates that the competency is included in the frameworks but with partial or less structured descriptions.
- A **low** level suggests that the competency is not explicitly codified in official frameworks but is still essential and widely required in actual work practice.

including payroll processing, contract administration, and compliance monitoring. This perspective reflects an HR function that is highly procedural, focusing on record-keeping, regulatory adherence, and policy enforcement rather than strategic workforce planning.

2. **Talent acquisition & retention.** The recruitment function is framed primarily in technical terms, emphasising the use of structured competency-based hiring. Retention is considered through mechanisms like benefit personalisation and career development plans, but there is less emphasis on proactive engagement or innovative workforce planning.

3. **Training & employee development.** Training responsibilities are largely tied to compliance with national qualification frameworks (CNQ) and structured upskilling initiatives, with a focus on formal learning platforms and training automation tools (e.g. e-learning solutions that automate content distribution and assessment). However, there is limited recognition of adaptive learning strategies, informal mentorship, or agile skill-building approaches.

4. **Compliance with labour law.** HR managers are expected to be legal experts, proficient in labour codes, equality standards, and GDPR compliance. Their role is framed as a guardian of legal frameworks, ensuring policies are in line with labour agreements and corporate governance. This suggests an HR function that is more reactive than proactive, focusing on risk avoidance rather than shaping progressive workplace policies.

5. **HR analytics & data management.** The use of HR analytics is acknowledged, particularly in performance monitoring and workforce metrics (e.g., absenteeism, turnover), but with a medium level of codification. The role is not yet fully recognised as data-driven, and predictive analytics for workforce planning is only emerging as a key competency.

6. **HR digital tools & technology.** Digital transformation in HR is partially acknowledged, but its formal recognition is still low to medium. While the HRMS (Human Resource Management Systems) and recruitment technologies are embedded in formal definitions, the adoption of AI-driven HR solutions, workflow automation, and cybersecurity measures is still not fully codified in HR standards. The strategic potential of HR digitalisation remains underdeveloped in current frameworks.

7. **Employee well-being & workplace culture.** The HR Manager's role in employee well-being is emerging, but it is still not strongly institutionalised. While well-being programmes and work-life balance policies are mentioned, the HR function is not yet seen as a driving force in workplace mental health and employee engagement. The emotional intelligence and human-centreed skills required for fostering a positive work culture remain undervalued in formal codification.

8. **Change Management.** HR's role in organisational transformation is weakly defined. Change management is lowly codified, with only basic expectations around handling employee resistance and project management methodologies. HR is still not recognised as a key driver of business agility, organisational adaptation, and digital workforce transformation.

9. **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) management.** The formal HR framework acknowledges diversity management, but in a limited and procedural sense. The focus is on policy development, legal compliance, and equal treatment, rather than actively driving inclusive leadership, cultural transformation, or intersectional workforce strategies. Emotional intelligence and the ability to manage diverse workplace experiences are underrepresented in official HR role descriptions.

10. **Management of external relations.** HR's role in union and labour relations is defined through a compliance and conflict resolution lens. The emphasis is on regulatory enforcement, mediation, and negotiation rather than proactive collaboration with social partners, government entities, or industry networks to drive future-oriented labour policies.

SKILL MATRIX – Codified competences for HR professional profiles

Competency	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Level of codification
HR administration	- Payroll processing, compliance, and document management.	- Accuracy and reliability in handling sensitive data.	High

Competency	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Level of codification
and accounting management	- Design and implementation of personnel administration systems. - Employment contract administration - Compliance monitoring - Familiarity with legal requirements for record retention and data security.	- Strong organisational and time-management skills to prioritise administrative tasks. - Coordination to streamline administrative workflows.	
Talent acquisition and retention	- Recruitment strategies using ATS – Applicant Tracking Systems (e.g., LinkedIn Recruiter) and competency-based interviews. - Tailoring recruitment strategies to local markets - Knowledge of employer branding techniques and labor market trends - Proficiency in managing hiring workflows in HRMS and other recruitment tools.	- Negotiation and relationship-building skills. - Communication to effectively present the company's value proposition. - Empathy to engage candidates and employees in the recruitment and retention processes.	High
Training & Employee development	- Designing and managing training programmes and learning initiatives aligned with the National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ) and organisational goals. - Proficiency in Learning Management Systems (LMS) and training workflow automation tools. - Conducting skill gap analyses and implementing upskilling initiatives accordingly. - Knowledge of e-learning platforms.	- Coaching and mentoring employees. - Creativity to develop engaging learning opportunities. - Empathy to understand individual motivations and foster a culture of continuous learning. - Leadership to align employee growth with business strategies - Adaptability to diverse learning styles.	High
Compliance with labor law	- In-depth knowledge of labor codes, including contracts, working hours, dismissals and equality standards. - Familiarity with GDPR	- Professional ethics to ensure fairness and transparency in labor relations. - Ethical decision-making to navigate complex legal scenarios.	High

Competency	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Level of codification
	- Expertise in monitoring labor agreements and ensuring compliance. - Ability to design and implement HR policies that align with legal standards.		
HR analytics and data management	- Data collection, organisation, and analysis (e.g., performance, absenteeism, turnover). - Proficiency in advanced Excel and HRMS (HR Management Systems). - Familiarity with GDPR compliance and data security practices for maintaining confidentiality in data management - Predictive analytics.	- Critical thinking to interpret data and derive actionable strategies. - Results-oriented mindset to transform insights into measurable improvements.	Medium
HR digital tools & technology	- Implementation & Management of HR Tech**:** HRMS, ATS, payroll software, workforce management tools, and cloud-based HR platforms for automation and compliance. - Knowledge and use of AI-driven HR solutions, HR analytics tools, cybersecurity for HR data, and automation of workflows to enhance decision-making and efficiency.	- Digital adaptability to quickly embrace new technologies. - Critical thinking to balance digital transformation with organisational models and business goals.	Medium/Low
Employee well-being & workplace culture	- Design and implementation of employee engagement programmes. - Development of mental health and well-being initiatives. - Work-life balance policy formulation and execution. - Data collection and analysis on employee satisfaction and burnout prevention. - Integration of well-being metrics into HR analytics.	- Empathy and emotional intelligence to understand employee needs. - Active listening and coaching skills to provide personalised support. - Conflict resolution to address well-being concerns in teams. - Adaptability to adjust wellness initiatives to workforce changes.	Medium/Low

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Competency	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Level of codification
		- Problem-solving for identifying and mitigating workplace stressors.	
Change Management	- Planning and executing organisational transformations aligned with labor laws' evolution and company's organisational goals. - Understanding agile methodologies (Scrum, Lean) and familiarity with project management tools and techniques. - Expertise in addressing employee resistance to changes through structured frameworks/tools.	- Emotional intelligence to address resistance and build trust. - Ability to lead in uncertain environments. - Strategic thinking to align change with business goals.	Low
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) management	- Designing and implementing inclusive recruitment and diversity policies. - Expertise in creating inclusion strategies to enhance individual differences and prevent discrimination. - Proficiency in analysing and updating company policies related to equal treatment and diversity. - Ability to manage recruitment and development through a DEI lens.	- Sensitivity to cultural diversity to create an inclusive environment. - Emotional intelligence to address individual experiences. - Conflict resolution skills to bridge differences and promote collaboration.	Low
Management of external relations	- Management of labour and industrial relations, ensuring regulatory compliance. - Networking ability - Familiarity with union bargaining processes and best practices for resolving conflicts.	- Mediation and negotiation skills to build consensus. - Strategic thinking to align labour policies with business objectives. - Professional ethics to maintain trust and transparency in relationships.	Low

Level of codification of the competences detected in each territorial context

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Competency	Level of codification					
	Portugal	**Italy**	**Hungary**	**Spain**	**France**	**Belgium**
HR administration and accounting management	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Talent acquisition and retention	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Training & Employee development	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Compliance with labour law	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
HR analytics and data management	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
HR digital tools & technology	MEDIUM	MEDIUM/HIGH	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Employee well-being & workplace culture	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM
Change Management	MEDIUM	MEDIUM/HIGH	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) management	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Management of external relations	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW

1.2.2 What idea of HR management emerges?

In general, the HR manager, as officially codified in formal frameworks analysed, is primarily defined by **administrative, regulatory and operational responsibilities**. The role is structured around ensuring legal compliance, workforce administration, talent acquisition and management, and organisational efficiency, with a strong emphasis on procedural correctness and adherence to labour laws.

More specifically, from the current formal codification, the HR Manager role is framed as:

➢ **Regulatory and process-oriented** → Strong emphasis on legal compliance, administrative rigor and procedural governance.

➢ **Administrative functions** → HR is defined as a **service function**, focused on payroll, documentation, and legal adherence rather than as a business enabler.

➢ **Reactive rather than strategic** → HR is tasked with ensuring compliance and maintaining employee records (managing important documents and information related to employees**).** In a reactive HR approach, the focus is primarily on keeping these records accurate and up to date, rather than using them strategically **to drive talent development, cultural transformation or business growth and innovation.**

➢ **Technically skilled but limited in strategic influence** → HR professionals are expected to be proficient in HRMS, compliance tools, and recruitment systems, but their role in strategic workforce planning and organisational leadership is not fully acknowledged.

➢ **Emerging focus on well-being, DEI, and digital HR** → Some modern HR dimensions (like employee well-being, HR analytics, and diversity management) are partially recognised, but not yet deeply embedded in official HR competency frameworks.

1.2.3 Conclusion - The discrepancy between the official definition of the HR manager and the skills required in practice

The current codification of the HR Manager presents a highly structured but narrow vision of HR, focusing on legal compliance, process management, and administrative efficiency. While modern HR functions like well-being, DEI, digital tools, and analytics are starting to emerge, they are not yet central to the formal HR framework.

For HR to become a real strategic business partner, the role should evolve beyond compliance and process execution, integrating data-driven decision-making, leadership in workplace transformation, and proactive engagement with employees and stakeholders.

The role of the HR Manager, as codified in national and regional competency frameworks, does not always accurately reflect the real-world responsibilities and daily challenges that HR professionals face. Official descriptions, often standardised and static, tend to focus on administrative, regulatory, and managerial aspects, failing to fully capture the evolution of the role and the new competences required in today's labour market.

Today, HR functions are at the heart of twin transition (digital and ecological), hybrid work management, inclusion, and sustainability. However, these emerging dimensions are rarely adequately represented in institutional professional frameworks, leaving a gap between formally recognised competences and those truly necessary for effective performance in the role.

Further evidence of this discrepancy can be found in the job vacancies published by companies: more often than not, HR Manager job postings require skills that go far beyond the official definition of the role. In addition to traditional personnel management and administrative skills, companies now seek expertise in people analytics, employer branding, change management, sustainability management, and cybersecurity awareness. These competences, shaped by new organisational challenges, are not always integrated into regulatory frameworks, creating a misalignment between the "official" profile and the actual expectations of the market.

This situation highlights the need for an update of competency frameworks, ensuring they reflect the evolution of the HR profession and better support the training and development of professionals in the field. By aligning institutional definitions with market realities, we can develop more effective training programmes and help companies recruit HR professionals who are truly equipped to tackle the new challenges of the modern workplace.

CHAPTER 2

Future perspective on HR management: changes, challenges and new opportunities for innovation

Key evidence from the field research

2.1 Future outlook on HR management in evolving companies: insights from the transnational survey

2.1.1 Methodology

The first step of the field research phase consisted in the development and distribution of a questionnaire in the countries and regions involved in the project. This section presents the most significant findings that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire results, with the aim of exploring how HR managers — both current and future — perceive ongoing transformations and challenges. The objective is to identify possible commonalities or sector-specific features among the organisations involved in the survey, as well as any territorial characteristics specific to the different local contexts analysed.

The target group of the questionnaire consisted of professionals who — at various levels — are involved in human resources (recruitment, management, and development) within companies or organisations.

To develop the structure and content of the survey (Annex 1), the following assumptions were made:

- **Identification of the main challenges that companies (especially Knowledge Intensive companies) are/are going to face**: the challenges that companies are facing have been grouped within two macro-phenomena**: 1. twin transition; 2. people shortage/labour market mismatch**. This makes it possible to identify a sufficiently broad (but, at the same time, focused) perimeter within which to identify the new competences, skills and knowledge required by the HR managers "of the future".

- **"Double" level of impact**: the two phenomena (twin transition and people shortage) have a double-level impact on HR managers within KIOs: 1. "Direct" impact on HR managers (e.g. How does digitalisation impact on the tasks of HR manager?) 2. Impact on labour force and "indirect" impact on HR managers (How does digitalisation impact on the company's staff and, consequently, on HR managers work?).

- **"Double" time perspective:** Maintaining a double time perspective (present and future) has been functional to the identification of possible gaps.

- **Need to agree upon concepts:** Given the complexity of the topics covered by the survey, it has been necessary to "break down" each topic, so as to limit (as much as possible) the risk of misunderstanding/misinterpretation, making it difficult to compare results.

- **Hierarchy of Competence, Skills and Knowledge: Competences** represent a broader set that includes the use of multiple skills, behaviours, and attitudes, often in more complex contexts and with greater autonomy and responsibility. To "simplify" the *competences* in the survey are treated as "tasks". **Skills** are defined as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems; they are specific and operational, related to the ability to perform precise tasks.

The questionnaire was developed in English using Google Forms by Veneto Lavoro, in collaboration with and validated by the project consortium. It was then translated and disseminated by each partner in their respective regions or countries. The responses collected were subsequently recoded into English, and a unified database was created in an Excel file containing aggregated information. After cleaning the data matrix, Veneto Lavoro carried out the analysis of the results.

Given these premises, the structure of the questionnaire was divided into four main sections, consisting mainly of closed-ended questions to facilitate subsequent recoding:

- *Section 0 - General Data* aimed at collecting information regarding the sector and type of company or organisation to which the respondents belong.

- *Section 1 - Knowledge of the topics detected* with the aim of assessing the meanings and perceptions that respondents attribute to the identified phenomena and transformations.

- *Section 2 - "Direct" impact of twin transition on the role of HR* focused on identifying the need for new skills to manage and support processes of digitalisation, technological advancement, and environmental sustainability within companies.

- *Section 3 - Workforce transformations ("indirect" impact on the role of HR)* focused on identifying the need for new skills related to knowledge management and diversity/complexity management, in light of structural transformations of the workforce

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(e.g., ageing, the impact of migration flows, and labour shortage) as well as contingent factors (such as those linked to the twin transition).

- ***Section 4 - Conclusion and follow-up*** dedicated to collecting socio-demographic and professional background information from respondents, as well as their possible interest in sharing good practices in HR management and participating in training activities, which will be the focus of the second phase of the HR+ project.

The survey was disseminated by each partner through their own contacts starting in December 2024. The deadline for collecting responses was set for mid-February 2025, with the goal of reaching a total of 250 responses.

Below the main findings that emerged from the analysis of the collected data are presented.

2.1.2 The respondents

A total of 250 responses were collected by the questionnaire's closing date (28/02/2025), distributed as follows based on the geographical location of the respondents:

- Italy: 98 respondents (39%), respectively 67 from Veneto and 31 from Emilia Romagna;
- Hungary: 80 respondents (32%), respectively 49 from Central Hungary and 31 from other Hungarian regions;
- Portugal: 42 respondents (17%), all from Norte region;
- Spain: 30 respondents (12%), the majority from Galicia (23) and 7 from other Spanish regions.
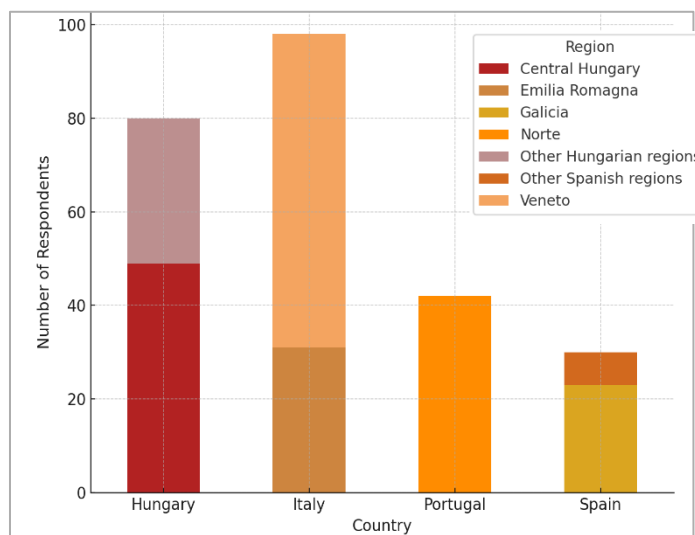
The high concentration of respondents in Italy and Hungary suggests that perceptions may be influenced by the specific dynamics of these countries[3].

- *Characteristics of the respondents*

The demographic analysis of the survey data provides valuable information on composition of the respondents, with the aim of exploring the characteristics of the participants and their professional experience and background. These insights can be instrumental in interpreting subsequent responses and trends observed in the survey results.

From a demographic perspective, the data reveal a female majority among respondents, with 65% identifying as women and 35% as men. In terms of age, the vast majority (8 out of 10 respondents) are over 35 years old, with the age group 46–55 being the most represented (38% of the total). This suggests that participants are mainly experienced professionals, likely holding well-established roles within their respective fields. In fact, over 77% report having more than four years of experience in the HR field — among them, 48% have over ten years of experience.

The sample is also characterised by a high level of education: nearly 8 out of 10 respondents hold a university degree (either a bachelor's or a master's).

Most respondents do not hold a formal HR role within their organisation but are instead involved in administrative or financial management functions, or are business owners themselves. Nevertheless, a significant portion — 52% — stated that they are involved in human resource management. This distribution suggests that HR-related tasks are often shared across various roles within the organisation.

Overall, the survey reached a predominantly adult, highly educated audience, with a significant presence of HR professionals, offering a valuable context for interpreting the findings.

- *Characteristics of the organisations involved*

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[3] It was initially planned that the survey would also be disseminated in France and Belgium via the EVTA network. Due to the difficulties encountered in dissemination in the country, it was decided to disregard the responses received (4 from France, 2 from Belgium), which were irrelevant for statistical analysis. Nevertheless, the content of these surveys was taken into account in the general processing of the results of all the field research activities contained in the last section of this report, in order to make the most of the information gathered in these territorial contexts through the focus group and in-depth interviews.

The organisations to which the respondents belong are distributed quite evenly between the tertiary sector (51%) and industry (47%), with a small share from the primary sector (2%). Among the companies operating in the services sector, 32% are represented by organisations engaged in **non-market services**, including key areas such as education and training, public administration, and social entities. The remaining 18% are involved in **market services**, such as financial and consulting services, ICT, and others. Within the industrial sector, the majority of respondents work in **manufacturing of metal products and machinery** (accounting for 26% of all respondents) and in the **construction sector** (21%).

Using the definition provided by the OECD to identify **Knowledge-Intensive Organisations (KIOs)** (Tab.1), 36% of the organisations involved fall under this category. The survey focuses on **medium-high and high-technology manufacturing** and **Knowledge-Intensive Services (KIS)**.

Regarding company size, the largest group is made up of **SMEs**. Specifically, **small enterprises** with 10 to 49 employees represent 27% of the total, while **medium-sized enterprises**, with 50 to 249 employees, account for 34%. **Large enterprises** with more than 250 employees make up 24% of the total. Looking at the **territorial distribution** of companies by size, Hungary shows a clear concentration of **medium and especially large enterprises**, as the Pest region is the most economically and industrially developed area in the country, attracting investment from multinational companies with a high level of innovation. In **Italy**, **SMEs clearly prevail**, reflecting the traditional structure of the local production system in the two regions examined in the research. In **Spain and Portugal**, there is a higher concentration of **micro-enterprises** (1 to 9 employees) and **small enterprises**.

Table 1 – Classification of economic sectors (NACE Rev. 2) based on the OECD definition of "knowledge-intensive organisations"

Aggregated sector groups	NACE Rev. 2 Divisions	Sector names
Low-tech and medium-low technology manufacturing	10-12	Manufacture of food products, beverages and tobacco products

	13-15	Manufacture of textiles, apparel, leather and related products
	16-18	Manufacture of wood and paper products, and printing
	19	Manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products
	22, 23	Manufacture of rubber and plastics products, and other non-metallic mineral products
	24, 25	Manufacture of basic metals and fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment
	31-33	Other manufacturing, and repair and installation of machinery and equipment
Medium-high and high-technology manufacturing	20	Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products
	21	Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemicals and botanical products
	26	Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products
	27	Manufacture of electrical equipment
	28	Manufacture of machinery and equipment
	29, 30	Manufacture of transport equipment
Knowledge intensive services (KIS)	50-51	Water transport; Air transport
	58-63	Information and communication
	64-66	Financial and insurance activities
	69-75	Professional, scientific and technical activities
	78, 80	Employment activities; Security and investigation activities
Less knowledge intensive services	45-47	Wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
	49	Land transport and transport via pipelines
	52-53	Warehousing and support activities for transportation; Postal and courier activities
	55-56	Accommodation and food service activities
	68	Real estate activities
	77	Rental and leasing activities
	79	Travel agency, tour operator, reservation service and related activities
	81-82	Services to buildings and landscape activities; Office administrative, office support and other business support activities
Education, social care and health services	85-88	Education; Human health and social work activities
Construction	41-43	Construction

2.1.3 General perception of the labour market and the new challenges and transformations

To gain an understanding of the respondents' perception and opinion regarding the state of the labour market in their local context — particularly in relation to transformations, challenges, and potential critical issues, both current and future — participants were asked to identify what they considered to be **the biggest difficulties the labour market is now experiencing.** Analysing the total responses, regardless of the respondents' geographical origin, the most impactful phenomena identified were:

1) **labour supply/demand mismatch;**
2) **collective cultural and value changes in society;**
3) **lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill the labour force.**

The first two items received agreement from about 50% of respondents, while the third was selected by 4 out of 10 participants. Additionally, **global economic uncertainty** and **negative demographic trends** were also reported as moderately relevant challenges for the labour market, with response rates of 34% and 26%, respectively.

Chart 3 – What are the biggest difficulties the labour market is now experiencing? % of respondents

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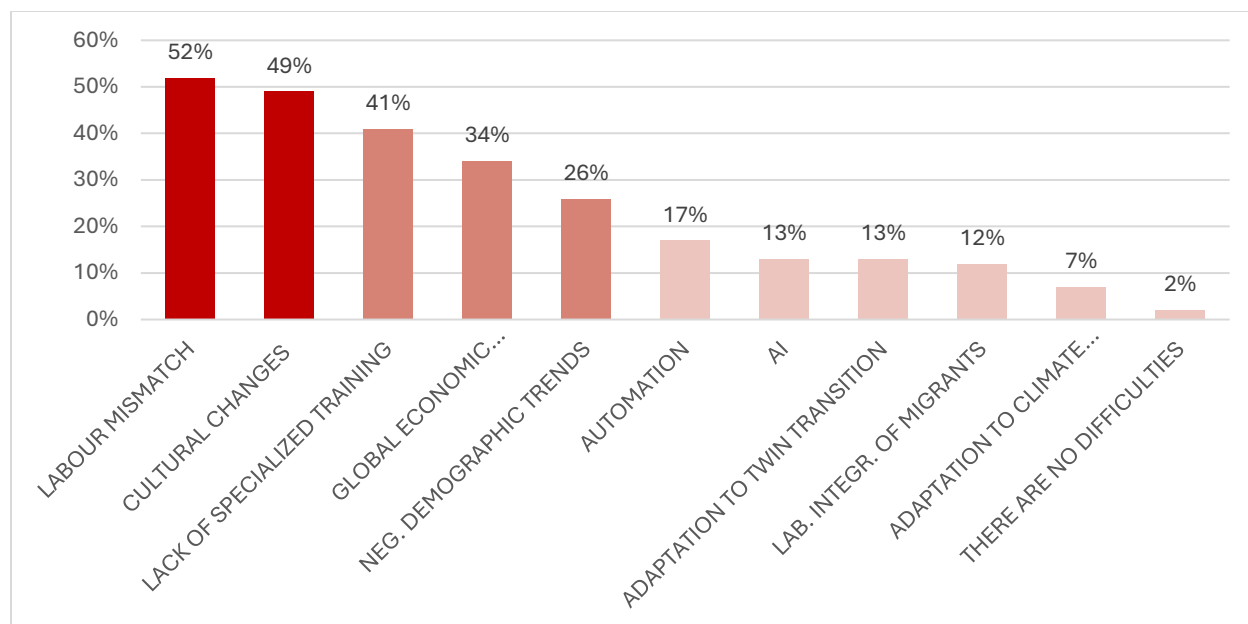
Looking in detail at the distribution of responses by individual country, some interesting differences emerge:

- In **Italy** (and in particular in the regional contexts of Veneto and Emilia-Romagna), the issue of changing cultural values in society was selected by more than 6 out of 10 Italian respondents, making it the most significant transformation perceived within the Italian context.

- In **Portugal**, 36% of respondents selected the lack of programmes for the labour integration of migrants as a critical issue for the local context, possibly due to a higher concentration among respondents of social organisations and education and training centres, which may be more sensitive to this type of issue. Additionally, 33% of Portuguese respondents identified challenges related to adapting to climate change as relevant—a problem that is instead considered marginal in the other countries.

- **Portugal and Spain** share a concentration of responses highlighting the need for specialised training to upskill and reskill the labour force: 57% and 55% of respondents respectively selected this item (compared to an average of 52%).

- In **Hungary**, global economic uncertainty is a particularly perceived issue: 50% of respondents chose this item (compared to an average of 34%); the same applies to negative demographic trends, with 36% of Hungarian respondents identifying this as a relevant topic in terms of changes and challenges in the local labour market (compared to an average of 26%). Furthermore, the spread of automation and Artificial Intelligence, although a marginal topic overall, appears to be more important than average in the Hungarian context.

- In **Spain** as well, similarly to the Hungarian context, the spread of Artificial Intelligence received more mentions than the average across the countries involved (approximately 2 out of 5 respondents indicated it).

These preliminary findings on how the labour market is perceived to be evolving can provide us with initial insights into the impact of these transformations on the role of the HR manager.

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2.1.4 Direct impact of the twin transition on HR management

As previously highlighted through the general question on changes and challenges in the labour market as perceived in the various territorial contexts, the issue of the impact of the twin transition does not appear to be particularly relevant according to respondents' opinions. In fact, it is most commonly associated with the broad concept of environmental sustainability[4] (4 out of 10 respondents). Secondly, the concepts most frequently associated with the twin transition are:

1) the need for upskilling and reskilling of the workforce;

2) the development of new economic sectors and professions (two elements linked by a cause-effect relationship);

3) Artificial Intelligence.

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[4] Reference to the question: "Which of the following topics do you associate with the concept of twin transition?".

The recurrence of these responses varies depending on the sector of the respondent's organisation and the size of the company[5] **(Tab. 2)**.

Table 2 – Level of importance (low, medium, high) attributed by respondents to issues related to the twin transition, based on sector and company size.

Topic	Sector	Micro Ent.	SMEs	Large Ent.
Changes in work organisation	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	High	High	High
"Extintion" of some professional profiles	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Low	Medium	Medium
Automation	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Low	Medium	High
Upskilling and reskilling the workforce	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Medium	High	High
Skill obsolescence	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Medium	High	High
Development of new economic sectors and professions	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Medium	High	High
Artificial Intelligence	Industry	Low	Medium	High
	Services	Medium	High	High
Corporate Social Responsibility	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Medium	High	High
Environmental sustainability	Industry	Medium	High	High
	Services	Medium	High	High

The analysis of the topics associated with the twin transition reveals a rather complex distribution of perceptions and levels of engagement across different economic sectors and company sizes. In general, **large enterprises** appear to be more involved on nearly all fronts, thanks to their greater availability of resources, more structured organisations, and often due to regulatory obligations or pressure from stakeholders. **Small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) also show significant engagement, particularly in relation to innovation and organisational adaptation.

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[5] According to the European Union's classification, enterprises are divided based on the number of employees: micro-enterprises have fewer than 10 employees, small enterprises have fewer than 50, and medium-sized enterprises have fewer than 250. Companies with more than 250 employees are considered large enterprises.

Micro-enterprises, although present across many areas, tend to display lower levels of involvement, often due to structural limitations or limited resources.

At the sectoral level, the **industrial sector** shows a strong focus on issues related to automation, the disappearance of certain job roles, and environmental sustainability—consistently with ongoing processes of production modernisation and the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies. However, the **services sector** also demonstrates significant engagement, particularly on topics such as work organisation, corporate social responsibility, and skills—areas in which digital transformation is rapidly reshaping processes, roles, and business models.

Cross-cutting themes such as upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, skills obsolescence, and the development of new sectors and professions appear to be central across all types of enterprises, reflecting a widespread awareness of the urgency to adapt to a constantly evolving context. Artificial Intelligence, on the other hand, remains a more mature field for large companies – especially in the services sector – while it is still less accessible to smaller or less structured organisations.

Overall, the data suggest that, despite different nuances, all enterprises—regardless of sector and size—are currently dealing with the changes brought about by the twin transition, although at varying speeds, with different priorities, and differing capacities to respond. This highlights the importance of providing tailored support for transition pathways, taking into account the structural and sectoral specificities of the productive landscape.

By breaking down the twin transition into its core components, Chart 4 illustrates how the tasks of Human Resources (HR) professionals have evolved over time in response to two major transformations: **the green transition and sustainability** (in orange), **and digitalisation** (in blue).

Chart 4 shows how digitalisation has profoundly influenced the role of Human Resources (HR) professionals, significantly changing their tasks. Most respondents report that their responsibilities have changed "a lot" or even "completely" due to digital transformation. This highlights how the introduction of new technologies, digital tools for personnel management, recruiting platforms, and HR data analytics has substantially reshaped the daily work within HR functions.

In contrast, the impact of the green transition and sustainability, while present, appears to be more limited. The majority of respondents acknowledge a "moderate" change, indicating that environmental and social issues are indeed entering HR agendas, but in a less disruptive way compared to digitalisation. This suggests that sustainability, although increasingly important from a strategic and reputational standpoint, is leading to more gradual and indirect operational changes for HR professionals.

Chart 4 – Since you have been working as an HR professional, how much have your duties changed as a result of green transition and digitalisation?
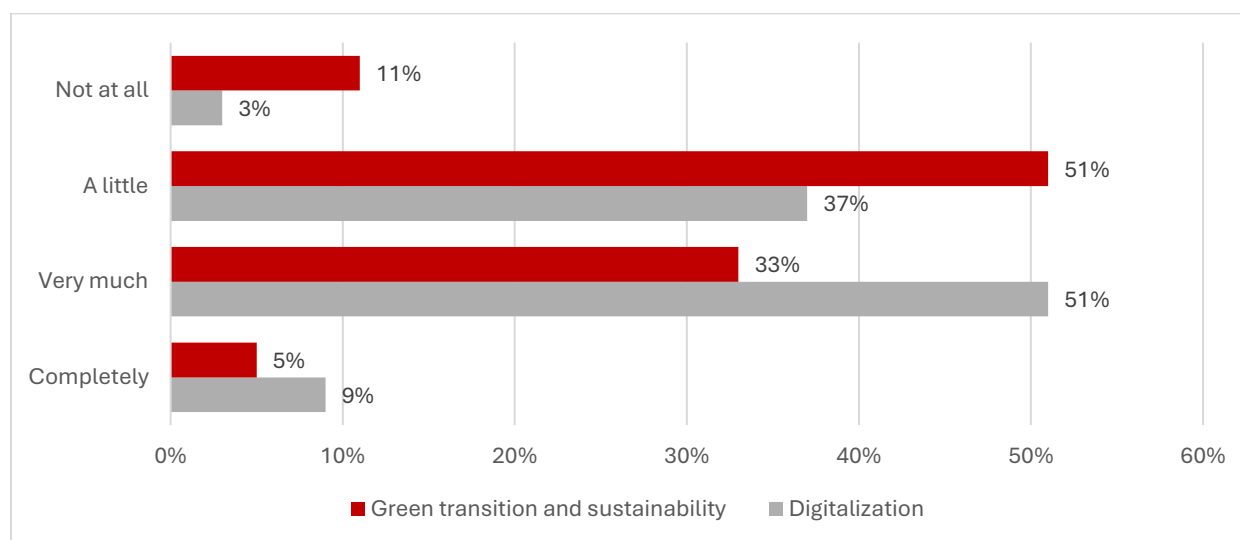
Overall, the comparison between the two dimensions of the twin transition reveals a scenario in which digitalisation stands out as the main driver of short-term change, while sustainability emerges as a growing process, likely to become increasingly central in the medium to long term.

- ***New skills and competences for the digital transition***

Given this premise, participants in the survey were then asked to indicate which competences and skills they believe are necessary for HR managers to address the identified challenges related to the twin transition.

Chart 5 illustrates the skills and knowledge considered extremely important for human resources management over the next five years in relation to the digital transition. The impact of digitalisation on the HR field is also reflected in how skill development priorities are perceived.

At the top of the list is a **strong emphasis on knowledge of cybersecurity measures to protect personal data and business information from cyber threats**, deemed essential by over 55% of respondents. This highlights the growing awareness of the importance of cybersecurity within HR, where sensitive information related to employees, recruitment, and internal processes is handled. Following closely are a range of competences related to the **management of integrated IT systems for handling HR information** (such as employee records, attendance, benefits, and career paths), **compliance with privacy and data protection regulations**, and the **ability to analyse employee data**. These are all skills closely tied to the operational and regulatory digitalisation of the sector.

Chart 5 – Thinking about how HR management will evolve in the next 5 years, how important do you consider the following skills/knowledge related to the digital transition? [% Extremely important]
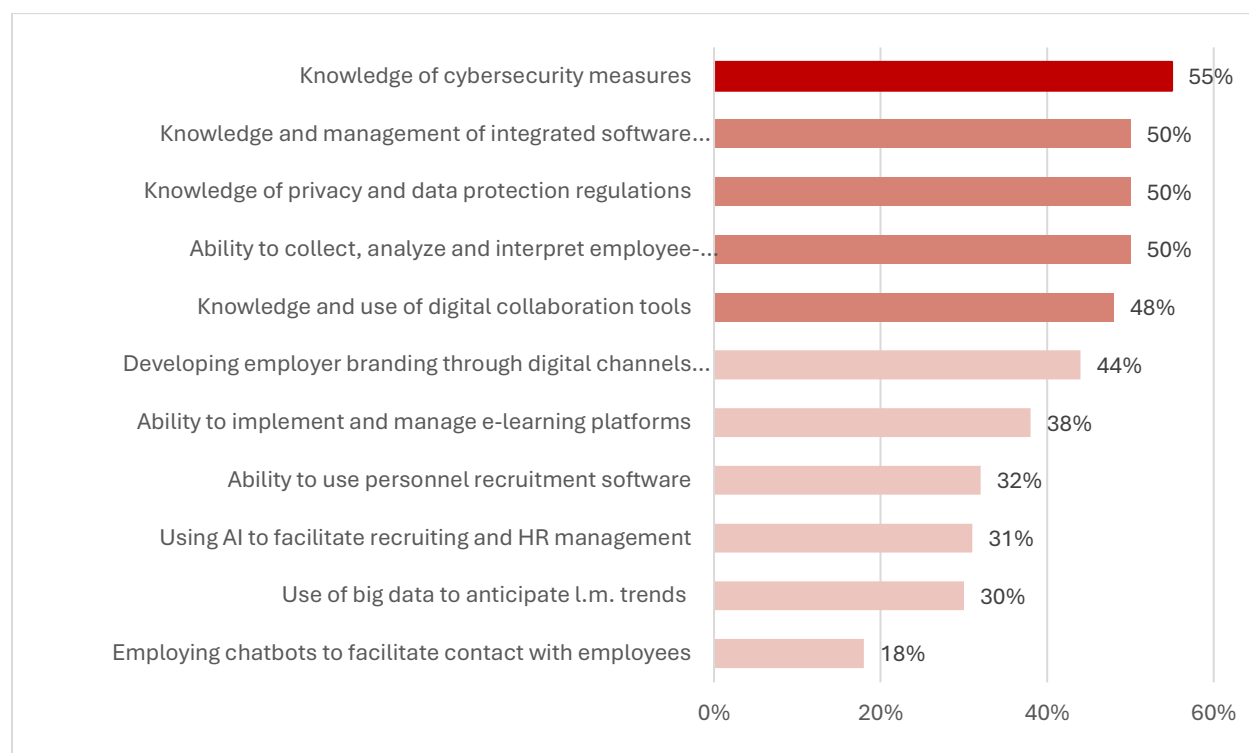
Another set of skills, slightly less of a priority but still highly relevant, concerns the **use of digital collaboration tools, the management of employer branding on digital channels, the**

implementation of e-learning platforms, and the use of recruitment software. While these competences do not top the list, they reflect a progressive yet structural transformation of the HR function, which is increasingly integrating digital tools to attract, train, and manage people.

Lastly, more advanced and "tech-driven" skills have been also identified, such as **the use of artificial intelligence for recruiting, leveraging big data to anticipate labour market trends, and employing chatbots to facilitate employee communication.** These are currently seen as lower priorities, likely because their impact is still in an early stage or limited to more innovative contexts, but they represent rapidly expanding areas.

Overall, a dual trend emerges: on one hand, the centrality of skills related to data protection and the efficiency of digital processes; on the other, a growing openness to more advanced technologies that could become equally crucial in the coming years. The digital transition is therefore not only a technical matter, but also a cultural and strategic one for the HR world.

- *New skills and competences for sustainability and green transition*

Chart 6 – How important do you consider the following skills/knowledge related to green transition and sustainability? [% Extremely important]
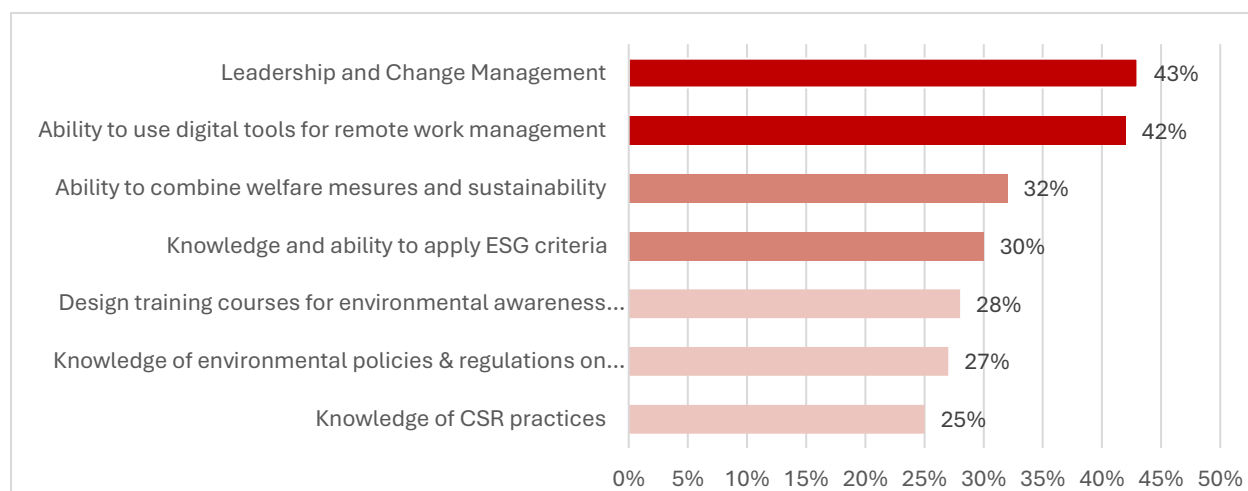
Chart 6 highlights the skills and knowledge considered extremely important for addressing the green transition and sustainability in the context of human resources management. The distribution of responses reveals a clear hierarchy of priorities, with **leadership and change management**, along with **the use of digital tools for remote work management**, at the top.

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of the author, and neither the Commission nor the Inapp Erasmus+ National Agency cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Both are cross-cutting competences, regarded as essential by over 40% of respondents, confirming that sustainability—at least in current perceptions—is not only about environmental issues but also about organisational and cultural change. To lead the transformation toward more sustainable models, it is crucial to have figures capable of guiding change and promoting flexible, agile, and less impactful work practices.

However, it is interesting to note that the skills perceived as most important are, in fact, quite general and not exclusively related to the green transition in a strict sense. The centrality given to these cross-cutting skills may reflect a limited familiarity among organisations with the specific implications of environmental and social sustainability within the HR domain (as previously highlighted). In other words, the green transition may still be viewed as a marginal or secondary process compared to other more established phenomena, such as digitalisation or organisational transformation.

The next set of identified skills relates more specifically to social and environmental sustainability, including **the ability to integrate welfare and sustainability measures** and the **knowledge and application of ESG criteria**. These competences reflect the evolving role of HR towards a more strategic dimension, where employee well-being and environmental and social responsibilities are closely intertwined.

Although with slightly lower percentages, the **ability to design training programmes focused on green skills**, **knowledge of environmental regulations,** and **familiarity with corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices** are still considered relevant. These are more technical competences, which may still be in the process of consolidation or delegated to specialised roles, but they are showing increasing recognition.

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that the green transition necessitates an integrated set of competences, encompassing managerial capabilities, digital proficiency, and specialised knowledge in the field of sustainability. Within this framework, the HR management emerges as a key driver in fostering a transformation that is not only organisational and operational, but also cultural and value-oriented.

However, the findings point to a relatively superficial perception of sustainability, which may be attributed to the limited and still emerging impact of green transition processes on the core responsibilities of HR professionals, as well as on the structuring of their competency frameworks.

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It is reasonable to anticipate that, as awareness increases and regulatory and societal pressures intensify, these more specific sustainability-related competences will assume a more central and strategic role within the HR domain.

2.1.5 The impact of major labour market transformations on the workforce: indirect implications for the HR function

The effects of the twin transition and demographic trends—such as declining birth rates, population ageing, and the growing presence of foreign workers in the labour market—along with broader shifts in societal values, particularly in the post-pandemic era, are progressively shaping "new" characteristics of the workforce within organisations and companies. This workforce is increasingly fragmented, multigenerational, and culturally diverse.

Recent transformations in the labour market, combined with these emerging workforce characteristics, behaviours, and expectations, may lead to mismatches between labour supply and demand, potentially resulting in labour shortages.

With regard to participants' perceptions of how the impact of the three key phenomena—**digitalisation and new technologies, the green transition and sustainability, and labour shortage**—is expected to evolve over the next five years, there is widespread awareness that the labour market is undergoing a phase of profound transformation (Chart 7).

The most remarkable finding concerns the **labour shortage**, which is perceived as the phenomenon with the most significant projected increase in impact: over 80% of respondents believe its relevance will grow in the coming years. This highlights that the difficulty in sourcing adequate labour is already a concrete challenge today, and one that is expected to intensify due to structural trends such as declining birth rates, population ageing, and an increasing demand for specialised skills that are not always readily available on the market.

Chart 7 - How do you expect the following phenomena to evolve in terms of their impact on the workforce?
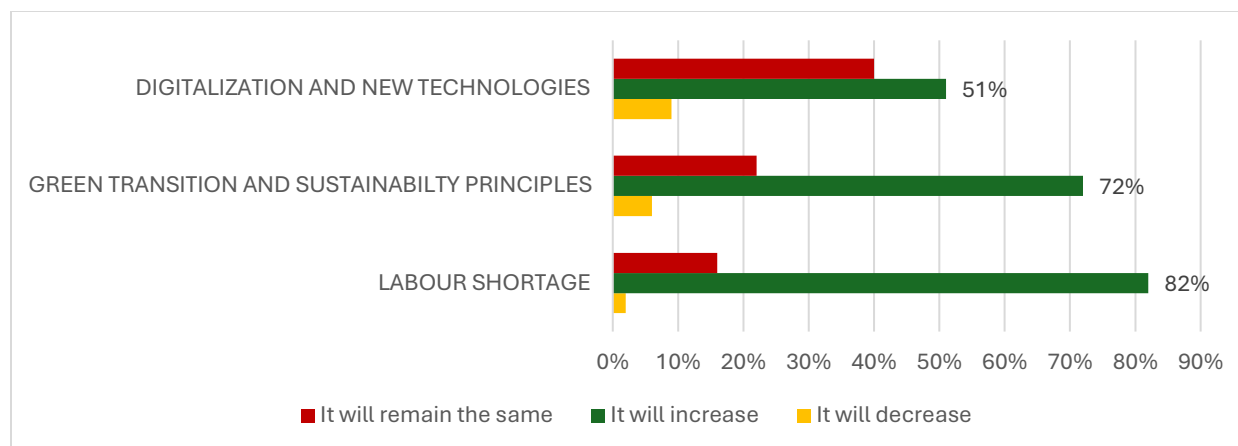
Digital transformation follows, with approximately 60% of respondents anticipating an increasing impact. Although digitalisation is a process that has long been underway, it continues to be viewed as a powerful transformative force capable of redefining roles, skills, and organisational models. Nevertheless, a significant proportion (around 30%) believes that its impact will remain stable—likely because many companies have already embarked on digital transformation paths, thus rendering its effects less "disruptive" compared to the past.

Finally, the **green transition** is also perceived as a growing phenomenon—with about 50% of responses indicating so—but as less disruptive than the other two. Around 30% expect its impact to remain unchanged, and only a small minority foresee a decrease. This finding aligns with a trend already observed: while sustainability is acknowledged as important, it still struggles to be perceived as a tangible and transformative factor in workforce management. This may be due both to a still partial understanding of the topic and to the fact that its direct impact on HR tasks has not yet fully materialised.

The survey also explored the priorities perceived by companies in relation to the **emerging needs arising from the transformation of the workforce**, driven by the aforementioned phenomena (Chart 8).

The most urgent needs identified are the **reorganisation of work** and the **intergenerational management of teams** – both considered highly relevant by more than half of the respondents. These findings suggest that companies are undergoing a continuous phase of adaptation, in which flexibility, new working models (such as hybrid work or results-oriented approaches), and

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the coexistence of generations with differing values, expectations, and working styles constitute key organisational challenges.

Following these, though still with significant response rates, are the needs related to the **attraction of new talent** and the **retention of senior employees**, the **promotion of employee well-being and work-life balance**, and the **necessity for upskilling and reskilling the workforce** – each selected by approximately three out of ten respondents. These responses reflect a growing awareness on the possible competitive advantage brought by the ability to attract talent, retain employees, and foster skill development, in a context marked by constant transformation and a shortage of qualified profiles.

Chart 8 - How relevant are the following needs related to workforce transformations affecting the company in which you are employed? [% Extremely relevant]

Need	%
Adaptation of work organization	52%
Management of teams where different generations...	46%
Implement strategies to attract talent/qualied workers	35%
Promotion of work-life balance and well-being	34%
Provide upskilling and reskilling of workers	32%
Enhancement and retention of senior workers	28%
Implement strategies to attract workers (general)	22%
Promote women's participation to the lm	14%
Management of multicultural work environments	13%
Strategies for inclusion of vulnerable groups	9%

A slightly lower priority is attributed to the **general need to attract workforce** (22%) and to several aspects related to inclusion and diversity, such as the needs to enhance **female participation to work**, to manage **multicultural teams**, and to develop **strategies to include vulnerable groups**. However, as far as it emerged from the other questions of the survey, the lower scores given to these issues do not mean that they are not being taken into account: for some organisations, it may indicate that these aspects are not perceived as "new" emerging

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needs, but rather as longstanding challenges that companies have been dealing with for quite some time. In other cases, it seems that the awareness in these areas is still in the process of maturing.

Once again, the overall distribution of responses conceals distinct territorial specificities:

- Among **Hungarian respondents**, needs related to the management of multigenerational work environments, the promotion of work-life balance and employee well-being, and the workforce upskilling and reskilling received higher-than-average response rates.

- In the **Portuguese context**, inclusivity appears to be a key priority: items such as multicultural management within companies and the labour inclusion of vulnerable groups received double and quadruple the number of responses, respectively, compared to the average reported in the chart. This may be attributed to the nature of the Portuguese sample, which consists predominantly of socially oriented organisations or institutions operating in the field of education and training.

- Among **Spanish respondents**, the issue of senior workers' retention received twice as many responses as the average (47%). A heightened sensitivity to the need for improving work-life balance and workplace well-being is also evident.

- The **Italian context** aligns closely with the overall average.

- ### *Skills and competences for knowledge management*

As human capital increasingly takes the form of "**intellectual capital"**, the ability to manage knowledge in a structured way becomes a key competitive lever. **Knowledge Management** (KM) within a company or organisation refers to the **set of processes, practices, and tools aimed at creating, collecting, organising, sharing, and enhancing internal knowledge, with the goal of improving efficiency, fostering innovation, and strengthening competitiveness**.

With regard to respondents' perceptions of the importance of specific competences related to knowledge management (in a medium-time perspective), **the ability to identify new professional needs** ranks first, with approximately 45% of responses (**Chart 9**). This is a competency traditionally associated with the HR function, as also emerged from the desk research phase on formally codified skill sets.

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Chart 9 - How important do you consider the following skills related to knowledge management? % Extremely important

Skill	Percentage
Ability to detect professional needs	44%
Ability in designing and managing innovative teaching…	36%
Knowledge of lm dynamics/transformations	34%
Contribute to local initiatives and projects to attract…	32%
Constant update on macro-trends/transformations	29%
Be familiar with skills forecasting tools	20%
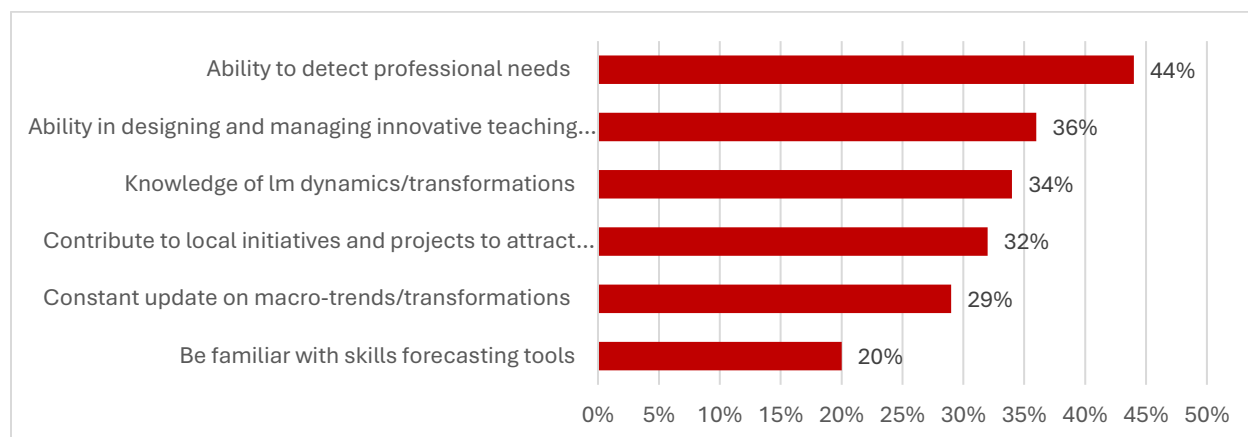
Following this, **the ability to design and manage training initiatives using innovative teaching methods** (e.g., gamification, in-house academies, etc.) ranks second, followed by **knowledge of the local labour market and its dynamics and transformations.** These findings underscore the growing need for organisations to integrate innovative learning approaches with contextual analysis, ensuring that training objectives align not only with internal corporate needs but also with broader labour market trends.

In fourth position is the **ability to contribute to local initiatives aimed at attracting talent**, which confirms that knowledge management is not solely an internal corporate function, but also serves as a bridge to the territorial ecosystem—particularly from the perspective of employer branding and collaboration with educational institutions or public entities.

Although ranked lower, competences related to the **continuous monitoring of macro-trends** and **familiarity with skills forecasting tools** are nonetheless considered relevant. Their lower positioning may suggest that such tools are still not widely used or well known, or that knowledge management practices continue to focus more on the present than on long-term projections.

Overall, chart 9 indicates that effective knowledge management, as perceived by survey's respondents, is not merely a technical matter. Rather, it requires a combination of analytical, pedagogical, strategic, and relational competences. The ability to identify needs, translate them into training pathways, connect them to the local context, and stay up to date with ongoing changes is becoming increasingly central to building a learning-oriented and adaptive organisation. In this regard, the role of HR is unquestionably strategic.

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- *Skills and competences for diversity management*

In corporate contexts, diversity and complexity management and inclusion refers to a **set of strategies, practices, and attitudes aimed at valuing the differences among individuals within an organisation** (including age, gender, ethnicity, culture, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, family status, etc.) **and at creating a fair, inclusive, and productive work environment for all**. Today's companies are increasingly multicultural, multigenerational, and characterised by hybrid and flexible work arrangements. It is therefore essential for HR professionals to interpret and manage this complexity in order to prevent conflict, discrimination, or exclusion.

According to the survey participants' opinion, the main challenge and critical issue in fostering more inclusive and adaptive work environments is *cultural* in nature: nearly half of respondents report **strong internal resistance to change.** This is compounded by more operational challenges, such as a **lack of resources for implementing inclusive policies** and **insufficient training specifically targeted at HR professionals**, which hinder the effective adoption of inclusion strategies.

Respondents were asked to indicate what, in their view, will be the three most important skills related to diversity/complexity management and inclusion in light of their organisation's evolution over the next five years (Chart 10). The results clearly point in one direction: to effectively address these challenges, **relational and adaptive soft skills will be crucial** – particularly those related to **communication, leadership, and conflict management.**

Chart 10 - How important do you consider the following skills to manage diversity/complexity within organisations? % Extremely important

The competences deemed extremely important by the majority of participants are **communication skills** and the **ability to adapt leadership style**, both considered essential by approximately 6 out of 10 respondents. Following closely, though still with very high percentages, are **active listening skills** – crucial for understanding individual needs – along with **mediation, facilitation, and conflict management**. These findings confirm that internal complexity is not only a source of richness, but also of potential tensions that require advanced tools to be addressed constructively. These two skill sets were endorsed by roughly 50% of the respondent sample.

The remaining competences—such as the ability to adapt and personalise career paths; awareness and management of prejudice and unconscious cognitive biases; mentorship; and knowledge and use of participatory and team building techniques—were selected by approximately one-third of respondents. Lastly, at the bottom of the ranking, is the knowledge of foreign languages and cultures. While this skill undoubtedly plays an important role, particularly in international contexts, it is perceived as less of a priority compared to relational and managerial competences.

2.2 Territorial insights from the focus groups and in-depth interviews

This chapter aims to present the field research activities conducted by each HR+ partner within their respective territorial contexts. By engaging relevant stakeholders, these activities sought to deepen and complement the knowledge gathered through the survey with locally grounded insights.

As part of the research, a total of **five focus groups** were conducted across different territorial contexts: **two in Italy**, specifically in the **Veneto** and **Emilia-Romagna** regions; **one in Portugal**, in the **Norte** region; **one in Spain**, in the **Galicia** region; and **one in Hungary**, in the **Central Hungary** region. These focus groups involved **a total of 57 participants**. In parallel, **18 in-depth interviews** were carried out, distributed as follows: **2 in France**, **4 in Belgium**, **8 in Italy** (including **3 in Emilia-Romagna** and **5 in Veneto**), **4 in Spain**, **3 in Portugal**, and **2 in Hungary**.

The partners were provided with a **focus group facilitation model (Annex 2)**, which included a set of guiding questions to steer the discussion, as well as a common **template for conducting interviews (Annex 3)**. However, they were also given the flexibility to adapt the questions and explore different themes according to their specific knowledge needs and local contexts**.**

Both focus groups and interviews focused on these main topics:

- **Exploring possible development trajectories** – *How do you expect the HR manager role to evolve in the coming years?*

- **Focusing on competences, skills, and knowledge for the "future" HR** – *What specific competences (i.e., tasks) do you think will be essential for HR professionals to manage future challenges effectively? What skills and knowledge will be strategic for HR managers to carry out new tasks?*

- **Identifying possible solutions, innovative practices, and instruments** – *This final phase of the focus group aimed to identify potential best practices or study cases to be further explored through interviews and case studies.*

A synthesis of the main findings, with a detailed breakdown by territorial area, is here presented. In the following boxes, the focus is specifically on the major transformations occurring at the territorial level. The data collected on new competences for HR professionals and best practices

has instead been reorganised in an aggregated form and is presented more comprehensively in the final section of this report.

2.2.1 Portugal
What does it mean being an HR manager today?   *Evolution of the HR role in recent years; perception on the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies. Focus on the <u>present.</u>*

Based on a focus group and a series of interviews conducted by PREVIFORM with 13 HR professionals working in various sectors—such as the automotive industry, private enterprises, and public administration—it is evident that the role of Human Resources (HR) has undergone significant transformation in recent years.

HR is no longer limited to administrative tasks. It has evolved into a strategic and dynamic function, playing a crucial role in decision-making, workforce planning, and aligning employees with the organisation's objectives. There has been a clear shift from simply assigning tasks to promoting broader employee involvement.

This evolution is visible across all sectors studied—automotive, private companies, and public institutions—where HR is actively contributing to digital transformation, fostering diversity, and launching well-being initiatives.

Talent acquisition has also changed. Instead of just filling vacant positions, companies now seek candidates whose personal values align with the organisation's culture, aiming to foster long-term engagement and motivation. This is especially important in sectors like recruitment, hospitality, and manufacturing, where creating an attractive and supportive work environment is key to retaining top talent.

Modern HR practices emphasise flexible learning paths and continuous skill development. In a rapidly changing labour market, HR departments—particularly in educational institutions and public employment services—focus on promoting lifelong learning and upskilling. This not only keeps employees competitive but also cultivates a culture of innovation within organisations.

The growing importance of soft skills—such as communication, empathy, and leadership—is also enhancing the value of HR professionals. This is especially relevant in highly demanding sectors like healthcare, where interpersonal skills are essential.

At the same time, the adoption of digital tools and automation has made many administrative processes more efficient, allowing HR professionals to focus more on employee-centreed initiatives. For example, performance evaluations are shifting from traditional annual reviews to

continuous feedback models, which foster development and engagement while enabling quicker responses to challenges.

However, these changes bring some significant challenges. The construction sector struggles to attract young talent, while tech companies face intense competition for highly skilled professionals. HR managers must continuously adapt, developing tailored retention strategies and offering more flexible work environments. They must also strike a balance between digital innovation and the human dimension, which remains vital for building strong workplace relationships.

Ultimately, the research showed that many HR professionals today are not just administrators but empathetic leaders and agents of change. Their ability to adopt innovative methods and maintain a strong people-centreed approach is essential to help organisations navigate ongoing market changes and technological disruptions.

Participants emphasised the need for greater agility, strategic foresight, and an approach that balances cost-efficiency with a human touch. In such a complex and rapidly evolving landscape, HR professionals play a critical role in ensuring organisations remain competitive, innovative, and resilient in the face of new challenges.

Possible evolution trends in HR management

How the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations? How and to what extent these trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies in your territorial context? Focus on future prospects

One of the biggest challenges ahead for HR will be keeping up with rapid digitalisation and competing for skilled talent. They'll increasingly use advanced tools like artificial intelligence to improve hiring, make data-driven decisions and support continuous employee development.

At the same time, the workforce is changing. Digital skills are in higher demand, and more people are working remotely or in hybrid environments. This means professionals must adapt to new technologies, more flexible ways of working, and develop skills that match evolving market needs.

Demographic shifts – such as aging populations and higher migration – are also pushing companies to align with changing social values. Issues like diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are now central to HR strategies. Keeping top talent is becoming more difficult, so HR must find innovative ways to attract and retain the best people.

In this fast-changing environment, HR managers will need to anticipate trends and design strategies that blend technological innovation with a more human touch. The future of HR requires strong skills in digital tools and data analytics, but also the ability to create a culture of learning, inclusion, and sustainability.

To reach these goals, HR will need to combine the power of AI with meaningful human connections. New approaches are already emerging—for example, digital platforms that do more than just hiring and training. These platforms allow for real-time feedback and more dynamic performance management systems, moving away from the traditional once-a-year evaluations. Agile development and continuous coaching are becoming the norm.

Some companies are also building partnerships with schools and industry organisations to offer internships, mentoring, and specialised training programmes. These initiatives help close the skills gap and prepare the next generation of workers.

Sustainability is another growing priority in HR. HR teams now play a key role in promoting eco-friendly practices—through training that encourages green behaviour or by adjusting hiring criteria to favor candidates who value sustainability. Being environmentally responsible is no longer just a requirement—it's a competitive advantage, especially as public demand for ethical behaviour grows.

Work-life balance also needs a new approach. The rise of digital work has introduced new challenges, making it important to set clear policies that support flexible work models. These should help employees stay connected and productive while maintaining motivation and team spirit. Technology should enhance collaboration—not replace human interaction.

Mental health and well-being are becoming essential parts of HR strategies. Some companies, especially in high-stress sectors like healthcare and manufacturing, are already investing in psychological support programmes. For instance, some car manufacturers offer in-house psychologists to support their staff. These programmes improve productivity while promoting a healthier, more resilient workplace.

Based on insights from interviews and focus groups, the core mission of HR in the coming years will be to balance tech innovation with the human side of work. HR leaders must ensure that new technologies support, rather than replace, company culture. This means constantly reviewing and updating strategies to create a seamless experience that aligns business goals with employee needs.

Ultimately, HR will need to drive change while protecting human values. As businesses face digital, environmental, and social transformations, HR will play a crucial role in helping organisations stay future-ready, innovative, and competitive.

2.2.2 Italy – Veneto region

What does it mean being an HR manager today?

Evolution of the HR role in recent years; perception on the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies. Focus on the <u>present.</u>

Participants highlighted that the role of the HR Manager in Veneto is undergoing a significant transformation, influenced by different factors that are reshaping its nature and responsibilities.

The most important changes include:

1. **How AI and Automation impact on job market and HR role:** AI-based softwares are changing recruitment processes, introducing increasingly sophisticated tools for hiring and onboarding. While these advancements make processes more efficient, they also raise pressing questions about the future of "entry-level" roles, which may soon be replaced by technology.

2. **Generational perspectives on work:** Generational differences within organisations impact not only the adoption and use of new digital tools but also attitudes toward work, influencing both its perceived meaning and professional expectations. The focus group revealed that younger generations are sometimes perceived as less "transparent" and less inclined to collaboration (e.g. many young people suddenly quit their jobs without having previously shown signs of discomfort or unease). Additionally, younger workers often prioritise efficiency and speed, sometimes at the expense of work quality. This evolution in workplace dynamics requires companies and HR departments to develop new strategies and practices that effectively address changing employee expectations. Indeed, it is a priority for HR to improve the ability to attract new talent and retain younger resources, ensuring greater competitiveness and organisational sustainability.

3. **HR role evolution: from administrative function to "organisational climate guardian" and "corporate value promoter":** The focus group highlighted the need for the redefinition of the HR role. In this new context, HR managers can no longer be confined to a purely bureaucratic function. Instead, they must become key reference points within organisations, taking on a strategic role in listening and support, with an

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increasingly human-centreed approach. In essence, more humanity and less technology. Several participants emphasised the importance of HR managers in developing advanced skills in active listening and empathy, which are crucial for continuously monitoring organisational climate through tools like surveys and one-on-one interviews. These practices not only help prevent internal misunderstandings and dissatisfaction but also enable HR managers to identify potential challenges, establish a closer connection with employees, and enhance motivation and engagement. Moreover, the increasing multiculturalism in Veneto-based organisations makes linguistic and cultural management an essential competency for HR managers. HR professionals more and more often will act as mediators across different languages and cultural contexts, transitioning seamlessly from Venetian dialect to English as needed.

Possible evolution trends in HR management

How the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations? How and to what extent these trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies in your territorial context? Focus on <u>future prospects</u>

- **Major changes and challenges for the HR function in the next 5 years**

- Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are transforming the job market by eliminating some roles, modifying others, and replacing many "entry-level" functions. HR manager will need to lead this transformation by supporting technology adoption, overcoming resistance (especially from senior employees), and creating new career paths for newcomers, focusing on truly innovative and high-value skills and roles.

- The evolving workforce, characterised by fewer young workers, greater multiculturalism, and generational diversity, requires a new approach to HR management. HR manager will need to foster integration, communication, and collaboration among employees with different leadership styles, life and work expectations, and learning approaches.

- Companies must comply with increasingly stringent regulations and growing expectations regarding equity, inclusion, and sustainability. HR manager will play a crucial role in redesigning business processes to align with ESG (environmental, social, and governance) principles, promoting workplace well-being, and implementing corporate social responsibility policies.

- Artificial intelligence is becoming central to recruitment and workforce management but poses risks of discriminatory bias. HR manager will need to ensure ethical and responsible use of AI tools, carefully monitoring selection and evaluation processes to promote fairness and diversity.

- New work models, smart working and digitalisation have reduced direct interactions, weakening communication and collaboration within companies. HR must strengthen employees' sense of belonging and create more inclusive work environments, fostering intergenerational dialogue and implementing personalised engagement strategies.

- **Changes and challenges that will significantly impact the workforce in the next five years (and indirectly affect HR managers)**

- Increasing multiculturalism and generational diversity in the workplace pose new challenges for HR management. HR manager will need to facilitate integration through cultural and linguistic mediation strategies, enhancing internal cohesion and operational efficiency.

- New generations prioritise flexibility, professional growth, and well-being over job stability. HR manager must rethink retention and corporate welfare strategies to meet evolving needs, developing career paths and fostering stimulating and motivating work environments.

- The introduction of advanced technologies is transforming business processes and altering the skills required. HR manager must lead workforce reskilling efforts, promoting continuous learning to ensure that human capital remains competitive in the labour market.

- Regulatory evolution and increasing social expectations demand greater focus on equity, well-being, and sustainability. HR manager will need to integrate compliance and corporate social responsibility practices into business strategies, ensuring an ethical and inclusive work environment.

- **New priorities for HR managers of the future (HR manager as "drivers of change"):**

HR managers will have the following priorities:

- Support the integration of new technologies by developing employees' digital skills and reorganising work activities to maintain an optimal balance between automation and human value,

- Promote dialogue across generations and cultures by implementing strategies that enhance integration, internal communication, and employee engagement, positioning HR manager as a bridge and amplifier of both corporate and workforce needs,

- Monitor the ethical use of AI tools by ensuring fair selection processes and developing corporate policies that promote diversity and inclusion,

- Adapt career models to the new labour market reality by investing in continuous training and upskilling/reskilling programmes to prepare employees for future challenges.

- **Innovative strategies to address the identified challenges:**

- Implement intergenerational mentorship and networking programmes to create connections between senior and junior employees, facilitating knowledge transfer and strengthening corporate cohesion.

- Develop assessment tools and training programmes to align employees' skills with market evolution, promoting continuous learning and adaptability to ensure long-term employability.

- Establish clear policies for responsible AI use to prevent bias in decision-making processes and ensure ethical and strategic application of AI in HR operations.

- Create flexible career paths and tailored corporate benefits to meet new employee expectations, structuring personalised engagement and retention strategies.

- Redefine job roles and responsibilities to optimise human potential while effectively integrating technology, ensuring that automation enhances work without diminishing its human value.

2.2.3 Italy – Emilia Romagna region

What does it mean being an HR manager today?
Evolution of the HR role in recent years; perception on the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies. Focus on the present.

Being an HR Manager today means dealing with a range of challenges—many of which are tied to the growing complexity of the labour market. Insights from interviews and focus groups highlight two major pain points: the difficulty of finding highly specialised professionals and the struggle to retain top talent.

In an increasingly competitive landscape, HR leaders need to be excellent at spotting and nurturing talent. This involves designing personalised career paths, encouraging internal growth, and making the company a place where people want to stay. That's where **employer branding** and company attractiveness become crucial tools.

The labour market itself is becoming more polarised. Some sectors—like tourism and food service—are seeing declining economic conditions and reduced professional recognition. On the other hand, highly innovative tech-driven sectors are pushing hard to attract workers. These companies are not only offering attractive salaries, but also adapting their compensation models to meet the growing demand for **work-life balance**—through smart working, welfare programmes, and flexible benefits.

Another major issue that's come to light is the evolving role of HR in helping organisations shift from job-based structures to skill-based models. This shift requires strong **change management** programmes, especially because speed is becoming a critical factor. Companies today are under pressure to shorten the time it takes to turn strategic plans into action.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point. Before the pandemic, change processes focused on things like updating ERP systems or reorganising operations in response to globalisation. The term *VUCA*—Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity—was coined to describe that era.

But after COVID, the pace of change has accelerated. The rapid rise of digital technologies is forcing organisations to move faster than ever. Strategic planning and execution now need to happen almost in real-time, with companies expected to respond quickly to changing market needs.

A third important topic that emerged is the **management of generational diversity** in the workplace. Participants in the discussion agreed that a diverse age mix can be a huge strength—but only if it's actively managed.

Talking about age diversity means creating an inclusive environment where people of all ages can thrive. This requires redefining HR policies to support everyone, no matter their stage of life or career. Career development systems need to reflect the evolving skills, needs, and life cycles of individuals—both on a personal and professional level.

Possible evolution trends in HR management

How the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations? How and to what extent these

trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies in your territorial context? Focus on future prospects

- **Major changes and challenges for the HR function in the next 5 years**

- Talent management: in an increasingly competitive labour market, the HR Manager must excel in identifying and developing talent, creating personalised career paths and promoting internal growth;

- Strategic leadership: the HR Manager must be an integral part of defining company strategies, ensuring that HR policies are aligned with business objectives;

- Promoting corporate culture: creating and maintaining a corporate culture based on innovation, trust and collaboration is essential in KI companies, where employee motivation and commitment directly influence results;

- Digitalisation and HR Tech: with the advent of HR technologies, the HR Manager must know how to use tools such as artificial intelligence and big data to analyse staff trends, improve employee experience and optimise processes;

- Flexibility and change management: KI companies operate in volatile and uncertain environments. The HR manager must be able to lead the organisation through change, promoting an agile and resilient approach.

Looking ahead, the role of the HR manager in KI companies will continue to evolve. Emerging trends include:

- Data-driven HR: collecting and analysing employee data will become critical to making informed decisions;

- Hybrid working and flexibility: HR managers will need to refine policies to accommodate hybrid-working arrangements and ensure that productivity is not impacted;

- Continuous learning: As technological change accelerates, HR managers will need to create continuous learning systems to ensure that employee skills remain up to date.

- **Changes and challenges that will significantly impact the workforce in the next five years (and indirectly affect HR managers)**

Over the next five years, the workforce will undergo significant changes due to a variety of technological, economic, social and regulatory factors. Here are the key trends and challenges that will impact HR and HR managers:

1. Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Change: The increasing adoption of AI and automation will replace many repetitive tasks, while creating new opportunities for more complex roles;

- HR challenges: Reskilling/upskilling, managing resistance to change and new retention strategies for highly skilled workers.

2. Hybrid and flexible work

- Change: Remote and hybrid work will become the norm in many industries, requiring new ways of managing productivity and employee engagement.

- HR challenges: Establishing flexible company policies, managing the well-being of remote workers and creating a cohesive company culture even without a physical presence.

3. Gig Economy and freelance work

- Change: The number of self-employed and freelance workers will grow, leading to greater flexibility but also to a reduction in traditional permanent contracts;

- HR Challenges: Rethinking contractual models, managing more fluid and unconventional workforces, and new tools for performance management.

4. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

- Change: Inclusion and Diversity will become critical aspects for corporate competitiveness, with growing pressure from employees, customers and regulations;

- HR Challenges: Developing inclusive hiring strategies, eliminating bias in selection processes and creating fair and representative work environments.

5. Wellbeing and mental health

- Change: There is a growing focus on employee wellbeing, with higher expectations on benefits related to mental health and work-life balance;

- HR Challenges: Implementing psychological support programmes, reducing work-related stress and reviewing corporate welfare policies.

6. New skills and continuous learning

- Change: The evolution of the market requires new digital, analytical and soft skills to face a changing world of work;

- HR challenges: Creation of continuous training paths, identification of key skills and incentives for internal learning.

7. Employer branding and talent attraction

- Change: Employees increasingly evaluate the corporate culture, values and social impact of the company before accepting a job;

- HR challenges: Strengthen the attractiveness of the company through employer branding strategies, innovative benefits and greater attention to sustainability.

8. New labour regulations

- Change: Regulatory changes on smart working, flexible contracts and data protection will influence personnel management.

- HR challenges: Compliance with new laws, more complex management of union relations and adaptation to new global standards.

In short, HR managers will have to face a profound transformation of people management in the next five years. Success will depend on the ability to anticipate these trends and adopt proactive and innovative strategies oriented towards employee well-being and corporate competitiveness.

2.2.4 Spain

What does it mean being an HR manager today?
Evolution of the HR role in recent years; perception on the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies. Focus on the <u>present.</u>

Today, HR professionals are increasingly involved in strategic workforce planning, driving digital transformation, enhancing employee engagement, and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Insights gathered from interviews and focus group discussions with professionals in the field reveal that the HR role is becoming more complex. Managers are now expected to balance organisational demands with rising employee expectations around flexibility, career development, and personal well-being.

The challenges HR professionals face often vary by sector. In some industries, there is a growing emphasis on ensuring salary transparency and fair compensation. In others, especially

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those involving care, education, or emotionally demanding roles, the need for both emotional and professional support for employees has become a key concern.

Digital transformation is another major theme. As technology continues to reshape business operations, HR leaders must support the upskilling of employees—particularly in sectors where AI and automation are changing the nature of work. At the same time, industries experiencing labour shortages, such as construction and manufacturing, are placing increased focus on talent retention and building long-term workforce stability.

The discussions also highlighted the need for updated HR strategies to address workforce diversity and generational dynamics. Managing age-diverse teams effectively and creating inclusive policies that respond to varying life and career stages has become essential. Additionally, the rise of remote work has introduced new challenges in maintaining team cohesion and preserving company culture across distributed teams.

Possible evolution trends in HR management

How the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations? How and to what extent these trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies in your territorial context? Focus on future prospects

- **Major changes and challenges for the HR function in the next 5 years**

 1. **Talent acquisition & workforce shortages**

- The shortage of skilled professionals is expected to worsen, particularly in IT, construction, healthcare, and specialised industries.

- Labour shortages in key sectors will force HR teams to compete for highly skilled workers and rethink recruitment strategies.

- Younger workers prioritise job flexibility and purpose over stability, making retention more challenging.

- Geographical disparities will persist, with rural companies struggling to attract talent due to limited transport and infrastructures.

 2. **The impact of digitalisation & Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

- HR management will be shaped by increased automation, AI-driven recruitment, and digital HR tools.

- AI-powered hiring will optimise recruitment but may introduce bias risks and ethical concerns.

- Automation of HR processes will improve efficiency but require digital upskilling among HR teams.

- Remote and hybrid work models will become standard, requiring new digital communication strategies.

3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the workplace

- Managing diverse, multigenerational, and multicultural teams will become a core HR responsibility.

- Companies will need to develop inclusive work environments for employees across different age groups, genders, and backgrounds.

- Cross-generational team management will require HR professionals to bridge differing work expectations.

4. Work-life balance and mental well-being

- Employee well-being and mental health policies will become essential to workforce retention.

- Workplace flexibility will remain a top demand, forcing HR to adopt hybrid models and adaptable schedules.

- Burnout and mental health issues will increase, requiring HR teams to integrate wellness programmes into corporate culture.

- Emotional intelligence in HR leadership will be critical in maintaining a supportive and engaging work environment.

- **Changes and challenges that will significantly impact the workforce in the next five years (and indirectly affect HR managers)**

1. **The evolving nature of work and employee expectations**

The labour force is experiencing generational and structural shifts that will impact HR strategies:

- Employees prioritise job satisfaction, ethical company values, and work-life balance over long-term loyalty.

- Freelance and gig work will increase, requiring HR managers to handle flexible employment contracts.

- Upskilling and lifelong learning will be necessary to adapt to automation and digitalisation.

2. **Sustainability & the Green Transition**
- HR managers will need to integrate sustainability into corporate policies:

- Companies must align HR strategies with environmental and social responsibility to attract talent.

- The green transition will create demand for new skill sets, requiring training initiatives in sustainability-related fields.

3. **Migration and workforce mobility**
- Labour migration patterns will impact workforce availability, requiring HR to navigate cross-border hiring and relocation policies.

- Cultural integration strategies will be necessary to support a diverse and mobile workforce.

- **New priorities for HR managers of the future (HR manager as "drivers of change"):**

HR managers will need to adopt a proactive and strategic approach to navigate the evolving challenges in workforce management. One of their primary priorities will be talent attraction and retention, as labour shortages continue to affect multiple sectors. Companies will need to rethink their recruitment strategies, improve employer branding, and enhance the overall employee experience to compete for highly skilled professionals.

Another critical focus will be workforce upskilling and reskilling. As digitalisation and automation reshape industries, HR managers must implement training programmes that help employees adapt to new technologies, including AI and sustainability-focused skill sets. Lifelong learning initiatives will become a core element of HR policies to ensure workforce adaptability.

Employee well-being and inclusion will also take centre stage. HR professionals will be expected to integrate mental health support, work-life balance policies, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies into company culture. The demand for flexible work arrangements, emotional intelligence in leadership, and personalised employee support will continue to rise.

HR managers must also embrace digitalisation and AI adoption. The future of HR will require integrating automated HR tools, AI-driven hiring platforms, and remote work management systems to improve efficiency and support a hybrid workforce. However, this shift will also require HR professionals to develop digital competences to manage new HR technologies effectively.

Lastly, sustainability and social responsibility will influence HR strategies. Companies will need to align their workforce policies with environmental goals, ethical business values, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This shift will not only help businesses comply with emerging regulations but also attract purpose-driven employees who prioritise working for organisations with strong environmental and social commitments.

- **Innovative strategies to address the identified challenges:**

1. **AI-powered HR solutions**
- Automated CV screening and predictive analytics will improve recruitment efficiency.
- Chatbots for employee support will streamline HR communication.
2. **Personalised learning & development**
- AI-driven training platforms will offer customised career paths and upskilling programmes.
- Gamification and e-learning strategies will enhance engagement.
3. **Flexible work models & hybrid leadership training**
- HR policies will prioritise work-life balance through flexible schedules and hybrid leadership training.
- Virtual team-building and digital collaboration tools will maintain employee engagement.
4. **Diversity & Inclusion-focused HR strategies**
- Mentorship programmes to foster cross-generational knowledge exchange.
- AI-driven bias detection tools to ensure fair hiring and compensation practices.
5. **HR-Driven Sustainability Initiatives**
- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) integration into HR policies.
- - Green HR strategies, such as eco-friendly workplace policies and sustainable hiring.

2.2.5 Hungary

What does it mean being an HR manager today?
Evolution of the HR role in recent years; perception on the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies. Focus on the present.

The role of HR managers has evolved from a predominantly administrative function to a strategic position crucial for business sustainability. According to field research findings, HR professionals today must act as business partners, contributing to decision-making and long-term organisational planning.

Key responsibilities include workforce planning, employee engagement, change management, and digitalisation efforts. HR managers are expected to navigate a complex environment where employee expectations, technological advancements, and regulatory frameworks continuously shift. One HR leader highlighted that digital transformation has increased efficiency but also introduced challenges such as data security concerns and workforce adaptation to automation.

Employee retention and talent acquisition remain pressing challenges, particularly in knowledge-intensive industries. Organisations struggle to attract high-calibre professionals and ensure continuous upskilling of existing employees. Some companies have introduced tailored learning programmes and career pathways to improve retention and engagement.

HR is also responsible for fostering workplace culture and inclusivity. Companies that have undergone mergers or acquisitions report difficulties in integrating different organisational cultures. HR managers are instrumental in ensuring smooth cultural alignment through structured onboarding and leadership coaching.

Additionally, HR has taken on a more significant role in managing employee well-being. Organisations are implementing mental health support programmes, flexible work policies, and employee assistance initiatives to improve job satisfaction.

In essence, today's HR managers must balance operational tasks with strategic functions, requiring adaptability, digital literacy, and leadership skills to drive organisational success.

Possible evolution trends in HR management

How the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations? How and to what extent these trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies in your territorial context? Focus on <u>future prospects</u>

HR management is set to undergo profound changes in the coming years due to technological advancements, demographic shifts, and economic transformations. Based on insights from interviews and the focus group discussion, several key trends have been identified:

1. Increased reliance on digital solutions

The integration of AI and automation in HR processes is expected to accelerate. AI-powered recruitment, predictive analytics for workforce planning, and automated performance management systems will become standard. However, HR professionals stress that technology must complement, not replace, human-centric HR functions. Companies investing in digital transformation must simultaneously focus on digital skills training to ensure adoption.

2. Addressing skills shortages and upskilling needs

The ongoing labour shortage, particularly in specialised industries such as IT, necessitates a proactive HR strategy. Future HR management will emphasise upskilling and reskilling initiatives to bridge skill gaps. Some organisations are already implementing in-house academies, gamified learning platforms, and mentorship schemes.

3. HR's expanding role in ESG and corporate responsibility

HR is increasingly expected to lead corporate sustainability efforts, particularly in social and governance aspects. Organisations are embedding diversity and inclusion policies, mental health support structures, and corporate social responsibility initiatives within HR frameworks. The integration of ESG into HR will continue to grow as regulatory requirements increase.

4. Workforce flexibility and hybrid work models

The demand for flexible working arrangements will persist, with hybrid and remote work models becoming more structured. HR will play a crucial role in maintaining engagement, fostering company culture remotely, and ensuring fair performance evaluations. Some companies are already using employee experience platforms to monitor engagement and productivity.

5. A greater emphasis on employee experience and retention

The 'employee experience' approach is becoming central to HR strategy. Companies are investing in personalisation, career development opportunities, and holistic well-being initiatives to retain top talent. One HR leader shared a successful practice of offering employees participation in company decision-making processes, increasing engagement and loyalty.

2.2.6 France and Belgium

What does it mean being an HR manager today?
Evolution of the HR role in recent years; perception on the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies. Focus on the present.

In France and Belgium, the role of HR managers has moved well beyond its traditional administrative roots. While attracting and retaining talent remains a core objective, today's HR professionals are also deeply involved in developing people, managing performance, planning the workforce, and ensuring compliance with ever-changing regulations. Increasingly, their focus is on creating a supportive environment where employees feel valued and safe, both physically and psychologically. This evolution has placed HR at the centre of business strategy, responsible for aligning employee needs with broader organisational goals.

Managing people has become more complex as the workforce itself evolves. The growing use of freelancers, contractors, and other flexible employment models requires HR teams to rethink how they manage and support staff. In the public sector, budget cuts and reduced staffing have added pressure, often requiring HR to do more with less while keeping teams motivated and productive.

At the same time, digital transformation has fundamentally altered HR processes. Tasks that were once manual, such as compiling reports, are now automated, enabling HR to focus on strategic decision-making. The widespread adoption of HR technology, including analytics dashboards and AI-based tools, has streamlined operations but also introduced a learning curve. HR professionals must stay up to date with emerging trends to effectively integrate technology into their daily work. The fast-changing nature of digitalisation means that the skills needed today may become obsolete tomorrow, requiring continuous learning and adaptation.

Beyond technology, shifting employee expectations have reshaped HR responsibilities. The demand for flexibility, purpose, and well-being—particularly among younger workers—has increased significantly. Employees now expect remote or hybrid work arrangements and value a strong work-life balance. HR must navigate these expectations while ensuring performance and preventing burnout. Companies with remote work policies have had to implement new strategies, such as establishing core working hours and setting clear boundaries to prevent overwork. This requires a delicate balance between accommodating flexibility and maintaining engagement and productivity.

Regulatory compliance has also become a critical aspect of HR management. With evolving labour laws, data protection requirements such as GDPR, and new employment regulations, HR professionals must ensure that their organisations remain compliant. Keeping up with European and local legal frameworks requires constant attention, particularly as new regulations—such as the EU's pay transparency law—come into effect. In large institutions, bureaucratic processes often slow down HR operations, creating frustration among employees. HR managers must translate these complex rules into clear policies and find practical solutions

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within legal constraints. In some cases, regulatory barriers limit diversity efforts, such as strict work permit regulations that make it difficult to hire non-EU talent. HR professionals must either find compliant workarounds or advocate for policy changes to create a more inclusive workforce.

Ultimately, being an HR manager today means juggling multiple roles—strategic partner, employee advocate, technology expert, and compliance officer. While the people-focused mission of HR remains the same, the skills and responsibilities required have grown considerably. The challenge lies in leveraging digital advancements and strategic planning while preserving the human connection that defines the essence of HR.

Possible evolution trends in HR management

How the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations? How and to what extent these trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies in your territorial context? Focus on <u>future prospects</u>

According to the perception of the people involved in the investigation activities, The future of HR management in France and Belgium is poised for profound transformation, shaped by rapid technological advancements, evolving workforce expectations, and regulatory changes. AI and automation are expected to play a crucial role in streamlining HR processes, particularly in areas such as recruitment, data analysis, and employee management. Many organisations have already integrated AI tools to assist with screening CVs, analysing workforce data, and automating administrative tasks. However, rather than replacing HR professionals, these technologies are seen as augmenting their roles. The human aspect of HR—empathy, ethical judgment, and interpersonal skills—will become even more critical in an AI-driven workplace. HR managers will be responsible for ensuring that AI tools are used ethically and transparently, preserving fairness in decision-making and maintaining the essential human touch in areas such as conflict resolution and employee development. Companies are already preparing for this shift by upskilling HR professionals and other employees in AI literacy to ensure they can adapt to these technological changes effectively.

The shift toward hybrid work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to significant changes in workplace dynamics. HR managers will continue to refine hybrid work models, balancing flexibility with organisational needs. Remote work has expanded the talent pool beyond national borders, allowing companies to hire internationally, but it has also introduced new challenges related to compliance with labour laws, cultural integration, and maintaining a sense of belonging among employees. HR professionals in both France and Belgium recognise

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the importance of clear frameworks for hybrid work, ensuring productivity and accountability while fostering trust rather than relying on intrusive monitoring. There is also an increasing emphasis on sustaining company culture in a hybrid environment. Organisations are adopting innovative solutions, such as virtual coffee chats and remote team-building programmes, to maintain cohesion among employees. As younger workers prioritise work-life balance and well-being, HR is expected to implement policies like the right to disconnect, wellness programmes, and flexible schedules to meet these evolving expectations.

Employee retention remains a critical focus for HR, as companies compete for skilled talent in an increasingly dynamic job market. The traditional approach of relying on external hiring is shifting toward a stronger emphasis on internal mobility and professional development. Organisations are investing in upskilling programmes to prepare employees for future roles, ensuring that they remain engaged and adaptable. In Belgium, for example, a public-sector HR department has implemented a structured internal development programme to train employees for hard-to-fill positions, an approach that is expected to become more widespread. Similarly, HR experts in France stress the need for continuous learning, urging professionals to update their skills regularly rather than relying on outdated knowledge. This trend highlights the growing importance of personalised career development plans and lifelong learning initiatives as essential tools for employee engagement and retention.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) remain at the forefront of HR priorities, with increasing efforts to translate corporate commitments into tangible action. Organisations in France and Belgium are working to create more inclusive workplaces by implementing bias-free recruitment processes, diversity training programmes, and mentorship opportunities for underrepresented groups. European institutions are also setting standards for inclusive hiring by expanding candidate selection criteria beyond traditional academic backgrounds. Additionally, upcoming EU regulations, such as the Pay Transparency Directive, will require HR departments to ensure pay equity and eliminate discriminatory salary practices. Companies are preparing for these regulatory changes by adopting more transparent compensation policies and tracking diversity metrics to measure progress. Beyond gender and ethnicity, HR managers are expected to broaden their inclusion efforts to support employees with disabilities, diverse sexual orientations, and non-traditional career paths, fostering a workplace where all employees feel valued and respected.

Regulatory and societal changes will continue to shape HR management, requiring professionals to navigate complex legal frameworks and emerging policies. Compliance work is expected to increase as governments introduce stricter regulations around remote work, data privacy, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting. The green transition is

also influencing HR policies, prompting organisations to implement sustainable practices such as remote work to reduce carbon footprints, green commuting incentives, and reskilling programmes for jobs in sustainable industries. Some HR professionals have raised ethical concerns about the environmental impact of AI technologies, highlighting the need for responsible AI usage in HR processes. HR will increasingly collaborate with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) teams to ensure that workplace policies align with sustainability goals, reinforcing the role of HR in driving corporate environmental responsibility.

While many of these trends are shared across France and Belgium, there are notable differences in their HR landscapes. Belgium, particularly in Brussels, has a highly international workforce, requiring HR professionals to navigate complex cross-border employment regulations and manage multicultural teams. This necessitates a strong focus on legal compliance, adaptability, and cultural competence. In contrast, France has a more centralised labour system with strong union influence, meaning that HR professionals may need to focus more on negotiating flexible work arrangements within a traditionally rigid framework. Despite these differences, HR leaders in both countries agree on the overarching priorities: leveraging AI and digital tools effectively, fostering employee well-being, and strengthening inclusive workplace cultures.

The HR manager of the future in France and Belgium will be a strategic leader capable of navigating rapid technological advancements, regulatory changes, and shifting employee expectations. This role will require a balance between data-driven decision-making and human-centred leadership. As organisations continue to evolve, HR professionals will play a crucial role in shaping workplace culture, ensuring fair and ethical employment practices, and fostering an environment where employees can thrive. Whether implementing AI-driven recruitment processes, redefining hybrid work policies, or championing diversity and well-being initiatives, HR will remain at the heart of organisational success, adapting to new challenges while keeping people at the centre of these transformations.

CHAPTER 3

Territorial case studies

Key evidence from the field research

3.1   Case studies. Inspiring good practices from local companies

This chapter aims at reporting on the best practices in HR management collected in the different territorial contexts involved in the field research. These practices offer concrete examples of how organisations are adapting to emerging challenges and reshaping the competences, responsibilities, and strategic positioning of HR professionals. By integrating good practices into the research process, it becomes possible to go beyond abstract definitions and capture how theoretical models are actually translated into operational approaches. Furthermore, these insights can highlight patterns, innovations, and context-specific solutions that enrich the overall analysis.

The **table below** identifies six case studies that describe how organisations in the partner regions address key issues related to current human resource management. The case studies highlight the **social innovation capacity of local organisations** and the central role of HR Manager in fostering well-being and cohesion.

Country	Company	Website	Scope	Objective
ITALY	UP DAY RISTOSERVICE SPA	https://www.day.it/	GENDER EQUALITY	Promote gender equality in the workplace
	ARD RACCANELLO SPA	https://www.ard-raccanello.it/it/	EMPLOYEE WELL BEING	Attract new employees and retain existing ones, ensuring continuity for the company
	OZ RACING SPA	https://www.ozracing.com/it/	EMPLOYEE WELL BEING	Foster holistic well-being
	SIAV SPA	https://www.siav.com/it/	EMPLOYEE WELL BEING	Reduce employee turnover by fostering loyalty
SPAIN	CONTACTICA SL	https://contactica.es/es/	EMPLOYEE WELL BEING, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION,	Provide flexible and hybrid working conditions adapted to the nature of R&D projects and

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			DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	create a new business structure that encourages networking and job sharing
HUNGARY	**LECHNER KNOWLEDGE CENTRE**	https://lechnerkozpont.hu/en	DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION	Establish HR as a strategic function in business decisions, streamline HR processes through digitalisation, and create a more engaged and stable workforce
	HARTMANN HUNGARY KFT.	https://hartmann-hungary.hu/	DIVERSITY & INCLUSION, EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND WELL BEING, CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH HR PARTNERING	Implement a structured HR partner model to foster engagement, develop employee well-being programmes tailored to generational needs, and promote an inclusive and collaborative work environment
PORTUGAL	**YMCA**	https://www.ymcasetubal.org/	EMPLOYEE WELL BEING, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	Promote well-being and mental health, ensure greater flexibility in the organisation of work, support professional development and progression, and strengthen a culture of cooperation, inclusion and recognition

3.1.1 UP DAY RISTOSERVICE SPA – BENEFIT CORPORATION (GROUPE COOP-UP)

Services for the labor market and companies

Large enterprise

ITALY (Bologna)

GENDER EQUALITY

Create an inclusive and equitable work environment, with the goal of combating all forms of discrimination and promoting gender equality in the workplace.

https://www.day.it

https://www.day.it/company/esg-sostenibilita-up-day#:~:text=Day%20%C3%A8%20particolarmente%20attenta%20ai,di%20qualsiasi%20forma%20di%20discriminazione/

Based in Bologna (IT), Up Day is an innovative company operating in the business and personal services market. The company designs, creates, and develops cutting-edge services that are beneficial for all its stakeholders. Its core business has always been meal vouchers, a sector that in recent years has undergone significant technological transformations, leading to the near-total replacement of traditional paper vouchers with digital ones. Among the other services offered by Up Day are "Cadhoc" gift vouchers and corporate welfare plans through "Day Welfare", the platform that allows companies to allocate their profits to employees with the tax advantages provided by law, thereby improving employees' professional and personal lives. Up Day supports companies from the analysis stage to the design of customised platforms.

The company is an integral part of the international group "Groupe UP", controlled by the French social cooperative UPcoop, which, thanks to its long-standing experience and presence in over 20 countries worldwide, has established itself as a global leader in the same sector. The ethical nature that has always distinguished Up Day's corporate initiatives, combined with a growing commitment to issues such as equity, transparency, inclusivity, sustainability, and local engagement, led to a path that culminated in the inclusion of these values into its corporate purpose and the company's transformation, in early 2023, into a Benefit Corporation ("Società Benefit"). Since January 2023, Up Day has been officially recognised as a Benefit Corporation, positioning itself among the companies committed to enhancing human and social capital within the business context. The company pursues not only profit objectives but also goals of common benefit,

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operating responsibly and sustainably with regard to people, communities, the territory, and the environment. This qualification serves to formalise the company's long-standing ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) commitment to equity, transparency, and inclusivity—principles that are part of its DNA and management vision, inherited as well from its parent company, the French Groupe UP, a social cooperative founded in France over fifty years ago and present on four continents, of which Day UP is a part.

Challenges or issues addressed

Up Day is a virtuous company that operates according to a series of well-established best practices, which can essentially be summarised as follows:

Gender Equality Certification in accordance with the UNI/PdR 125:2022 Practice, obtained in March 2023, making it the first Italian company operating in the business and personal services sector (meal vouchers, gift vouchers, and corporate welfare plans) to receive such recognition. This certification confirms Up Day's commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable work environment, with the goal of combating all forms of discrimination and promoting gender equality in the workplace. The UNI/PdR 125 standard validates Up Day's dedication to a virtuous process that combines strategic corporate vision with respect for and the well-being of people, in order to enhance individual traits and improve both individual and organisational performance.

Description

Focusing specifically on gender equality, one of the most significant recent efforts has involved **recruitment**—a phase that is often overlooked. Up Day has made notable progress by becoming increasingly specific in requests to external agencies, addressing the early stages of the recruitment process to ensure an equal number of male and female candidates are considered. The company ensures that all discriminatory elements are removed from job searches and, most importantly, works on addressing **cognitive bias**, including unintentional discrimination. This focus on training and awareness of unconscious bias runs through every stage and aspect of the process.

Starting from recruitment, many changes have been made. Another major area of focus has been **compensation**, where a great deal of work has been done. The company, with its 40-year history, has had to overcome outdated compensation structures dating back to when it first began operating as DAY. For instance, the early company presidents believed that only sales staff could advance in their careers—and sales positions were held exclusively by men.

As a result, the company historically had a male-dominated presence in higher-level positions and in certain roles (such as sales). Today, however, **gender parity** has been achieved across roles and salary levels. There are currently four executives—two men and two women—and at the managerial level, parity has also been reached, in a company where the workforce is approximately **70% female and 30% male**.

Significant efforts have also been made to raise **awareness among both male and female employees**. In recent years, initiatives have been undertaken to address **gender-based violence**, both within and outside the company, along with numerous philanthropic investments to support businesses, organisations, and projects that work against gender-based violence or in support of its victims.

Within the company, **in-depth analysis and dialogue** have taken place, starting with a shared understanding of what constitutes harassment. The scope then expanded to include suppliers and customers, with the adoption of measures that might now seem minor or even trivial. For example, **all offices within the company are open**, and no woman is ever left alone in an office without someone being able to see what is happening from the outside.

While seemingly simple, these measures provide a strong sense of **safety and reassurance** for those involved, allowing them to work with greater peace of mind and confidence.

From a **training and educational** perspective, a well-stocked **library on gender equality** has been created, managed by a colleague with a disability. A large portion of the library consists of books for **children and teenagers**, based on the belief that cognitive biases must be addressed from a very young age.

There have also been extensive **welfare initiatives** to support **parenthood** and promote a better **work-life balance**, with meaningful actions especially valued by female employees, helping them manage personal and professional responsibilities more easily.

In addition to these measures, further tools have been implemented to support solidarity, both internally and externally:

1. **At UP Day, there is no Time Bank system**, but a more flexible and "accessible" model has been adopted. Following a legal reform, employees can donate vacation days to colleagues in difficulty. This tool is provided for by the individual collective agreement.

2. **A Solidarity Fund** has been established, supported by a Foundation — a separate organisation partially funded by UP Day itself and its executives. A committee has been formed to intervene when a colleague faces hardships due to life circumstances and is in need of financial assistance. Various situations are evaluated, and support is offered accordingly.

Externally, UP Day implements a **comprehensive philanthropic policy**, partly managed independently by the Italian office and partly through international projects initiated by the parent company. Among the most notable and appreciated initiatives is one included in the company's supplemental agreement: the opportunity for each employee to use **two paid days per year** for volunteer activities.

Another solidarity initiative the company is particularly proud of is the **"Zerovirgola" project**, which allows employees to **donate the rounded-off cents from their paychecks to charity**. These donations go to two organisations:

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- **Ageop**, an association dedicated for over twenty years to the fight against childhood cancer and leukemia
- **AIRC**, committed to raising funds for cancer research.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved: **On the topic of inclusion, UP Day remains strongly committed and is even aiming for acceleration.** This drive is also encouraged by the parent company, which has changed its name from Groupe UP to Coop-up to emphasise the belief that the future will be even brighter if it embraces the values of cooperation. Work continues by balancing the needs of customers and those of the affiliated network — not merely suppliers, but true partners — along with employees, who are always considered UP Day's greatest asset.

The most significant achievements so far include:

1. **Substantial gender equality** in both roles and salary levels.
2. **Efforts to combat gender-based violence and workplace harassment**, along with the implementation of measures and tools that allow women to work in the office safely, calmly, and with peace of mind.
3. **Adoption of support tools for those in difficulty**, made available upon request — such as the Solidarity Fund, which is accessed every year by employees facing personal challenges.

Challenges faced and solutions adopted: As previously mentioned, UP Day is a Benefit Corporation, and in line with its vision, it pursues six common benefit objectives**:**

- **Common Benefit 1:** Transparency and sustainability in doing business
- **Common Benefit 2:** Employee well-being and care
- **Common Benefits 3 and 4:** Acting for the environment
- **Common Benefit 5:** Enhancement and support of the local area
- **Common Benefit 6:** Positive presence within the community

At this stage, the most ambitious and at the same time challenging goals relate to the Environment:
One objective is to **reduce environmental impact**, while the other is to **improve environmental quality**.
The company is committed to environmental care — from planting trees to repopulating many nearby parks — and is actively working on carbon footprint issues. However, it is becoming increasingly complex to invest in new projects and, above all, to understand how far the bar can be raised.

Feedback from employees and managers: The perception is that the many changes and transformations that have taken place over the years were not particularly orchestrated, but rather

the result of a natural process. In some respects, the parent company provided guidelines and certainly had an influence, but paradoxically, both top management and middle management were somewhat carried along by events and by the grassroots movement. Sensitivity towards these issues grew over time, fueled by results, and there was a gradual realisation that certain approaches paid off — in terms of employee satisfaction, customer benefits, and revenue growth.

The transformation into a Benefit Corporation was always conceived internally and legally, meaning it was intended to allow the pursuit of social impact goals without the concern of focusing solely on economic profit.

It was not driven by commercial or speculative logic. However, it was observed that when UP Day officially became a Benefit Corporation, even historically more demanding clients changed their attitude.

As a result, management embraced this path even more enthusiastically, realising that being sustainable is not just a slogan — it truly pays off.

And when we talk about the "G" in ESG, Governance, it precisely means integrating business strategy with sustainability strategy, because doing so leads to clear advantages and tangible results.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice: The colossal challenge the company is looking toward for the future is artificial intelligence. Currently, the company sees itself still in an exploratory phase, trying to understand how technological innovation and digitalisation are connected to the themes of social responsibility and environmental impact.

The management team is actively engaged by participating in numerous events, conferences, and networks, working more and more in connection with other organisations both locally and with similar values. Examples include partnerships with "Impronta Etica" on sustainability topics, "Assobenefit", AIDP and ADA. These collaborations help envision possible future scenarios, as such cross-pollination greatly supports growth, learning, observation, comparison, and — most importantly — overcoming resistance to change.

3.1.2 ARD RACCANELLO SPA

Chemical industry

SME

ITALY (Padova)

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

Attract new employees and retain existing ones, ensuring continuity for the company.

https://www.ard-raccanello.it/it/

https://www.greatplacetowork.it/scheda_azienda/ard-raccanello-spa/

https://www.ard-raccanello.it/app/uploads/2025/03/SUSTAINABILITY_REPORT_2023_LOW.pdf

Founded in 1949 in Padua, ARD Raccanello is a family-owned company and a leader in production and selling of paint products for the building industry. The production, which is 100% Italian, takes place at the historic Padua headquarter and at the highly automated plant in Castelguglielmo (RO), covering a total area of 29,000 m² and employing over 120 people. Today, the brand is present in Italy with around 700 distributors and in 25 countries worldwide.

By embracing the evolution of technology and aesthetic trends, the company offers a complete range of products - from traditional interior wall paints to decorative finishes, high-performance professional exterior coatings, and products for external thermal insulation systems. In line with increasing environmental awareness - a concern the company has always prioritised - and with the goal of developing innovative and sustainable products, ARD Raccanello provides technologically advanced solutions with low impact on health and environment.

Digitalisation, automation, flexibility, safety, increased production capacity, improved product quality, and sustainability have been the company's core objectives for over twenty years, starting with the creation of the pioneering production plant in Castelguglielmo (RO), which is currently being expanded and features cutting-edge digital innovation. Originally designed for the production of water-based paints, in 2023 the facility was complemented by a new plant dedicated to the production of thick coatings, in line with Industry 4.0 principles. The layout and technologies used represent a major innovation in the paint manufacturing sector.

To build these facilities, ARD also relied on the knowledge and expertise of its employees, providing training where necessary to operate these highly automated systems. ARD

Raccanello's strong focus on technological innovation and environmental sustainability goes hand in hand with its commitment to employee well-being. The company doesn't just produce paints and coatings—it creates "well-being in color."

There are three core elements that define the company's identity:

- **RESPECT**

Social responsibility in ARD is felt just as strongly as environmental responsibility. Respect is a core value, and care for people is seen as the key to success. Through the commitment of four generations, ARD has built solid and honest relationships with customers, employees, partners, and stakeholders who are part of its world.

- **PERSISTENCE**

ARD's goal is to create products that stand the test of time. As a historic company, ARD has always been determined to pursue its objectives with persistence and ongoing dedication. Its strategy stands out by offering products that endure over time, combining technology, tradition, and quality to meet the challenges of the market.

- **DYNAMISM**

ARD knows that change is a constant. While being a historic company, it is also a dynamic organisation that embraces innovation and adapts to change.

Challenges or issues addressed

Currently, ARD employs around 120 people. The average age ranges from 40 to 45 years, and over 39% are employed in production. The shortage of skilled labour is a significant challenge for ARD, especially since the chemical industry is almost exclusively male-dominated. Working in paint production is physically demanding and strenuous. Workers move cans of 25 liters while using weight-reducing devices. For this reason, despite the fact that 80% of ARD's Board of Directors is female, there are currently only 23 women in the company, mostly working in the office. In a Veneto context, where it is increasingly difficult to find workers willing to work in shifts and perform demanding, sometimes physically intense tasks, ARD has faced challenges in recruiting skilled labour and retaining them over time. If ARD's products are designed to last (PERSISTENCE), the same applies to the company's workforce, which must be engaged and motivated to stay. This is especially true given that paint production processes are complex and require high levels of expertise. After extensive internal training, the company cannot afford to lose the resources it has invested in.

Description

ARD Raccanello is convinced that prioritising the human factor is the key to success in an ever-evolving world. For this reason, in order to increase the company's attractiveness and create a

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recognisable brand in the local area, ARD invests comprehensively in the well-being of its employees through a series of integrated and complementary initiatives:

- **HEALTH AND SAFETY:** All employees have access to a **Welfare Plan**, with discounts and agreements that allow them to purchase goods and services at more favorable market prices. Additionally, if the job role permits, they can **work remotely** to achieve a better work-life balance. Through a second-level agreement with the RSUs (Employee Representative Bodies), **24 hours of additional paid leave are provided for medical visits**, and a **regular survey** is conducted to measure work-related stress. ARD continuously invests in industrial innovation to optimise production processes, implementing more efficient technological solutions to speed up and simplify workflows, thus easing the physical demands on workers. To improve health and safety, a closed-loop system has been created at the Castelguglielmo (RO) facility, which allows raw materials to flow directly into dispensers, minimising physical effort during manual material unloading and eliminating the inhalation of dust.

- **TRAINING: Continuous training** is a fundamental pillar of the working experience at ARD. Production staff must be able to use and control the new technologies that manage machines and systems. Therefore, over the past three years, all employees have participated in at least one training course per year, with each employee dedicating around **36 hours to learning (2024)**. The training programmes cover both soft skills and technical competences specific to each department, with particular focus on **workplace safety**, which is central in a chemical company. Additionally, a dedicated space for company training activities has been created, which is also available to customers, professionals, and sales agents.

- **WELLBEING:** Sharing and collaboration are essential values in ARD. For this reason, in addition to offering every employee the opportunity to grow professionally and apply new knowledge in a variety of company projects, the HR Department (3 resources) has developed an **integrated wellbeing plan** based on the company's strong commitment to protecting and enhancing the well-being of its employees:

  -**PARENTHOOD SUPPORT:** An **additional 5 days of paternity leave** are provided beyond the 10 days legally required. Upon the birth of a child, a **bonus of €2,000** is granted, and an **additional €1,000** is given when the child reaches their first birthday. If compatible with the role, employees can also benefit from additional days of remote working. Moreover, employees can take extra leave for their children's medical appointments up to the age of 12.

  -**EMPLOYEES' LISTENING:** Surveys are regularly administered to employees on wellbeing as well as to identify further needs and initiatives to develop. Over the course of one year, more than **50 improvement suggestions** were collected.

  -**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ("WE ARD" COMPANY RECREATIONAL CLUB):** ARD is dedicated to promoting initiatives for

employees' leisure time, aimed at personal and cultural growth, encouraging them to expand their knowledge beyond the workplace. Interaction between generations contributes to company wellbeing, and the sense of belonging is also fostered through sharing non-working moments. For this reason, the company has been providing a budget for the **"WE ARD" (employee recreational club)** for many years. The "WE ARD" has several objectives: to create a more positive and harmonious work environment through recreational and social activities, foster the creation of bonds between employees, contribute to improving the company climate, promote sports practice and physical activity, and enhance both physical and mental wellbeing. Over the years, various initiatives have been organised (visits to Lake Iseo with wine tasting, a trip to Venice during the Redentore Festival, mountain trekking, football and padel tournaments, cake contests, etc.). Often, these activities are not only attended by employees but also by their families.

Innovative aspects: The innovation of ARD's initiatives lies not so much in the value of any single activity, but in the company's ability to pursue, with passion and determination, a long-term process of improving and developing integrated human capital. This process touches on multiple aspects (training, safety and wellbeing, engagement, community and territorial connection), placing concepts such as participation, listening, and engagement at the centre of everything.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved: In 2023 ARD was ranked among the top ten "Best Workplaces™ for Blue Collar," a ranking entirely dedicated to the best organisations that prioritise the wellbeing of the blue-collar workforce. In 2024, as a testament to its ongoing commitment, the company further improved its position, reaching fifth place. The "Great Place to Work®" recognition rewards organisations that, following internal analyses, stand out for their company climate. Through a digital survey, the company gathered feedback from employees about their experience within the organisation, comparing the results with market benchmarks.

Feedback from employees and managers: The "Great Place to Work®" analysis revealed that the people working at ARD know they can rely on values such as sharing and collaboration, and that the company cares about the wellbeing of everyone, even those in more operational roles. The participation rate in the employee survey was 91% in 2023, with 67% giving a positive review of the company and 74% considering ARD an "excellent" workplace. In 2024, engagement increased further, reaching a 93% participation rate. Positive feedback also improved significantly: 81% of employees gave a favorable review, and 90% described ARD as an excellent place to work.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice: Achieving the certification is not a final goal. Based on the results obtained, ARD has created heterogeneous focus groups based on job roles (blue-collar workers/office employees). A separate focus group consisting only of managers was also established to develop specific topics. These working groups presented their proposals to the CEOs for the development of a multi-year action plan.

3.1.3 OZ RACING

Metalworking and mechanical engineering industry

SME

ITALY (San Martino di Lupari, PD)

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

Foster holistic well-being.

https://www.ozracing.com/it/

Founded in 1971, OZ Racing, based in San Martino di Lupari, is an Italian company that manufactures alloy wheels for cars and motorcycles. It is a world leader in the aftermarket light alloy wheel sector, with subsidiaries around the globe.

Challenges or issues addressed

Even though OZ is a leader in the design and production of alloy wheels intended for the world of competition and high-end vehicles, it is not a large multinational, but a medium-sized company attentive to the needs and well-being of its collaborators. The company in fact is deeply rooted in the local area, where it serves as an important reference point. Retaining talent, managing generational turnover, and motivating people are key issues for OZ Racing. For this reason the company internally promotes psycho-physical well-being and involvement by stressing concepts such as stress management, resilience, attention, memory, empathy, calm and awareness.

Description

OZ's organisational structure is strongly influenced by the **Lean approach**, which promotes horizontal process flows, encourages teamwork, and fosters the exchange of ideas. In fact, Lean transforms the production cycle into a continuous flow, identifies and eliminates waste, and introduces the "one-piece flow" logic, which perfectly aligns with the company's tailor-made, craftsmanship-driven vocation.

The introduction of Lean in the company over 20 years ago marked a major turning point for organisational cohesion and the achievement of expected performance. Lean itself made it

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possible to address certain issues at their root, without the need to focus, for example, on strengthening soft skills such as teambuilding. Building on this already highly cohesive organisation, OZ HR Manager has chosen to focus its organisational efforts on promoting **well-being**. In fact investing in the well-being and health of all collaborators is not only right from an ethical-social point of view but also generates an economic return for the company which many studies on the topic have now established. It is a strategic lever to improve organisational well-being and economic performance.

Innovative aspects: At OZ, well-being is promoted across **3 key areas: nutrition, physical health, and psychological well-being**. For years, the company has been carrying out a series of integrated initiatives to support both physical and mental health, including **mindfulness and relaxation courses** for all the staff.

In 2024, OZ also launched a **pilot Physiotherapy Project** in collaboration with external healthcare professionals, aimed at alleviating joint and muscle pain among production staff.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved: As part of the Physiotherapy Programme, 20 employees participated. Initially, 50% reported joint pain, a figure that dropped to 17% by the end of the programme.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice: Physiotherapy in the workplace not only improves physical health but also fosters a calmer and more motivated atmosphere, boosting employees' overall performance and well-being.

OZ Racing's initiative demonstrates how investing in employees' physical health through physiotherapy programmes can lead to substantial benefits in terms of health, productivity, and the overall workplace climate.

3.1.4 SIAV SPA – BENEFIT CORPORATION

IT company

Large enterprise

ITALY (Rubano, PD)

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

Reduce employee turnover by fostering loyalty.

https://www.siav.com/it/

https://www.siav.com/it/news/siav-apre-le-porte-al-progetto-coderdojo/

SIAV S.p.A. Società Benefit is an IT company specialised in digitisation, electronic document management, and digital processes. It is known for its expertise in carrying out complex projects for companies and public institutions, and it stands out for its ability to handle analysis, implementation, and support activities using in-house resources.

Founded in 1990 in Rubano (Padua), with over 20% market share, SIAV is currently the leading Italian company in the Enterprise Content Management sector. It offers software, cloud solutions, and outsourcing services for Electronic Document Management, Electronic Protocol, Workflow Management, Electronic Invoicing, and Digital Preservation. SIAV has offices in Padua, Milan, Genoa, Bologna, and Rome, and also operates in Switzerland and Romania.

The company serves more than 4,000 organisations in both the public and private sectors, with notable clients including Adecco, ICE Agency, Amadori, Autovie Venete, Bottega Verde, Camst, CNPADC, Coop and Unicoop, Electrolux, Granarolo, ISTAT, Kerakoll, Sacmi, Segafredo, and many others.

Challenges or issues addressed

The world of IT and software development is characterised by extremely high turnover. In fact, SIAV employees, given the nature of their work and their skill sets, could potentially work remotely from anywhere in the world. For this reason, attracting new talents—and above all, retaining them—is a key challenge and a strategic priority. The company has chosen to address this through a series of integrated initiatives, starting with the formal amendment of its corporate bylaws in 2021 to become a Benefit Corporation (Società Benefit).

Description

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SIAV has always placed corporate social responsibility at the heart of its business philosophy, aiming to build a new entrepreneurial paradigm in which ethics are an integral part of both the organisational model and governance. For this reason 99% of the staff are employed with permanent contracts.

Its core values are:

-FOSTERING GROWTH

-BUILDING TRUST

-CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

-GIVING BACK.

In line with this vision, in 2021 SIAV became a Benefit Corporation (Società Benefit), thereby making official its commitment to operate responsibly, sustainably, and transparently toward individuals, communities, the environment, cultural and social assets and activities, institutions, associations, and other stakeholders. To enhance its market appeal and fulfill its mission, the company has carried out a series of integrated initiatives over these years:

- **EMPLOYEE WORKING CONDITIONS:** Work-life balance policies that include flexible working hours and remote work (starting from 2024, SIAV has decided to make **remote working** as a permanent work mode, no longer contingent or temporary, but as an integral part of the company's organisational structure. To this end, it has been decided to maintain individual remote working agreements active indefinitely, which are initiated at the time of hiring, without needing to be renewed annually, unless specific needs arise. In 2024, about 99% of the staff worked up to 50% of their working hours remotely. In continuity with this strategy, a weekly **closure of company offices on Fridays** has been implemented, with all employees encouraged to work remotely that day, in line with specific work needs); Agreements with organisations for access to **specialised healthcare service**s; Annual activity plan focused on organisational well-being, as part of the **Family Audit certification**; Training on workplace health and safety, with yearly updates to the risk prevention plan; **Educational webinars** on topics related to employee health and well-being; **Continuous training** (in 2023, a total of 6.240 hours of training were delivered, representing an 18% increase compared to 2022).

- **EQUAL TREATMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL:** Renewal of Pdr125 certification for gender equality and monitoring of a strategic plan for equality; Tools to ensure fairness in recruitment and selection processes; Inclusion of individuals with physical or mental disabilities and/or those belonging to minority groups; Corporate initiatives and policies aimed at **promoting gender equality** (e.g., targeted training and webinars); Annual review of the Training Plan based on emerging needs, including technical training and soft skills for all employees, targeted training for managerial roles, and training on sustainability-related topics; Equal access to training and personal/professional development opportunities; Promotion of the internal **"Discovering Siav"** project, aimed at increasing awareness of different company roles

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through job shadowing in other departments, to broaden employees' knowledge and skills.

- **LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** Corporate volunteering day ("**Siav Impact Day**") held annually at one or more non-profit associations/cooperatives/organisations, supporting solidarity and local development projects; All employees are given the opportunity to dedicate **one paid day per year to volunteering activities**; Support for local initiatives aimed at territorial development and/or charitable projects; Preservation of historical and cultural heritage through the activities of the "Cultural Heritage" department, which manages projects for the digitisation of historically significant documents belonging to public and/or private archives and institutions.

- **PROMOTION OF SCIENTIFIC AND DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE:** Activities to promote digital knowledge through support for conferences organised by the Siav Academy association; Promotion of digital skills among school-aged children through the "**Coderdojo Project**"; Launch of STEM-oriented training programmes aimed at hiring young people within the company ("Siav School"); Placement of students in internships or school-to-work transition projects; Participation in career days and university-level training events; Creation of greater employment opportunities for young people through targeted training programmes designed to nurture young talents in IT and promote STEM disciplines.

Innovative aspects: The innovation of SIAV's initiatives lies not so much in the value of any single activity, but in the company's ability to pursue a long-term process of improving and developing integrated human capital. Two initiatives, however, stand out for their innovative potential:

-The **"Discovering Siav"** project, inspired by job rotation principles, offers employees who request it the opportunity to shadow colleagues from departments other than their own. The goal is to deepen their understanding of activities carried out in different business areas, share mutual knowledge and experiences, and gain a broader, more integrated view of the company's processes;

-The **"Coderdojo"** project involves employees' school-aged children in an introductory journey into coding and computational thinking. In 2024, the initiative engaged 20 children, supported by 7 volunteers, with 4 sessions held.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved: Thanks to the integrated initiatives described above, the turnover rate has decreased from 33% (2023) to 28% (2024). However, the turnover rate among employees under 30 years of age is 53%, which represents a significant challenge that management must continue to address.

Feedback from employees and managers: The monitoring of the results from the flexible work arrangements has shown positive outcomes. Surveys conducted among employees in

2024 reveal high satisfaction levels with the flexibility offered by the company: more than 77% of employees report being satisfied with the way SIAV implements remote work and believe their working hours are conducive to a good work-life balance.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice: Becoming a Benefit Corporation is not a final goal. Based on the results obtained, SIAV has created the "Siav People & Culture" project. This initiative involved all SIAV employees, divided into approximately 16 groups, to create opportunities for meetings, discussions, mutual understanding, and exploration of company culture and values.

HR+ Innovative competencies for HR manager among twin and social transition in knowledge intensive industries
n. 2024-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000254093

HR PLUS

3.1.5 CONTACTICA SL

Technical services, consultancy
SME
SPAIN (Madrid-Pontevedra)

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Increase employee well-being and engagement,

Provide flexible and hybrid working conditions adapted to the nature of R&D projects,

Create a new business structure that encourages networking and job sharing,

Retain talent by improving work-life balance to avoid turnover,

Maintain or improve productivity through autonomy and trust,

Foster a culture of accountability, collaboration and inclusion.

Web: https://contactica.es/es/
LinkedIN: https://www.linkedin.com/company/contactica

Founded with a commitment to driving sustainability through R&D innovation, CONTACTICA has grown into a leader in delivering Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and eco-friendly solutions for industries across Europe.

Its mission is to help companies reduce their environmental impact while fostering the growth of sustainable products and technological advancements. With over 25 successfully funded European projects and collaborations with a range of industries, CONTACTICA has a proven track record in securing European funding for R&D initiatives. It specialises in providing comprehensive support across the entire project lifecycle - from concept and funding applications to project execution and commercialisation. Its expertise spans multiple sectors, including Food, Health, Environment, and the Circular Economy.

Challenges or issues addressed

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote or hybrid working has become a societal requirement for employment. In addition, many employees in R&D consulting roles suffer from burnout, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, and limited flexibility in managing day-to-day responsibilities. The traditional model of face-to-face office-based working hours has become increasingly unsustainable, especially given the knowledge-intensive and often

project-based nature of R&D work. Retention problems and declining job satisfaction highlighted the need for a more adaptable and human-centered work structure.

Description

CONTACTICA implemented a flexible and hybrid working model throughout the company, based on trust and the measurement of results and quality through KPIs. Key initiatives included:

-Hybrid working policy: Employees have the possibility to work from home up to 2 days a week, with presence in the office aligned with the rest of the team, project needs or collaboration demands,

-Flexible working hours: Employees can organise their working day with flexibility to clock in between 8:00 and 9:00 am and clock out between 17:00 and 18:00 pm, as long as key meetings and project deadlines are not affected,

-Digital tools: Adoption of collaboration platforms (MS Teams) for asynchronous work and real-time team interaction,

-Regular meetings: Sessions for regular monitoring of work across departments, projects and the whole business structure.

Innovative aspects: Unlike traditional flexible policies, this practice is:

-Results-based: Employees are evaluated based on project milestones and results.

-Co-created with employees: Initiatives are designed through focus groups and considering employee preferences and proposals.

-Adaptable: The model is reviewed annually, and policies are adjusted based on employee feedback and work dynamics.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved:

-Increase in employee satisfaction,

-Higher talent retention,

-Productivity and project delivery timelines remained stable or improved.

Challenges faced and solutions adopted:

-Obstacles to technological incorporation: managed through briefings and the development of protocols and procedures,

-Maintaining team cohesion: was tackled by organising monthly in-person "Innovation Days" for cross-functional collaboration.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice: The hybrid-flexible model has become a cornerstone of the company's culture and value proposition to employees. The next phase includes:

- Formalising a remote onboarding experience for new employees,
- Expanding the options of the hybrid model to attract talent nationally,
- Improve protocols for tracking KPIs and quality of projects and services performed.

3.1.6 LECHNER KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

IT & Digital Services

Large enterprise

HUNGARY (Budapest)

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Establish HR as a strategic function in business decisions,

Streamline HR processes through digitalisation,

Create a more engaged and stable workforce.

https://lechnerkozpont.hu/en

The Lechner Knowledge Centre (LKC) is a professional background institution to the Prime Minister's Office specialising in architecture, land registry records and GIS. Its mission is the digitalisation and promotion of the wide range of public services it provides relating to the built environment and spatial data. The LKC has held the largest amount of spatial data and has the widest range of GIS expertise in Hungary since 2019. LKC serves as an intermediary between architecture and associated professions and the wider public, making its services available for both professional and residential users.

Challenges or issues addressed:

-Rapid organisational transformation due to frequent leadership changes,

-The need to integrate different corporate cultures following a merger,

-Resistance to HR digitisation and strategic HR role recognition.

Description

This best practice primarily focuses on: HR digitalisation – streamlining HR processes through automation; Strategic HR role expansion – ensuring HR is actively involved in leadership decisions; Employee engagement & communication – fostering transparency and organisational alignment.

- HR Digitalisation: The company transitioned from a manual HR system to a fully digital process, reducing approval times from weeks to hours.
- Employee Engagement & Communication: A structured feedback mechanism was introduced, along with quarterly leadership live sessions and company-wide newsletters.
- HR Strategy in Business Decisions: HR representatives are now active members of strategic decision-making boards.

Innovative aspects:

1. HR Digitalisation & Process Automation: Transition from manual HR processes to a fully digital workflow, reducing approval times from weeks to hours and enhancing transparency;

2. Strategic HR Business Partner Model: HR was repositioned from an administrative support function to a proactive strategic partner, ensuring alignment with business goals.

3. Enhanced Employee Engagement & Communication: Introduction of regular leadership live sessions and structured feedback mechanisms, improving transparency and workforce involvement.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved:

-Increased efficiency in HR processes through automation,

-Enhanced internal communication, reducing misinformation and uncertainty,

-Higher employee retention despite economic challenges (fluctuation rate: 2%).

Challenges faced and solutions adopted:

-Challenge: Initial resistance to digital transformation. - Solution: Pilot programmes and leadership support to encourage adoption.

-Challenge: Employee dissatisfaction due to lack of salary increases. - Solution: Transparent communication and retention-focused initiatives.

Feedback from employees and managers:

-Employees reported feeling more valued due to transparent HR policies.

-Managers noted improved efficiency in handling HR-related tasks.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice:

-Expand HR's role in leadership decision-making.

-Further enhance digitalisation with AI-driven HR analytics.

3.1.7 HARTMANN HUNGARY KFT.
Paper industry
Large enterprise
HUNGARY (Acs)
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION, EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND WELL BEING, CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH HR PARTNERING
Implement a structured HR partner model to foster engagement,   Develop employee well-being programmes tailored to generational needs,   Promote an inclusive and collaborative work environment.
https://hartmann-hungary.hu/

The Hartmann Group is currently the world leader in printed fiberboard packaging, with 15 production plants and approximately 2,500 employees. Additionally, it is a market leader in the design, engineering development, and production technology of spunbond fibers. The Hungarian subsidiary of the Denmark-based corporate group was founded in 1991, and due to increased investment, the production of egg packaging materials experienced a boom, opening new market opportunities.

Since its foundation, the Hungarian company has experienced dynamic growth in several stages. Thanks to the multi-billion investments made over the past five years, the factory has consistently expanded its production capacity, optimised logistics processes, and created new organisational units. These developments ensure the future stability of the company in Ács.

The technology developed by Hartmann is based exclusively on the use of recycled paper. The packaging material they produce is 100% eco-friendly and fully biodegradable, making it an exemplary model in the field of recycling. Furthermore, the molded pulp technology is eco-friendly and can be fully adapted to the shape of the items being transported.

The volume of goods produced at the Hungarian plant exceeds several million units per day, the majority of which are consumed in the European market. This reflects the size and reputation of the company, as well as the excellent quality of the products made.

While in the 1990s there were 100 employees at the Ács facility, today this number ranges between 550 and 600. Many of them have worked for the company for 15-20 years, and 90% of the employees are local. It is therefore no surprise that Hartmann's activities are closely

intertwined with the life of the town of Ács and its surrounding microregion. In their commitment to social responsibility, they have defined guidelines that serve the interests of their communities, both large and small.

Challenges or issues addressed

- The need for enhanced talent retention strategies,

- Adapting to the generational shift in workplace expectations,

- Addressing conflicts within diverse workgroups.

Description

- HR Partner Model: A decentralised HR structure was introduced, where HR business partners are directly involved in specific teams.

- Conflict Resolution Mechanism: A company ombudsman role was introduced to handle sensitive employee concerns confidentially.

- Adapting to Generational Needs: Initiatives such as flexible workspaces, informal social areas, and digital communication channels were introduced.

Innovative aspects:

- The HR partner system provides real-time support for employees,

- The organisational ombudsman ensures a trust-based conflict resolution framework.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved:

- Employees feel more supported due to HR presence in daily operations,

- A structured conflict resolution process has reduced workplace tensions,

- Greater alignment between HR and business objectives.

Challenges faced and solutions adopted:

- Challenge: Resistance to HR Partner integration in business teams. - Solution: Continuous education and leadership alignment.

- Challenge: Navigating multi-generational workplace expectations. - Solution: Customised employee experience initiatives.

Feedback from employees and managers:

- Employees appreciate the HR partners' involvement in daily operations,

- Leadership acknowledges improved workplace harmony.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice:

- Expand the HR partner model to additional departments,

- Conduct regular reviews of generational workforce needs.

3.1.8 YMCA

Tertiary sector. Non-profit association, in IPSS format

Large enterprise

PORTUGAL (Setúbal)

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Promote well-being and mental health,

Ensure greater flexibility in the organisation of work,

Support professional development and progression,

Strengthen a culture of cooperation, inclusion and recognition.

https://www.ymcasetubal.org/

The YMCA of Setúbal is an IPSS (Private Social Solidarity Institution) founded in 1975 and is part of the global YMCA movement (a member of UNESCO, UNICEF, and ECOSOC-UN).

Challenges or issues addressed

After the COVID-19 pandemic, YMCA was forced to adapt and reformulate some of its social responses and insertion practices. Teleworking, which until then had not existed in the organisation, had to be implemented quickly. At the same time, the growing concern for the well-being of employees - particularly with regard to mental health and work-life balance - brought new challenges, which required adjustments in social responses to ensure the continuity and quality of the services provided. Main challenges faced:

-Adaptation and rapid implementation of the teleworking regime,

-Increasing attention to the mental health and well-being of employees,

-Promotion of work-life balance,

-Need to restructure social responses to ensure continuity of services.

Objectives of the best practice: At the IPSS under study, the good practices adopted focus on valuing the well-being of employees and creating conditions that allow for a more balanced and flexible professional performance. The promotion of mental health, the reconciliation of personal and professional life and the support of career development are clearly assumed priorities. The organisational culture has been built on measures that promote collaboration

between teams, strengthen internal communication and recognise the individual contribution of each employee. Active participation in day-to-day decisions and involvement in continuous improvement initiatives are central elements of this approach, which privileges proximity and mutual respect.

Description

The pandemic has highlighted the need to rethink internal practices and has driven the adoption of new people-centred approaches. From that moment on, YMCA began to integrate and value a set of good practices that it considers fundamental for its operation:

-Promotion of professional well-being and work-life balance;

-Valuing work with purpose and reflecting on the non-material benefits associated with the function performed;

-Commitment to digital transformation, with the introduction of collaborative tools such as videoconferencing platforms;

-Strengthening skills through upskilling and reskilling actions, as part of a performance evaluation programme that identifies training needs and guides professional development paths.

Details are as follows:

1. **Job well-being:** Several policies have been implemented with the aim of promoting employee well-being, including flexible hours, a policy of no penalties for unpaid absences through the hour bank, and additional benefits such as discounts and access to services such as a gym and swimming pool,

2. **Upskilling and reskilling:** The performance evaluation programme allows the identification of training needs, giving rise to professional development actions aimed at improving skills (upskilling). In the case of requalification processes (reskilling), whenever new opportunities arise, priority is given to internal recruitment. This approach aims to strengthen employee motivation and offer the possibility of retraining to people who occupy less complex roles and lower levels of remuneration,

3. **Digital transformation:** Collaborative tools were adopted that facilitated remote work and strengthened internal communication, highlighting, among others, the use of platforms such as Zoom and video call systems,

4. **Decentralised HR management:** The definition of policies is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department, and the coordinators of each unit are responsible for their implementation, always under the guidance of that department. This model ensures that upskilling and reskilling initiatives are transversal to the entire organisation,

promoting the active participation of employees from different areas in their professional development.

Innovative aspects:

-Reskilling anticipation and planning: The organisation is committed to proactive reskilling management, seeking to communicate reskilling opportunities in a timely manner. This practice allows employees to prepare in time, acquiring new skills and adjusting more smoothly to any changes in function.

-Bank of hours as a conciliation instrument: A bank of hours system was implemented that avoids financial penalties associated with unpaid absences. This measure translates into greater autonomy for employees in managing their time, promoting a better balance between personal and professional responsibilities.

-Decentralised Human Resources Management: The execution of Human Resources policies is based on a decentralised approach, where the coordinators of each unit take an active role. This proximity facilitates the adaptation of measures to the concrete realities of each team, making management more agile, participatory and aligned with local needs.

Impact and results

Main benefits/improvements achieved:

-**Employee satisfaction:** Employee satisfaction is monitored through a KPI, integrated into the performance evaluation of unit managers and organisational performance. In the last three years, there has been a gradual improvement of about 20% among internal employees.

-Reduction in absenteeism: Absenteeism has seen a decrease in absences not justified for medical reasons, reflecting an increase in the level of employee satisfaction and commitment.

-Reduction of internal conflicts: After carrying out group cohesion activities, such as paintball, canoeing and internal competitions, in addition to solidarity initiatives and actions involving families, a significant reduction in small team conflicts was noticed, contributing to a more collaborative and harmonious environment.

Challenges faced and solutions adopted: The introduction of new practices generated initial resistance, mainly due to the lack of knowledge and distrust of the changes. A clear example of this was the implementation of teleworking after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many employees believed that all functions could be performed remotely, but, in practice, only the functions that allowed it were done in telework, while those that required physical presence in the organisation remained in the face-to-face model. To ensure that the process was fair and balanced, a structured approach was adopted, where the criteria for teleworking were clearly defined, aligning decisions with the operational needs of the organisation.

Feedback from employees and managers:

-Employees: They feel more satisfied and valued, which is reflected in greater motivation and lower absenteeism.

-Managers: Observe improvements in the organisational climate, in cooperation between teams and in the progressive acceptance of new practices.

Conclusions and next steps

Future evolution of the best practice

The organisation will have to adapt to the ongoing social and demographic changes, especially with regard to the provision of innovative social responses. The active and healthy aging of the population will require the implementation of more qualified and diversified services, which go beyond the traditional IPSS model. It will be imperative to create new forms of health care delivery, support for social inclusion and community support, which are aligned with the new expectations of a changing society. To ensure effective adaptation, robust strategic planning with well-defined human resource management policies is essential. It is crucial to develop new guidelines on career progression, talent retention, work-life balance, and salary policies. Learning from previous experiences and from professionals who have already gone through similar trajectories will be decisive to avoid abrupt changes, ensuring a smooth transition and consistent alignment between organisational objectives and people management.

CHAPTER 4

HR in transition

Strategies to innovate HR responsibilities and competences

4.1   What does it mean being an HR manager today? Evolution trends that are re-shaping the HR role within organisations

"HR is no longer just administrative: now they are fundamental allies that help build the trajectory of companies"

"The HR landscape is moving towards a more integrated, technology-enabled, and employee-centric model, requiring HR professionals to develop new competences to stay relevant"

In recent years, the role of the HR manager has undergone a profound transformation, evolving from a predominantly administrative function to a more strategic and multidimensional one. The rapid changes in the labour market (in particular the green and digital transition and demographic trends) are reshaping the work organisation and models in companies, the characteristics and availability of the workforce, and also the process of supply-demand matching and the mechanisms for recruiting workers and 'talent'. HR managers today are required to be 'drivers of change', 'promoters of well-being' and 'mediators of diversity', leading companies and labour force through the challenges of today and tomorrow.

- From administrative functions towards a more strategic human resources management: a new focus for HR

In the recent past, HR management was primarily focused on administrative tasks such as contract handling, payroll processing, and ensuring regulatory compliance. This emphasis is particularly evident in the formal systems used to classify and recognise professional competences at both national and regional levels, where these administrative functions and the related skillsets are among the most commonly acknowledged (see Section 1).

Today, the traditional approach to human resources management is being replaced with different timeframes depending on the territorial contexts analysed and the characteristics of the companies (mainly size and sector) by **a more innovative approach**. This recognises the HR manager's fundamental role in facilitating the relationship between companies and workers in a labour market undergoing rapid and constant change. The HR manager's scope of action and impact is therefore expanding from a purely bureaucratic and administrative sphere to a more operational and strategic one, actively contributing to the achievement of the objectives of

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companies and organisations, on the one hand, and to the development and 'protection' of human capital and talent, on the other. Indeed, the role of HR has become more people-centred, with the aim of creating a working environment that fosters employee well-being, commitment and, as a result, productivity.

- A facilitator of demand-supply matching processes, with a stronger focus on talent retention and attraction

One of the core and most defining responsibilities of the HR manager has traditionally been to **facilitate the positive matching of labour supply and demand**. In other words, the HR manager serves as a bridge between the organisation's needs and the job profiles available in the market, striving to identify the right individuals for specific roles while also providing employees with opportunities that align with their skills and aspirations.

However, demand-supply matching processes have changed profoundly over time, and so have the nature and responsibilities of HR practitioners. In the past, the matching process was pretty straightforward, following more simple and linear patterns: professional profiles and required skills were often standardised, and selection criteria were mainly based on qualifications, previous experiences and formal requirements. The career paths tended to be more stable, vertical and internal to the organisation. Today, things have become more complex. The labour market is fast-moving and competitive, many economic sectors are facing significant labour shortages (not only of high-skilled workers). In this new scenario, companies need to attract and keep the right people, **rethinking the mechanisms that regulate recruitment**.

The recruitment is no longer a one-way process, but a circular/mutual one, where the company chooses the best candidate, but the candidate also chooses the company that offers the best conditions. It is crucial for HR to consider this change of perspective, because attracting and retaining employees is becoming more and more embedded in recruitment strategies. This also means including in the selection process the evaluation of new elements such as **consistency of values, adaptability, motivation and growth potential**, rather than simply assessing candidates' technical skills.

In this perspective, the core activity of HR professionals (recruitment and selection) is enriched with new nuances: the traditional transactional approach - focused on filling vacancies based on

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technical qualifications - has been replaced by a more holistic and value-driven model. Recruitment today is not just about finding the 'right skills' or the 'right professional', but about identifying individuals whose values and mindset align with the organisation's culture and vision for the future. At the same time, HR managers are called upon to actively contribute **to building an organisational identity for the company that is attractive to employees, inclusive and sustainable**, capable of retaining people over the long term and proactively addressing structural imbalances in the labour market.

- *The (perceived) impact of the twin transition: more "digital" than "green"?*

The issue of the twin transition - the simultaneous digital and green transformation - is now widely recognised as one of the major challenges for the future of work and human resource management. The collected evidence reveals an unbalanced perception: while the digital component appears to be widely adopted and clearly visible, the **green component** remains only partially integrated and is often viewed as **secondary to technological innovation**.

Environmental sustainability is generally perceived as **a secondary outcome of digitalisation** – achieved, for instance, through process dematerialisation, the reduction of commuting thanks to remote work, or the adoption of more efficient technologies – rather than as a distinct and strategic area of intervention within the HR function.

Company size plays a crucial role in shaping both the perception and the practical implementation of the ecological transition. Larger organisations, due to their greater availability of resources and, in many cases, regulatory requirements or stakeholder pressure, tend to demonstrate a higher level of awareness and a stronger capacity to integrate environmental sustainability into their overall strategies, including those related to human resources. These organisations often allocate dedicated staff, adopt more structured and formalised sustainability policies, and promote initiatives that connect employee well-being with environmentally sustainable practices.

In contrast, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are more likely to view the green transition as a marginal or complementary issue, frequently subordinated to digital transformation. In such contexts, sustainability is typically associated with technological upgrades aimed at

enhancing operational efficiency, rather than with a broader cultural and organisational shift that actively engages the HR function.

Overall, the comparison between the two dimensions of the Twin Transition reveals a scenario in which digitalisation stands out as the main driver of short-term change, while "green" and "sustainability" emerges as a growing process, likely to become increasingly central in the medium to long term.

At the same time, and as an indirect effect of the twin transition on the HR role, there is a growing **need to upskill and reskill employees** so they can acquire – or adapt – the skills required to stay competitive in the labour market and bridge existing gaps. As a result, HR managers are increasingly expected to take on **knowledge management responsibilities** and to promote a **culture of continuous learning**. This requires not only the management of training plans, but also the ability to create flexible organisational contexts in which learning is integrated into daily work processes and supported by appropriate technologies.

- Technological progress and the centrality of the human factor: a delicate balance

The increasing use of technology in HR practices highlights the importance of **maintaining a focus on the human factor.** The operational efficiency enabled by digitalisation, while necessary, cannot replace the value of interpersonal relationships, listening skills and empathy. In order to preserve the human dimension of organisations, the HR manager today must **balance the use of technological tools with the care for individual and collective well-being.**

For instance, the integration of AI and automation in HR processes is expected to accelerate. AI-powered recruitment, predictive analytics for workforce planning, and automated performance management systems will become standard. However, HR professionals stress that technology must complement, not replace, human-centric HR functions.

This means that HR managers are required to constantly keep an eye open on how technology is affecting work, including how it affects organisational models and jobs, what new training is needed by the staff to keep up with innovation, whether people feel included or not, etc. The challenge is to make improvements without "leaving nobody behind", ensuring that digital tools

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serve as enablers – not obstacles – for creating motivating, equitable, and sustainable work environments.

HR should act as a mediator between innovation and people, playing a key role in steering technological change while preserving the value of relations, participation, and organisational well-being.

- Beyond Diversity & Inclusion Management: towards "Complexity" Management

In recent years, many organisations have made significant **progress in managing diversity and inclusion,** implementing policies designed to promote equality and recognise differences related to gender, age, cultural background, and personal circumstances. However, in an increasingly dynamic and complex environment, these efforts – though essential – **no longer appear sufficient to fully address the multifaceted challenges facing today's organisational contexts**.

Work teams seem to be increasingly heterogeneous, not only in terms of socio-anagraphic characteristics, but also because of the different cultural backgrounds, personal conditions, expectations and values. People attribute different meanings to work: for some, it represents "personal fulfilment", for others, a source of "stability"; and for others it is "a part of their life to be harmoniously integrated with their private sphere". This diversity of perspectives gives rise to a wide range of needs and behaviours that can no longer be effectively addressed through standardised approaches.

For HR managers, this means **moving forward from standard categories** (which often reduce diversity to separate silos which do not interact with each other) and adopting a broader and dynamic approach that takes into account the uniqueness of each employee.

- Traditional hard skills "in transition" due to digitalisation

Digitalisation is profoundly transforming the traditional skillset considered core to the HR profession – such as personnel administration, payroll and accounting management, regulatory compliance, and contract handling. Increasingly advanced digital tools – like integrated Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), automated payroll platforms, cloud-based document

management systems, and e-compliance applications – are reshaping the way these activities are performed, in terms of both content and timing.

This is not merely a technological substitution, but a functional transition that requires new abilities: configuring and managing complex digital systems, interpreting data generated by automated processes, monitoring legal compliance in real time, and actively contributing to the optimisation of workflows. Traditional HR hard skills are not disappearing – they are evolving: from manual handling to digital supervision, from legal knowledge to the ability to embed it in intelligent systems, from basic execution to the design and improvement of HR processes.

In this context, mastering digital tools is no longer a plus, it is rather a necessary condition to ensure efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in modern HR management.

4.2 Innovative competences and skills for the HR managers "of the future"

Building on the reflections outlined above regarding the evolving directions of the HR profession, a set of **innovative competences and skills** has been identified as increasingly relevant in addressing emerging challenges. These competences have been grouped into **five key clusters**, each capturing a critical area of action for HR managers:

1. Change management
2. Labour supply&demand matching
3. Knowledge management
4. Complexity management
5. Digital evolution of traditional HR hard skills

In the following sections, each competency will be examined in detail, with particular attention to how it is expressed in different organisational contexts and how it can be applied in practice. This stage of the research is essential for identifying training needs that will inform the next phase of the project, which focuses on the design and implementation of pilot training programmes in the territorial contexts involved. The ultimate objective is to equip HR professionals with the most innovative and future-oriented skills required to operate effectively in today's evolving labour market.

4.2.1 Change management as a cross-cutting competence

"As organisations undergo rapid transformations, HR must guide teams through change, ensuring smooth transitions and minimising resistance"

"HR professionals must be effective communicators, capable of conveying complex policies in an engaging way"

Change management is a transversal competence with a strong technical dimension and is increasingly recognised as one of the most strategic core skills for today's HR professionals. It involves a range of soft skills applied in both technical and organisational contexts. Although already codified in several competency frameworks and repertoires for various managerial roles, it is still not consistently or explicitly associated with the HR domain.

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The analysis carried out highlights that change is no longer an exceptional occurrence in our societies and labour market, but rather **a constant and ongoing condition**. In this context, change management emerges as **a cross-cutting competence, essential to the effective application of all the others.** It enables HR professionals to embody and promote a **proactive attitude toward innovation** – an approach that is critical to guiding both organisations and workers through multiple, overlapping transformations. In today's scenario of rapid transitions – ranging from digitalisation and environmental sustainability to regulatory shifts, demographic changes, and evolving organisational models – this competence stands out as a strategic lever for the HR manager.

Today, the HR Manager is expected to **lead both people and the organisation through change** – anticipating it when possible, navigating it with awareness and expertise, and mitigating its potential negative effects, such as resistance, stress, cultural misalignment, or loss of motivation.

Essential skills and practical applications

- **Systemic understanding of change**

The **ability to interpret change as a complex phenomenon** that affects people, processes, culture, and both internal and external relationships.

→ Maintain up-to-date knowledge of labour market dynamics, global trends, and their implications for the local economic context.

→ Identify and map organisational areas potentially impacted by emerging transformations (e.g., the twin transition).

→ Conduct ex-ante assessments of how transformations may affect roles and required competences.

→ Integrate external drivers – such as new environmental regulations or advancements in artificial intelligence – into HR strategies and management practices.

- **Guiding transitions and addressing internal barriers to change**

The ability to identify signals of resistance – whether explicit or implicit – and respond constructively, fostering both adaptation and motivation.

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→ Identify teams or functions that are likely to show the highest resistance to change (e.g., senior staff or long-established departments), and actively engage them as key stakeholders in the transformation process.

→ Organise facilitated and participatory sessions that provide space for expressing concerns, challenges, ideas and proposals. Involving employees in decision-making and in shaping company development strategies strengthens their sense of belonging, trust and motivation, making it a strategic lever for employee retention.

→ Provide tailored support through coaching, mentoring or shadowing – especially for those struggling most with the transition. Develop specific onboarding paths for newly defined roles or functions.

→ Emotional intelligence to address cultural and behavioural barriers to change and to build trust.

- **Monitoring, adapting and consolidating change**

The ability to regularly monitor how an organisational change is progressing, by spotting any problems, areas for improvement, or early signs of resistance among employees. This skill includes making timely adjustments when needed and turning successful changes into stable practices, behaviours, and processes within the organisation.

→ Ability to monitor reactions to change using both qualitative tools (individual interviews, focus groups, observation) and quantitative tools (surveys, HR indicators).

→ Facilitate continuous feedback practices and mutual learning within teams.

→ Define specific KPIs to assess the effectiveness of the change process (e.g., change in employee engagement rate or retention rate, post-change productivity).

→ Collect lessons learned and best practices from each change initiative, integrating them into internal regulations, procedures, and evaluation systems.

- ***Assertiveness* as a key communication skill**

Assertiveness is the ability to express ideas, opinions, needs, and decisions clearly, directly, and respectfully, without being aggressive or passive, balancing firmness with empathy. It is a key skill in ever-changing contexts, when it is important to stay focused, communicate effectively, and handle conflict or resistance in a constructive way. An assertive HR manager knows how to take a stand when needed, without being overbearing, and is able to listen to others while maintaining their own authority.

→ Strategic communication skills: the ability to clearly explain the reasons behind a change, using consistent and engaging messages that help people understand its purpose and feel motivated to support it.

→ Ability to manage conflicts and aptitude to problem solving, identifying solutions through open and participatory discussions

→ Ability to express constructive feedback and evaluations

→ Self-control and stress management.

4.2.2 Labour supply and demand matching

It is widely recognised that one of the core responsibilities of the HR manager has traditionally been to **facilitate the positive matching of labour supply and demand**. Desk research shows that this competence is already well-defined and formally structured in the various frameworks analysed. However, the processes that match labour supply and demand have changed significantly in recent years. They are now shaped by new mechanisms and influenced by factors that, until recently, were not considered central. As a result, the role and responsibilities of HR professionals in this area have also evolved. It is therefore necessary to update and expand HR tasks related to labour market matching, taking into account this new context.

In the past, the matching process was pretty straightforward and mainly aimed at "filling a vacancy": professional profiles and required skills used to be standardised, and selection criteria were mainly based on qualifications and formal requirements. Today, things have become more complex: the labour market is fast-moving and competitive, and companies need to attract and keep the right people. This means that the recruitment is no longer a one-way process, but a circular one, where the company chooses the best candidate, but – at the same time – the candidate chooses the company that offers the best conditions. It is crucial for HR to consider this change of perspective, because **attracting and retaining employees is becoming more and more embedded in recruitment strategies.**

Essential skills and practical applications

- **Strategic workforce planning**

Ability to anticipate future skill needs and proactively plan workforce development, aligning it with company goals and changes in economy and labour market conditions.

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→ Data analysis on labour market trends using a 'glocal' approach (combining global and local perspectives);

→ Use predictive analysis to identify the professional roles and skills that will be needed in the next 3–5 years, based on business development plans and labour market changes;

→ Assess the risk of skill shortages, especially in sectors most affected by the green and digital transitions;

→ Monitor data on employee turnover, work environment, and engagement levels;

- ***Talent* intelligence & retention analytics**

According to the survey results, labour shortage is seen as the biggest challenge that local labour markets are currently facing, and it is expected to become even more serious in the coming years. In light of this, the concept of "talent" needs to be redefined, along with the way talent attraction strategies are designed and implemented. Companies' labour force needs are no longer limited to highly qualified profiles in fast-growing sectors. Today, the demand also includes a wide range of roles (both medium- and low-skilled workers) even in more traditional sectors of local economies. For HR professionals, this means it is essential to understand the available labour force: who is available, what their skills are, and what kind of work they are looking for. This knowledge is key to creating attraction and retention strategies that are realistic and aligned with both the expectations of potential employees and the needs of companies. Talent intelligence refers to the ability to gather and interpret useful data on how the local workforce is changing – including underrepresented or hard-to-reach groups – in order to design more effective attraction and loyalty strategies.

→ Analysis of the composition and availability of the local workforce (e.g., age, background, education levels), as well as of the factors – beyond skill mismatches – that can contribute to demand–supply imbalances in the labour market (such as geographical mismatch, salary mismatch, sourcing mismatch, etc.).

→ Segmenting candidates based on their growing potential, motivations, career goals, etc. and tailoring recruitment strategies accordingly;

→ Designing accessible and inclusive recruitment processes that also consider candidates with vulnerabilities, irregular work histories, or non-standard profiles;

→ Ability to co-design career development plans and tailor job roles to individual needs, in order to support long-term motivation and sustainability, even in low-skilled roles;

→ Developing a clear, authentic, and distinctive Employee Value Proposition (EVP) to attract and retain a diverse range of workers;

→ Analyse turnover and employee satisfaction to develop retention strategies that target all workers, regardless of their level or role. This includes identifying reasons for leaving, monitoring early signs of disengagement or discomfort, and offering personalised incentives to retain key or hard-to-replace profiles.

- **<u>Skill-based matching</u>**

Ability to identify formal and informal skills and use them as a basis for matching workers with vacant positions, overcoming barriers related to qualifications, fragmented experience or atypical career paths.

→ Recognition and validation of skills acquired in informal or non-traditional contexts (e.g., undeclared work, migration experiences, caregiving, etc.);

→ Matching skills with job vacancies through digital platforms or job profiling tools;

→ Designing onboarding strategies based on skill gaps and growth potential of candidates;

→ Knowledge and use of AI-powered recruitment tools to speed up screening and selection processes.

- **<u>Networking and management of external relationships</u>**

Ability to build, activate, and manage strategic relationships with external stakeholders—such as training providers, employment agencies, public institutions, local businesses, universities, and professional networks. Managing external relations is a key competence that supports labour supply and demand matching, as it helps establish privileged recruitment channels for workers and talents. It is also relevant to other HR functions, such as employee training, and is closely linked to the area of knowledge management.

→ Stakeholder mapping and engagement; creation of stakeholder matrices to manage relationships

→ Co-design of training programmes with external providers.

→ Implementation of pilot projects in collaboration with other HR managers or local companies.

→ Benchmarking activities between companies on innovative HR practices.

→ Co-creation of school-to-work transition pathways.

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4.2.3 Knowledge management

"Continuous training is truly and genuinely vital"

"Future HR management will emphasise upskilling and reskilling initiatives to bridge skill gaps"

"Advanced technologies are transforming business processes and the required skills. HR managers must lead workforce upskilling and reskilling efforts, promoting continuous learning to ensure long-term employability"

Today, people's knowledge and skills are just as important as their work. That's why managing knowledge in an organised way has become an important advantage for companies. As mentioned earlier, knowledge management (KM) in a company or organisation refers to **the set of processes, practices, and tools used to create, collect, organise, share, and make the most of internal knowledge,** with the goal of improving efficiency, innovation, and overall competitiveness.

In today's labour market, shaped by:

- **Digital transition** – automation, artificial intelligence, remote work;

- **Green transition** – new processes, emerging professional profiles, new skills required, organisational change;

- **Generational turnover** – a large number of senior workers leaving, taking critical know-how with them;

- **A fluid and fragmented job market** – high mobility and irregular career paths;

- **The growing importance of continuous learning** – reskilling, upskilling, informal learning.

...effective knowledge management has become a key competitive asset for companies. It means creating systems where knowledge is shared, updated and capitalised – with HR managers playing an active role in making this happen.

For HR professionals, knowledge management is strategic for several reasons:

- **Preserving and transferring know-how**. In a labour market characterised by high turnover, retirements, and generational shifts, HR is responsible for ensuring that critical

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skills and expertise are not lost. Knowledge management makes it possible to transfer knowledge from those leaving the organisation to those just entering, ensuring operational continuity.

- **Develop an organisational culture based on life-long-learning.** In a rapidly changing market, where professional careers are more "fluid/flexible/mobile" and people's career trajectories are no longer as linear as they used to be, HR has a key role in promoting and disseminating a life-long-learning mindset among both employees and employers.

- **Strengthen training and development pathways,** through reskilling and upskilling, with a focus on strategic skills for the labour market.

- **Attracting and retaining workers.** Investing in employee training is an important lever in employee attraction and retention strategies, especially in those sectors (often knowledge-intensive sectors) where labour shortages due to skill mismatch are most common.

Essential skills and practical applications

- <u>**Knowledge mapping & competence gap analysis**</u>

The ability to map internal knowledge (both implicit and explicit), identify skill gaps in relation to organisational and technological changes, and determine the professional needs of the company and its employees. Traditionally, this competence has been associated with the HR department, as highlighted by desk research. However, it is becoming increasingly strategic.

→ Expertise in skill forecasting tools to anticipate labour market trends and workforce needs

→ Identification of skill gaps and emerging job profiles to align workforce development with organisational goals

→ Valuing all workers, regardless of their profile or background, as a valuable source of knowledge**.**

- <u>**Managing upskilling and reskilling processes**</u>

Ability to design structured programmes aimed at upgrading or adapting workers' skills to evolving needs. This competence also includes the ability to assess the impact of upskilling and reskilling initiatives on both employees and the organisation as a whole.

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→ Knowledge of the local labour market and its dynamics, to support context analysis to align training objectives not only with company needs but also with the labour market needs;

→ Ability in designing and implementing innovative teaching methods (e.g. gamification, AI-driven learning, role play, etc.);

→ Designing tailored training programmes for workers whose skills are becoming outdated, and for helping employees move from shrinking sectors into growing job roles;

→ Encouraging mentorship programmes and peer-learning initiatives to promote internal knowledge transfer.

- **Management of continuous learning environments, supported by digital tools**

Creating organisational environments and practices that encourage knowledge sharing, regular updates, and continuous experimentation—supported by digital platforms and tools that make learning and training more accessible and widespread.

→ Organisation of in-house academies.

→ Integrating informal learning into everyday work practices

→ Developing microlearning modules and on-demand training content that are accessible to all employees

→ Creating digital repositories to share resources, case studies, and practical business insights.

4.2.4 Complexity management & inclusion

In corporate contexts, complexity management and inclusion refers to a **set of strategies, practices, and attitudes aimed at valuing the differences among individuals within an organisation** (including age, gender, ethnicity, culture, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, family status, values, expectations, etc.) **and at creating a fair, inclusive, and productive work environment for all**. Today's companies are increasingly multicultural, multigenerational, and characterised by hybrid and flexible work arrangements. It is therefore essential for HR professionals to interpret and manage this complexity in order to prevent conflict, discrimination, or exclusion. In recent years, many organisations have made significant progress in the field of Diversity Management. However, it now seems more appropriate to refer to the concept of "diversity" in broader terms – as "complexity". As previously mentioned, for HR managers, this means moving forward from a siloed, category-based approach (which often

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reduces diversity to isolated compartments that do not interact with each other) and adopting a broader and more dynamic perspective.

Just like Knowledge Management, Complexity Management is also a strategic priority for HR professionals—for several reasons that go beyond simply responding to the structural changes in organisations and in the composition of the labour force:

- **It promotes well-being and retention.** People feel more motivated, engaged, and loyal when they work in environments that recognise their uniqueness and value each individual's contribution. Inclusion has a direct impact on job satisfaction and helps reduce employee turnover.
- **It enhances employer attractiveness (employer branding).** Younger generations, in particular, seek workplaces that are inclusive and sensitive to diversity. D&I (Diversity and Inclusion) policies have become a key factor in the competition for talent.
- **It meets regulatory requirements and social expectations.** More and more, companies are expected to report on their progress in inclusion and equal opportunity as part of their ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance).

Essential skills and practical applications

- *Relational* **sensitivity and intelligence**

This transversal skill refers to the ability to interpret relationships among people, roles, contexts, and processes from a systemic perspective—identifying points of interdependence, influence, and tension. It is a key competence for HR managers in their role as facilitators of relationships and complex human environments. This skill also involves the ability to adapt different leadership styles based on the context and the individuals involved, as well as strong communication skills, with particular emphasis on active listening to better understand a wide spectrum of needs and to implement targeted and personalised measures.

→ Identifying (or anticipating) signs of discomfort or feelings of exclusion within teams;

→ Preventing and addressing unconscious cognitive biases that may lead to prejudice against certain groups of workers;

→ Mediation and conflict resolution skills to handle diverse team dynamics and workplace disputes;

→ Mapping informal networks and organisational dynamics.

- **Designing inclusive systems in complex and hybrid contexts**

Developing HR practices that can embrace and enhance the complexity of individuals, while avoiding generalisations or standard solutions.

→ Designing flexible and personalised training, evaluation, and career development pathways. Ability to customise career paths based on individual needs, ensuring employees from different backgrounds have equal opportunities for professional growth;

→ Designing and adapting welfare measures and work-life balance solutions to employers' needs (e.g. family responsibilities, personal conditions, situations of vulnerability, etc.);

→ Implementing bias-free hiring practices, by identifying critical aspects in the selection process that may cause the preventive exclusion of certain candidates (CV screening methods or biased language in job descriptions).

- **Promotion of employee well-being**

"We can no longer think of well-being as a perk. It's a sign of an organisation's cultural maturity."

"We can no longer think of well-being as a perk. It's a sign of an organisation's cultural maturity."

One dimension that emerged as particularly important from the research carried out by the project partners across different territorial contexts – both through surveys and interviews – is the promotion of employee well-being. Traditionally linked to material benefits or health and safety initiatives, well-being is now increasingly recognised as a **multidimensional and subjective** concept. As such, it cannot be addressed using linear or standardised tools. It changes over time, varies between individuals and groups, and depends on a wide range of relational, cultural, and value-based factors. For this reason, promoting employee well-being is seen as an integral part of **complexity management**, while also serving – alongside training – as a **strategic lever for attracting and retaining workers and talent**.

According to the findings from the investigation, the concept of **"promoting well-being"** today primarily refers to the following areas:

→ Encouraging practices that improve work-life balance and work flexibility, such as flexible hours and remote working arrangements.

→ Supporting employees' mental health, through initiatives like psychological counseling, stress and burnout prevention programmes, and mental well-being resources.

→ organising initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and internal cohesion, including team-building activities, informal sharing moments, listening and dialogue networks, mentoring, or peer support programmes. When well-designed, these practices not only promote individual well-being but also help build a more inclusive, empathetic, and sustainable organisational culture.

→ Integrating ESG values into HR strategies, by engaging employees in sustainability-related initiatives. This not only boosts employee engagement but also reinforces the company's commitments to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

4.2.5   Digital evolution of traditional HR hard skills

The digital transition is not only affecting organisational structures and work models, but is also reshaping the foundational technical competences of the HR profession – what are often referred to as traditional hard skills. Functions such as HR administration, payroll and accounting management, labor law compliance, document handling, and reporting have historically constituted the backbone of HR activities. However, these responsibilities are now undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the integration of digital tools, platforms, and systems.

What used to be manual and paper-based tasks have been progressively replaced – or deeply reconfigured – by advanced digital solutions (HRIS, payroll automation, electronic signature systems, e-compliance tools, etc.). This transformation requires HR professionals to rethink their technical skillset: no longer limited to knowledge of procedures and regulations, but extended to include digital fluency, data interpretation, and process optimisation through technology.

Digital transformation is not eliminating traditional HR tasks, it is reshaping how they are performed, who performs them, and what value they bring to the organisation. Mastering this transition is essential for HR professionals aiming to remain relevant and effective in their role.

Essential skills and practical applications

- **Digital process governance**

This skill refers to the ability to manage and supervise digital workflows, ensuring their proper configuration, reliability, and integration within the broader HR system. It combines operational knowledge of digital tools with a systemic understanding of organisational processes.

→ Configuring and using HR software for managing HR information (employee records, attendance, benefits, payroll, etc.);

→ Monitoring data integrity and process flows in digital systems;

→ Ensuring interoperability among platforms (e.g. linking HR databases with accounting or legal systems);

→ To support virtual work environments through technology (remote work, hybrid work models);

→ Managing updates, data migrations, and user support within HR digital environments.

- **Legal-tech integration and compliance automation**

Regulatory compliance remains a core HR responsibility, but is increasingly achieved through digital means. This competence involves the ability to translate legal and contractual knowledge into automated workflows and digital checks.

→ To implement cybersecurity measures and strategies to protect personal data and business information from cyber threats;

→ To implement privacy and data protection regulations; ensuring data quality and protecting employee privacy in accordance with GDPR and other regulations;

→ Embedding labor law parameters directly into HR platforms (e.g. national collective agreements, working time limits, leave entitlements);

→ Coordinating with legal departments and IT teams to maintain up-to-date and compliant systems.

- **Data-informed decision making**

Modern HR administration generates and relies on a growing amount of data. HR professionals must therefore develop data literacy and analytical thinking in order to draw value from available information.

→ Interpreting dashboards and KPIs related to HR operations (e.g. turnover, absenteeism, payroll costs);

→ Using analytics to support strategic decisions (e.g. workforce planning, skill forecasting).

CHAPTER 5

HR+ Skill Matrix

5.1   HR+ Skill Matrix: the conceptual framework

The **Skill Matrix** is a tool widely used within companies to represent and analyse employee competencies in relation to business roles and activities. It enables the identification of strengths and weaknesses, supporting training planning, resource allocation, and talent management based on the tasks and expected skills associated with different organizational roles.

Its main area of application is in competency mapping and assessment activities, as well as in defining development and career plans for individuals or homogeneous work groups. We therefore decided to draw inspiration from this conceptual model to summarize the findings of the transnational research, making the output more accessible for the subsequent HR+ phase and for the dissemination of project results.

Alongside the Skill Matrix model, we adopted the concept of **Hybrid Jobs** from organizational research. This approach allowed us to categorize the identified competencies according to their primary domain (hard skills, soft skills, digital skills, green skills), also in line with the **European Skills Agenda**. This provided an additional lens through which to interpret the data collected in the field.

The four skill families used are:

1. **Hard Skills**: These set of skills are technical and job-specific, directly related to work activities. They are usually acquired through education, training, or work experience and are easily measurable and verifiable. They include practical abilities linked to specific professional tasks or knowledge, often formally listed in professional frameworks and job classification systems.
2. **Soft Skills**: These set of skills refer to personal, interpersonal, and behavioural competencies that influence how individuals interact with each other, approach their work, and handle various situations. Unlike hard skills, they are not tied to specific technical knowledge but involve communication, teamwork, time management, leadership, adaptability, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Although harder to measure, they are increasingly recognised as essential for professional success, especially in dynamic and collaborative environments. Soft skills are transferable across sectors and roles and often make the difference in one's ability to adapt, grow, and contribute effectively within an organisation.
3. **Digital Skills**: These encompass the knowledge and abilities required to effectively use digital technologies, IT tools, and online resources. They range from basic skills—such as using a computer, browsing the internet, managing email, or using productivity applications—to advanced competencies like working with specialized software, data management, programming, cybersecurity, digital marketing, or big data analytics. Digital skills are increasingly vital in all sectors and are key for adapting to technological change, ensuring business competitiveness, and supporting individual employability. The **DIGCOMP** (European Digital Competence Framework) provides a useful reference for identifying emerging digital competencies, including for HR managers.

4. **Green Skills**: These set of skills involve the necessary knowledge, abilities, and attitudes to contribute to environmental sustainability in the workplace and support the ecological transition of the economy. They include adopting practices, technologies, and processes that reduce environmental impact, promote energy efficiency, resource management, circular economy, and climate change mitigation. Green skills may be technical—such as those related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, or waste management—or transversal, including environmental awareness, systems thinking, sustainable innovation, and the ability to integrate ecological criteria into business decisions. As sustainability becomes a strategic priority for companies, institutions, and society at large, green skills are increasingly in demand across all sectors and thus deserve recognition as a distinct category.

In real organisational settings, job roles typically require a unique mix of the four competency categories defined by the Hybrid Jobs model, offering a more nuanced analytical tool to capture the complexity of real-life training needs.

To better contextualise our analysis of emerging skills and HR manager needs, we also incorporated the **Employee Life Cycle** model. This framework helps focus attention on the relationship between the individual employee and the organisation throughout the entire employment journey. It consists of seven key phases:

1. **Attracting candidates**: Activities and policies aimed at attracting talent by promoting a positive employer brand.
2. **Hiring employees**: Includes defining recruitment methods, managing the selection process, analysing applications, and structuring interviews.
3. **Integrating employees**: Encompasses onboarding and other integration policies, including return-to-work programmes following absences.
4. **Developing employees**: Refers to training and development initiatives targeting both employees and managers.
5. **Assessing performance**: The organisation's approach to evaluating and measuring employee performance.
6. **Managing compensation and promotion**: Procedures for handling promotions and employee compensation.
7. **Retaining good performers vs. voluntary exits**: Feedback mechanisms to understand why employees leave (voluntarily or due to retirement), and strategies to retain top talent.

Linking these Employee Life Cycle phases with the competencies identified in the field allows for a deeper understanding of HR manager needs and how competencies and related descriptors translate into observed behaviors and expected performance outcomes.

Finally, we connected the identified competencies with the major trends currently reshaping the role of HR managers—trends that present new professional challenges. These include the **twin transition**, demographic shifts, and the redefinition of migration policies. Such trends raise critical issues for those managing human and cognitive capital within organisations. These include (but are not limited to):

1. **Negative demographic trends**: Changing generational mix in the workforce, intergenerational cooperation, varying leadership styles and needs, inclusion of marginalised groups (e.g., women, senior workers, migrants, low-skilled personnel), and overall talent shortages.
2. **Cultural and societal value shifts**: Emergence of new needs, reassessment of the traditional social contract, greater emphasis on work-life balance and personal well-being, and workforce volatility.
3. **Automation**: Integration and replacement of staff in both manual and intellectual tasks, with a need to update skills and organisational practices through technological investment.
4. **Mismatch between labour supply and demand**: Rising competition in local labour markets, need for multi-stakeholder approaches to labour policy, and decline of traditional workforce planning models.
5. **Lack of effective migrant integration programmes**: Redefining migration flow policies, addressing basic integration needs (e.g., housing and employment), and investing in vocational, linguistic, and civic education for potential employees.
6. **Climate change adaptation**: Implementing personnel policies to support environmental sustainability goals, making eco-responsible decisions across departments, and raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices.
7. **AI adoption**: Utilising AI tools for routine tasks, developing new services based on AI, and updating competencies and business practices accordingly.
8. **Inadequate training offer for upskilling and reskilling**: Positioning companies as learning organisations, implementing formal knowledge management processes, promoting work-based learning, and aligning training investments with labour market dynamics.
9. **Global economic uncertainty**: Enhancing organisational resilience and aligning personnel policies with geopolitical, economic, and technological uncertainties.
10. **Adapting to the Twin Transition**: Redefining competencies, processes, and activities to leverage the competitive potential of digital technologies and ESG-driven business model transformation, supporting compliance with the **CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive)**.

The **HR+ Skill Matrix** summarises the evidence gathered and organises it around **five strategic areas** to takle emerging challenges. It outlines **ten key competencies -** categorised using the Hybrid Jobs framework - that HR managers should master. Additionally, the matrix highlights in which phases of the Employee Life Cycle each key competency is most relevant.

Drawing on national and regional research, a synthetic **relevance indicator** is provided for each of the 10 key competencies. This indicator is rated from 1 (not relevant) to 5 (essential), enabling a comparative analysis of the full competency set upon which the partnership bases the design of the innovative CV.

The complete HR+ Skill Matrix and its regional adaptations for Veneto (IT), Emilia-Romagna (IT), Budapest area (HU), Galicia (ES), Norte (PT), France, and Brussels (BE) is presented below.

HR+ GENERAL SKILL MATRIX							Territorial relevance (1-5)						
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Detected competencies/examples	Type of competency (hybrid jobs model)	Main fields of application for HR manager (employee journey model)	Italy - Veneto	Italy - Emilia Romagna	Portugal - Norte	Spain - Galicia	Hungay - Centre	France	Belgium
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artifcial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	To implement cybersecurity measures and strategies to protect personal data and business information from cyber threats	Digital skills	a. attracting candidates c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees e. assessing performance f. managing compensation, promotion g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
				To implement privacy and data protection regulations	Digital skills								
				To use office automation tools and data analytics	Digital skills								
				To manage digital systems and platforms/tools (i.e. LinkedIn Recruiter, SAP SuccessFactors, and Power BI for HR intelligence, etc)	Digital skills								
				To use integrated software systems for managing HR information (employee records, attendance, benefits, career paths, etc.)	Digital skills								
				To make on-boarding digital, ensuring an effective onboarding process	Digital skills								
				To integrate technology and green practices into HR operations	Green skills								
				To use digital tools for remote work management	Green skills								

				To maintain and control the updated personnel file in documentary and/or computerised form, in order to facilitate the flow of information throughout the company, in accordance with the regulations and internal organisation	Hard skills	b. hiring employees d. developing employees e. assessing performance f. managing compensation, promotion g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	3	4	5	3	4	4	5
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations	To perform administrative support to the tasks of selection, training and development of human resources	Hard skills								
				To manage the information and filing systems in conventional and computerised support	Hard skills								
				To handle office applications in information and documentation management	Hard skills								
				To comply with labour laws and regulations	Hard skills								
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	To detect professional needs: job profiles, competences and skills to be trained connected to the organision development (strategic workforce planning)	Hard skills	a. attracting candidates b. hiring employees f. managing compensation, promotion	4	4	4	5	5	4	4
				To use forecasting tools on skills/labour market, included big data	Hard skills								
				To manage local labour market and its dynamics/transformations	Hard skills								
				To be updated on macro-trends/transformations (international, national, local) affecting the labour market	Hard skills								
			To attract, recruit and select talents	To optimise recruitment process, streamlining the application and hiring process using softwares such as ATS	Digital skills	a. attracting candidates b. hiring employees	5	5	5	4	5	5	5

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	to upskill and reskill labour force			(Applicant Tracking System), chatbots and AI-drriven solutions		c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees f. managing compensation, promotion							
				To use talent intelligence & retention analytics	Hard skills								
				To match organisation skills demand/staff competencies	Hard skills								
				To network and manage external relationships	Hard skills								
				To contribute to local initiatives and projects to attract talents	Soft skills								
			To manage digital communication processes	To develop employer branding through digital channels to attract talent	Digital skills	a. attracting candidates	4	4	3	5	4	3	3
				To implement digital recruitment strategies (e-recruitment platforms, social media recruiting)	Digital skills								
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	To map competencies needs and analyse gaps according with organisation development and innovation processes	Hard skills	a. attracting candidates c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	4	4	5	5	5	4	4
				To design and manage training with innovative teaching methods (e.g., gamification, in-house academies, etc.)	Hard skills								
				To analyse employees' digital and green skills, to identify gaps and plan retraining and skills development programmes (reskilling and upskillng)	Hard skills								
				To design training courses to improve employees' environmental awareness and green skills	Green skills								
				To manage continuous learning environments, with the support of digital tools, included e-learning platforms	Digital skills								

			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	To implement and respect environmental policies and regulations on sustainability and pursue ESG goals for the organisation	Green skills	a. attracting candidates g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	3	4	4	2	3	2	3
				To design/implement welfare plans/company benefits systems that incorporate sustainability and CSR principles	Green skills								
				To raise awareness on climate change and participation: engaging employees with HR-sponsored volunteer, communication and learning programmes to raise awareness	Green skills								
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	**Complexity management and inclusion**	**To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation**	To design and manage welfare policies and job innovation, adapting measures and work-life balance solutions to employers' needs	Hard skills	a. attracting candidates c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
				To use digital collaboration tools (Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom, etc.).	Digital skills								
				To implement bias-free HR practices identifying critical aspects that may exclude certain workers	Hard skills								
				To simplify workflows by automating business processes related to human resources, reducing the use of paper-based tools and facilitating the use of dedicated work management software.	Digital skills								
				To provide training and support to employees, helping them understand how to use organisation's softwares and	Hard skills								

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				platforms, and benefit from available training programmes										
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	To customise career paths and development	Hard skills	b. hiring employees c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees f. managing compensation, promotion g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	5	4	4	4	5	4	4
				To design inclusive organisations in complex and hybrid contexts adapting diversity management to uniqueness of people	Hard skills								
				To promote employee well-being	Hard skills								
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	To listen actively and understand individual needs with relational sensitivity and intelligence	Soft skills	a. attracting candidates b. hiring employees c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	3	3	3	4	5	3	3
				To facilitate, mediate and resolute conflicts	Soft skills								
				To anticipate ongoing changes and support transition	Soft skills								
				Assertiveness	Soft skills								
				Foreign languages and culture understanding	Soft skills								
				To prevent and address unconscious cognitive biases that may lead to prejudice against certain groups of workers	Soft skills								
				To communicate	Soft skills								
				Mentorship skills	Hard skills								

To use team-building techniques			Hard skills							

HR+ SKILL MATRIX VENETO (IT)				Territorial relevance (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Italy - Veneto	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	**To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering**	**To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting**	4	The impact of digital tools on HR managers day by day tasks is growing in the last two years, due to the market availabilty of innovative suites from new providers and the new features in the traditional platform already adopted by organisations (i.e. SAP, Zucchetti etc). At this stage HR managers are using this tools to enhance their productivity automating routinary tasks and activities, fostering their hard and technical skills thanks to innovative digital skills; on the other side they're starting to be more confident with data management for reporting and decision making purposes.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration		**To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations**	3	Despite the demand for innovative competencies for organisational transition, HR managers are still often deeply rooted in staff administration tasks. The related hard skills are cross-cutting administrative, legal and fiscal fields and are usually developed with traditional courses and training paths both from school, university and VET system.

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	of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force				
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	**To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market**	**To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation**	4	In the recent years uncertain scenario, it's quite difficult to clearly plan skills needs for the company, but it's important for HR manager to be aware or involved in the decision making process for the organisation, in order to align the staff strategies with the investments and market strategies.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Attracting talents is the first issue in Veneto Region in HR fields. Starting from 2021, companies have hired several professionals (mostly psychologists, human and social sciences specialists) to start new activities on this topic. Ongoing experiences have focused up to now on employer branding and selection/hiring process and can greatly benefit from the adoption of the employee journey model.
			To manage digital communication processes	4	This is one of the main field of activity for HR managers to face the people shortage, mostly based on social networks, digital platform and online communication. There's a risk about effectiveness of this activities if they're not embedded in a general strategy for the company needs.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour	**To manage and develop knowledge and skills in**	**To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how**	4	Upskilling and reskilling are essential to retain talent and address labour market mismatches. In Veneto the company is the main field of learning for hard, soft and digital skills (work-based learning) and the knowledge management strategies is becoming one of the central issues for HR managers.

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	supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	the organisation			
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviors and practices among employees	3	The expected green shift is based also on the change of people behaviours, being more aware of the impact of their actions on the environment. HR managers are being progressivly involved in designing and implementing sensitisations campaigns as well as in provide solutions eco-friendly to the staff.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	This key competence is related to the ability of HR managers to positively contribute to the innovation of the organisational model of their company, in order to better match emerging needs from the staff. Digital tools and platforms can be used to provide solutions as remote working, timetable flexibility, calibrate and monitor tasks and goals potentially for each employees, without losing the general coherence of the organisation.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	5	Among the more effective strategies to attract and retain talents, HR managers can use the employee journey model to clearly plan and personalise career paths in a more transparent and reliable system, increasing the value offer for potential workers and using different schemes besides salary.

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Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies		Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	**Change management as a cross-cutting competence**	**Change Management**	**3**	HR managers are asked to be leaders in ongoing the transformation processes and can greatly contribute in the trasnistions of the industrial system and the regional society. This skill has already been recognised by public institutions and can be already developed thanks to a wide offer both from private and public training system.

HR+ SKILL MATRIX EMILIA ROMAGNA (IT)				**Territorial relevance (1-5)**	
Most relevant trends	**Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers**	**Main HR managers strategies**	**Key competencies**	**Italy - Emilia**	**Reasoning**
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour	**To develop hard skills and digital**	**To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting**	**4**	For Emilia-Romagna companies HR managers it is essential to know and manage digital systems, platforms and reporting tools because these technologies allow them to optimize HR processes, support strategic talent management and ensuring evidence-based decisions. In an advanced and

MIGRATION POLICIES	supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	**tools mastering**			competitive manufacturing context like the Emilia-Romagna one, the effective use of these tools helps monitoring performance, train staff and foster innovation, improving the efficiency and adaptability of organizations.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		**To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations**	4	The labor regulatory framework is articulated and constantly evolving. HR Managers must apply national and supplementary territorial or company collective agreements, which in Emilia-Romagna often also have sectoral specificities (e.g., engineering, agribusiness, logistic). Emilia-Romagna is distinguished by a production fabric characterized by SMEs, districts and integrated supply chains. This implies: - Need to manage different types of contracts (fixed-term, apprenticeship, administration, intermittent work, smart working). - Ability to deal with production and organizational flexibility demands typical of the area. Administrative and management skills make it possible to modulate contractual tools in compliance with the rules and to protect the business. All these skills are the subject of ongoing, constantly evolving training.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch	**To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market**	**To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation**	4	Mapping training and vocational needs means having a clear view of: - present competencies, - competencies missing or to be strengthened, - resources needed according to company goals. An HR manager performing this activity ensures that the organizational structure is consistent with the company's strategic plan, avoiding mismatches between ambitions and actual capabilities. Without accurate mapping, HR decisions risk being reactive and disconnected from real business priorities.

	E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Mapping training and vocational needs means having a clear view of: - present competencies, - competencies missing or to be strengthened, - resources needed according to company goals. An HR manager performing this activity ensures that the organizational structure is consistent with the company's strategic plan, avoiding mismatches between ambitions and actual capabilities. Without accurate mapping, HR decisions risk being reactive and disconnected from real business priorities.
			To manage digital communication processes	4	The level 4 priority assigned to the management of digital communication processes reflects a still significant importance in the current context. The role of digital tools to support remote work and internal communication despite the pandemic does not yet seem to be fully integrated and valued within business logics in Emilia-Romagna. Therefore, it still represents a priority, although we can speak of a consolidation phase process.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	4	Updating and retraining are essential factors for attracting and retaining talent and tackling labour market misalignment. However, in the Emilia-Romagna companies there is a lack of knowledge management strategy with serious consequences on competitiveness. The process of capitalisation and formalisation of know-how is therefore a crucial factor for HR managers.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviors and practices among employees	4	In Emilia-Romagna, environmental and sustainability issues are gaining increasing visibility in organisations. There is a growing attention to the social dimension of sustainability, in particular to employee wellbeing and work-life balance, and the integration of environmental objectives in HR strategies is, albeit laboriously, expanding. Therefore, this competence is expected to gain more relevance in the near future, driven by regulatory pressures and increasing social awareness of environmental issues.

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	J. Adaptation to the twin transition				
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	**Complexity management and inclusion**	**To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation**	4	In Emilia Romagna the use of digital tools and automation is rapidly growing, especially after the pandemic. Their application is often partial and focused on specific areas and, although there is growing attention to the subject, it does not yet reflect a complete transformation of the working environment. However, this competence is set to gain in importance with technological developments and the pressure for greater efficiency.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	For the Emilia-Romagna companies' HR Managers, planning and implementing personnel development policies is crucial to sustain the competitiveness of a territory characterised by strong industrial and manufacturing innovation. These competencies help to bridge the mismatch between demand and supply of skills, which is particularly relevant in a highly specialised manufacturing context. Moreover, they help strengthen relations with the territory, in synergy with schools, universities and training centres, supporting regional economic growth. Finally, they can guarantee companies greater resilience and adaptability to technological and market changes, key elements for success in Emilia-Romagna.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of	**Change management as a cross-cutting competence**	**Change Management**	3	The Change Management competence is fundamental for an HR Manager of companies in Emilia-Romagna because it allow him/her to guide people in adapting to the rapid technological, organisational and market changes that characterise this territory with a high industrial and innovative vocation. At the same time, this competence appears to be widely recognised by all the actors of the system (public and private) and is disseminated thanks to an extensive training offer, both public and private.

	Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty			

HR+ SKILL MATRIX – BUDAPEST (HU)				Territorial relevance (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Hungay - Centre	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	5	Digitalisation of HR processes is widespread in Hungary. Field and case research show a shift from manual to automated systems, improving efficiency and transparency. HR job postings frequently list digital tool proficiency as a requirement. This competency is essential for data-driven decision-making and administrative accuracy.

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	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		**To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations**	**4**	Labour law compliance and administrative HR tasks are deeply embedded in the Hungarian HR profession. Though not novel, ongoing legislative changes and digital monitoring tools require HR managers to stay up-to-date. Job postings confirm that legal and regulatory understanding is a core expectation.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch	**To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market**	**To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation**	**5**	Skills mapping is a strategic necessity. Research shows organisations are increasingly focusing on reskilling and upskilling, yet lack systematic tools. HR managers need to anticipate workforce shifts, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors. This is confirmed by field interviews and development plans.

	E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force				
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Labour shortages are a severe and well-documented issue in Hungary. Talent attraction and recruitment are considered top priorities. HR leaders are employing digital tools and employer branding strategies, which are frequently mentioned in both job postings and interviews.
			To manage digital communication processes	4	Digital communication practices such as internal newsletters and HR platforms are emerging but not yet fully institutionalised. Field data shows companies are adopting such tools unevenly. Communication skills through digital channels are listed in several HR manager vacancies.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labor supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants	**To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation**	**To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how**	5	Upskilling and knowledge retention are crucial responses to workforce transformation. Several companies have launched internal academies and gamified training. HR postings often include training design and career development responsibilities. The field research confirms its strategic value.

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	F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition				
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	3	Environmental and sustainability issues are increasingly recognised but not yet a key HR focus in Hungary. While ESG roles exist, environmental integration is generally handled outside HR departments. Still, this competency is expected to grow in relevance as regulatory pressures rise.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	Workplace digitalisation is accelerating, particularly post-pandemic. While not universally implemented, remote work tools and digital collaboration platforms are becoming more common. HR postings reflect this trend with references to remote management and flexible work environment support.

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	and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty		**To plan and implement organisational staff development policies**	**5**	Staff development planning is essential in response to high turnover and career stagnation concerns. HR managers are increasingly expected to personalise career paths and ensure leadership continuity. This is validated by field insights and HR job descriptions emphasising succession planning.	
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	**Change management as a cross-cutting competence**	**Change Management**	**5**	HR professionals are at the centre of managing rapid organisational change. Research shows that digital transformation, generational transitions, and business restructuring require strong change management skills. Job postings often require experience in leading transformation projects.	

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HR+ SKILL MATRIX – GALICIA (ES)				Territorial relevance (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	**Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers**	**Main HR managers strategies**	**Key competencies**	**Spain - Galicia**	**Reasoning**
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	**To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering**	**To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting**	**4**	Digital proficiency is increasingly important across all sectors in Galicia. Companies are adopting new tools for communication, collaboration, and data management. While awareness is growing, full integration of digital systems and cybersecurity practices is still in progress, particularly among SMEs. This competence is considered highly relevant for HR professionals but not yet universally mastered.

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	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		**To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations**	**3**	This is a standard and well-established HR function in most organisations. Legal compliance and administrative tasks are typically well handled, often with the support of external consultancies or dedicated departments. While still important, this competence is not perceived as a priority area for innovation or upskilling, but rather as a standard operational skill.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of	**To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market**	**To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation**	**5**	This is a top priority in Galicia. Employers report difficulty in identifying emerging roles and future skill demands. Rapid changes in technology and industry practices require HR professionals to be proactive in workforce planning. Focus group participants emphasised the need for tools and competences to conduct proper skills forecasting.

	migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		**To attract, recruit and select talents**	4	Galician employers consistently struggle with talent shortages, especially in technical and digital fields. While recruitment systems are in place, there is a strong need to modernise and personalise the approach to attract diverse and qualified candidates. This competence is highly valued and undergoing transformation, though some tools are already in use.
			To manage digital communication processes	5	High strategic relevance confirmed in focus groups and national report. With hybrid work and employer branding gaining importance, effective digital communication is increasingly expected from HR. While tools exist, many organisations still struggle to implement coherent, strategic internal communication practices.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch	**To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation**	**To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how**	5	Upskilling and reskilling are essential to retain talent and address labour market mismatches. In Galicia, continuous training is seen as a strategic HR function, especially as many companies face difficulties hiring externally. This competence enables internal mobility and development, which are key for organisational sustainability.

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	E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition				
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviors and practices among employees	2	Although environmental goals are central at EU level, this area is still underdeveloped in HR practices in Galicia. Few companies have integrated sustainability into their HR strategies, and the concept of "Green HR" remains marginal. While its importance will grow, it is not currently a priority for most local employers.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch	**Complexity management and inclusion**	**To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation**	4	Post-pandemic, there's been a notable shift towards more flexible, wellbeing-oriented work environments. However, the implementation of structured welfare policies still varies widely. HR is increasingly expected to lead this transition.

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	E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty				
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	A major priority in the Galician context. Developing internal talent and creating growth opportunities are key strategies to cope with limited hiring options and to strengthen long-term organisational resilience.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	4	Change management is a highly relevant competence in Galicia, particularly given the ongoing digital transition, restructuring in traditional industries, and the evolving expectations of younger workers. While some larger organisations have formal processes in place, many SMEs still approach change in a reactive or informal manner. HR professionals are increasingly expected to play an active role in planning, facilitating, and communicating change across teams. This competence is seen as key to ensuring agility and long-term organisational resilience.

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	G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty				

HR+ SKILL MATRIX – NORTE (PT)				Territorial relevance (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Portugal - North	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	In Portugal, there has been a growing adoption of digital tools, especially after the pandemic, improving internal communication and enabling remote work. Digital tools like Zoom are used to support communication and remote work. However, advanced use of digital systems and reporting tools remains limited. Technical skills development is ongoing but not yet part of a fully strategic and continuous approach.

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	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations	5	In Portugal, one of the organisations involved in the study highlighted the importance of structured HR policies aligned with labour regulations. Personnel management is decentralised but guided by the HR department, ensuring compliance and consistency. Practices such as internal mobility and transparent telework criteria reflect strong regulatory awareness. This competency is seen as essential for fair, effective, and legally compliant HR management.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	4	Anticipating skill needs is acknowledged as important by the Portuguese organisations that took part in the study, which use performance evaluations to identify training priorities. This approach has supported targeted upskilling and reskilling efforts. Nonetheless, actions tend to address immediate needs rather than follow long-term strategic planning. Strengthening foresight mechanisms could improve alignment with future organisational challenges.

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	D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force				
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	It was considered a high priority since talent attraction and recruitment in Portugal are essential due to the growing focus on employee well-being, work-life balance, and career development. Internal recruitment, flexibility, and reskilling are key strategies to meet these demands. The use of digital tools also supports these processes.
			To manage digital communication processes	3	The level 3 priority assigned to managing digital communication processes reflects a moderate importance in the current context. While the role of digital tools in supporting remote work and internal communication is recognised, especially after the pandemic, these are already relatively well integrated into the organisation's routine. Therefore, they do not represent an urgent challenge, but rather a process in consolidation. The main focus remains on human-centered aspects such as well-being, development, and talent retention, with digital communication serving as a relevant but not critical support.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society	To manage and develop knowledge	To design and manage learning opportunities to	5	We can verify a significant investment in upskilling and reskilling, which are essential actions to ensure employees continuously adapt to new demands, promote career development, and prepare the organisation for future

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	C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	and skills in the organisation	cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how		challenges. Training is integrated into a performance evaluation system, allowing individual development to align with strategic objectives, making this area a key priority.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	4	In Portugal, environmental and sustainability issues are gaining increasing visibility in organisations, but they do not yet represent a clear priority in human resource management. Although there is a consolidated focus on the social dimension of sustainability, notably on employee well-being and work-life balance, the integration of environmental objectives into HR strategies remains incipient. Nevertheless, this competence is expected to become more relevant in the near future, driven by regulatory pressures and growing social awareness of environmental issues.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in	**Complexity management and inclusion**	**To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation**	4	In Portugal, the use of digital tools and automation has been growing, especially after the pandemic. However, their application is often partial and focused on specific areas, not reflecting a complete transformation of the work environment. This skill tends to gain greater relevance with technological evolution and the pressure for greater efficiency.

	society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty				
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	In Portugal, workforce development policies are recognised and implemented, with a focus on continuous training, retraining and talent management. However, the strategic and comprehensive implementation of these policies varies between organisations. Increasing regulatory pressure and the need to adapt to technological and demographic changes indicate that this competency will gain greater relevance in the future.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change	**Change management as a cross-cutting competence**	**Change Management**	3	In Portugal, change management is recognised as an important competency, particularly in contexts of organisational transformation. However, its structured application is not yet widespread and is often limited to specific projects or isolated initiatives. As organisational adaptation becomes more critical and training opportunities expand, this competency is expected to gain greater relevance in the near future.

	G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty		

HR+ SKILL MATRIX – BELGIUM				Territorial relevance (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Belgium	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	Belgian HR professionals highlighted similar shifts toward digital HR tools. The use of HR platforms and integration of AI-based systems for analytics and automation reflects a strong relevance of this competence.

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	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		**To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations**	**5**	Compliance is highly relevant in Belgium due to the intersection of EU regulations and local laws. Interviews, especially from public and international organisations, stressed that HR must rigorously ensure regulatory alignment.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	**To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market**	**To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation**	**4**	Belgian interviewees discussed skill mapping initiatives, such as internal mobility programmes and structured talent development frameworks, particularly in the public sector and large organisations.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	**5**	Belgian HR leaders stressed employer branding, international recruitment, and use of digital tools to attract diverse candidates. They also noted increased competition for talent in multilingual and cross-border contexts.
			To manage digital communication processes	**3**	

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					Belgium's HR context includes remote teams and multilingual staff. While tools are in place, interviews showed digital communication is generally used to support processes rather than being an advanced strategic skill.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	**To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organization**	**To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organization's knowledge and know how**	4	Belgian HR professionals emphasized the importance of ethical frameworks around AI use, particularly in international or governmental contexts. They see HR as a key player in ensuring ethical compliance and data responsibility.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	3	Strategic HRM is a strong theme in Belgium, particularly in large and international institutions. HR is involved in shaping organizational direction and planning for future skill needs based on labour market trends.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration	**Complexity management and inclusion**	**To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation**	4	Belgian interviewees identified managing transformation as core to HR, particularly when introducing hybrid work or AI tools. Structured onboarding and engagement initiatives were used to support transitions.

	of migrants G. Diffusion of Artficial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty		**To plan and implement organizational staff development policies**	**4**	Belgian HR professionals are actively managing culture across distributed teams. Virtual coffee breaks and inclusive policy development were cited to maintain cohesion in hybrid environments.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	**Change management as a cross-cutting competence**	**Change Management**	**3**	Belgium's HR practices include resilience training and structural measures to support employee adaptability. HR professionals noted the role of coaching and flexible scheduling as key support mechanisms.

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HR+ SKILL MATRIX - FRANCE				Territorial relevance (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	France	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	**To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering**	**To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting**	**4**	Interviewees in France emphasized the importance of digital systems and HRIS in modern HR practice. For instance, AI-driven dashboards and automation of administrative tasks were mentioned as common tools in HR departments.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill		**To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations**	**4**	HR managers in France must navigate strict labour laws and GDPR regulations. Compliance with evolving national labour frameworks and data protection laws is a fundamental component of their daily responsibilities.

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	and reskill labour force				
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	**To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market**	**To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation**	**4**	French HR professionals noted that anticipating skill gaps and focusing on internal development is increasingly necessary. One expert emphasised the risk of stagnant experience and the need for continuous learning systems.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	**5**	Talent attraction and recruitment were described as increasingly data-driven and strategic. French HR managers discussed AI-based CV screening and remote hiring strategies to broaden the talent pool.
			To manage digital communication processes	**3**	Digital communication tools are widely used in French organizations, but are not yet a strategic HR competence. While hybrid work has normalised Teams/Slack use, communication management remains more operational.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for	**To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organization**	**To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how**	**4**	French HR interviews reflected growing awareness of ethical implications in using AI for recruitment and performance monitoring. The need to balance automation with human oversight was highlighted.

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	labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition				
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	2	HR managers in France are expected to align HR strategies with company goals. Interviews noted a shift to strategic roles, with a growing need for data-driven decision-making and long-term talent planning.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global	**Complexity management and inclusion**	**To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation**	4	French HR leaders described managing change and transitions as a key challenge, especially in the context of digitalisation and new work models. HR plays a central role in change communication and support.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	Organisational culture and employee experience were frequently mentioned in France, particularly post-pandemic. HR focuses on team rituals, feedback loops, and inclusion as part of employee well-being strategies.

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	economic uncertainty				
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	**Change management as a cross-cutting competence**	**Change Management**	**3**	Resilience and adaptability are seen as vital. HR in France is implementing mental health programmes, stress management workshops, and policies promoting work-life balance.

Annex 1 – Transnational survey

This survey is aimed at identifying the need for new competences, skills and knowledge for HR managers within companies, to address the challenges posed by the twin transition and the increase in the people shortage phenomenon. All personal information provided in this survey will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared, disclosed, or used for purposes beyond the project activities. Your responses will be reported in aggregate to ensure anonymity.

GENERAL INFORMATION

-Country (drop-down menu)
- Italy
- Hungary
- Spain
- Portugal
- France

-Region

-Company name

-Economic sector of your company (drop-down menu)
- Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products
- Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemicals and botanical products
- Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products
- Manufacturing of electrical equipment
- Manufacture of machinery and equipment
- Manufacture of transport equipment
- Water transport; Air transport
- Information and communication
- Financial and insurance activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Employment activities; Security and investigation activities
- None of the above (specify)..

-Firm size (numbers of employees[*]) (drop-down menu)
- 1-9 employees (micro-enterprise)
- 10-49 employees (small business)
- 50-249 employees (medium-sized enterprise)
- ≥250 employees (large enterprises - group of enterprises)

[+]Employee: a person employed as an independent worker or employee (full-time, part-time, or under an apprenticeship contract).

-Your role in the company

SECTION 1 – KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF THE TOPICS DETECTED

1. In your opinion, what are the biggest difficulties the labor market is <u>now</u> experiencing? Please select max. 3 answers that you think are most significant
- Negative demographic trends
- Cultural/value changes in society
- Automation
- Labor supply/demand mismatch
- Lack of programs for labour integration of migrants
- Adaptation to climate change
- Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence
- Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force
- Global economic uncertainty
- Adaptation to the twin transition
- There is no difficulty
- Other (specify)

2. Which of the following topics do you associate with the concept of "twin transition"? Please select max. 3 responses that you think are most significant
- Changes in work organization
- "Extinction" of some professional profiles
- Automation
- Upskilling and reskilling the workforce
- Skill obsolescence
- Development of new economic sectors and professions
- Artificial Intelligence
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Environmental sustainability
- Innovative strategies for talent attraction and retention
- None of these options
- Other (specify)

3. Which of the following factors do you think most affect the creation/strengthening of labor shortage situations in the labor market? Please select the 3 answers that you think are most significant
- Workers' low propensity for territorial mobility
- Characteristics of the vacancies
- Misalignment between the world of education and the labor market
- Stereotypes/prejudices about the labor market
- General shortage of workers related to demographic trends
- Lack of workers with the "right" skills required by companies
- Lack of knowledge of the structure and dynamics of the local labor market
- New work-related collective/individual meanings and values
- Insufficient supply/demand matching services
- Other (specify)

SECTION 2 – IMPACT OF THE TWIN TRANSITION ON THE ROLE OF HR MANAGER

4. In your company, how often do you perform the following tasks? Frequently, Moderately, Rarely, Never
- Data management and analysis
- Using HR software
- Management of learning and development platforms
- Design and implementation of training paths on digital skills
- Use of artificial intelligence tools
- Remote and hybrid work management
- Cybersecurity and data protection
- Social media management and employer branding

5. Since you have been working as an HR professional, how much have your duties changed as a result of digitization?
- Completely
- Very much
- A little
- Not at all

6. What new tasks related to the digital transition do you think you will have to perform most frequently in the next 5 years?

7. Thinking about how HR management will evolve in the next 5 years, how important do you consider the following skills/knowledge related to the digital transition? Not important at all, Slightly important, Fairly important, Extremely important
- Ability to collect, analyze and interpret employee-related data (e.g., performance, engagement, turnover) (data analytics)
- Use of big data to anticipate labor market trends and optimize recruitment and personnel management (use of big data)
- Ability to use personnel recruitment software
- Knowledge and management of integrated software systems for managing HR information (employee records, attendance, benefits, career paths, etc.).
- Ability to implement and manage e-learning platforms
- Using AI to facilitate recruiting and HR management
- Employing chatbots to facilitate contact with employees
- Knowledge and use of digital collaboration tools (Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom, etc.).
- Knowledge of privacy and data protection regulations
- Knowledge of cybersecurity measures to protect personal data and business information from cyber threats
- Developing employer branding through digital channels to attract talent

8. Are there any other digital skills that you think are strategic for the HR professionals (currently and in the future perspective)?

9. How does your company reduce its environmental impact? Multiple choice

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- Operates in a sector that itself contributes to combating climate change (e.g., renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable management of environmental resources, green building, waste management and recycling, etc.).
- Despite operating in a "non-green" sector, production processes have been completely/partially adapted to reduce the ecological footprint (reduce the impact of production)
- Has adopted internal environmental sustainability policies/measures (e.g., waste reduction, use of recyclable materials, corporate recycling programs, promotion of sustainable mobility for employees, etc.).
- Involves suppliers and business partners in sustainability projects, requiring them sustainability standards/certifications
- Promotes awareness among employees through training initiatives
- Supports CSR initiatives focused on the environment (e.g., tree planting, biodiversity protection, environmental education programs, etc.).
- None of these options reflect my company's situation
- Other (specify)..
......

10. Since you have been in the HR profession, how much have your duties changed as a result of the green transition and the introduction of new paradigms of sustainability?
- Completely
- Very much
- A little
- Not at all

11. How often do you perform the following tasks related to environmental sustainability in your professional activities? Frequently, Moderately, Rarely, Never
- Integration of sustainability into corporate culture
- Design and implementation of training paths on green skills
- Promotion of sustainable work practices (smart working, telecommuting, hybrid work, sustainable mobility incentives, recycling, flexible hours), to reduce environmental impact
- Integration of sustainability tools into the corporate structure (e.g., sustainability report, ESG certification)
- Management of sustainable/green suppliers
- Use of environmental sustainability performance as an attractive factor of the organisation

12. What new tasks related to the ecological transition do you think you will have to perform most frequently in the next 5 years?

13. Thinking about the development of your company in the next 5 years, how important do you consider the following skills/knowledge related to green transition and sustainability? Not important at all, Slightly important, Fairly important, Extremely important
- Knowledge of environmental policies and regulations on sustainability

- Knowledge of CSR practices
- Leadership and Change Management
- Ability to design training courses to improve employees' environmental awareness and green skills
- Ability to use digital tools for remote work management
- Ability to design/implement welfare plans that incorporate sustainability principles (e.g., incentives for the use of green transportation, promotion of healthy lifestyles).
- Knowledge and ability to apply ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) criteria

14. Are there any other skills related to sustainability/ecological transition that you consider strategic for the HR figure (currently and in the future)?

SECTION 3 – WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATIONS

15. In your company, how much do the following phenomena currently impact the workforce? Not at all, A little, A lot, Completely
- Digitization and introduction of new technologies
- Green transition and sustainability principles
- Labor shortage

16. Thinking about your company's evolution in the next 5 years, how do you expect the following phenomena to evolve in terms of their impact on the workforce? It will decrease, it will increase, it will remain the same
- Digitization and introduction of new technologies
- Green transition and push for sustainability
- Labor shortage

17. Could you indicate which business departments and job profiles are (or will be) most affected by the listed phenomena (digitalization, green transition, labor shortage)?

18. How relevant are the following needs related to workforce transformations affecting the company in which you are employed, now and in the future (5 years from now)? Indicate max. 3 items
- Finding solutions to promote women's participation in the labor market
- Adaptation of work organization (e.g. workflows and processes, responsibilities and task allocation, work scheduling, rules and procedures)
- Enhancement and retention of senior workers
- Management of work environments where many different generations coexist
- Implement strategies to identify and attract workers
- Implement strategies to identify and attract talent/qualified workers
- Management of multicultural work environments
- Strategies for inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Provide upskilling and reskilling of workers
- Promotion of work-life balance and work well-being

19. If you had to design a training course to promote environmental sustainability skills for workers, what objectives would you focus on? Indicate the 3 most important options

- Provide general knowledge on environmental and sustainability issues
- Raise awareness on climate change and environmental sustainability issues
- Improve sustainability attitude of staff, fostering them to adopt "eco-friendly" behaviors in the work environment
- Make participants acquire specific technical skills to work in a "green" sector (e.g., renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable management of environmental resources, green building, waste management and recycling, etc.).
- Allow staff to adapt to the business processes' transformations to reduce environmental impact
- Make them acquire specific technical skills to manage eco-transformations of the production
- Educate on the benefits and use of renewable energy sources to improve corporate sustainability
- Make them acquire specific digital skills to manage technological innovation related to "green" production processes

20. Thinking about the development plans of your company in the next 5 years, how important do you consider the following skills related to knowledge management (managing upskilling and reskilling processes)? Not important at all, Slightly important, Fairly important, Extremely important

- Ability to detect professional needs (job profiles, competences and skills to be trained)
- Knowledge of the local labor market and its dynamics/transformations
- Be familiar with skills forecasting tools
- Constant update on macro-trends/transformations (international, national, local) affecting the labor market
- Ability in designing and managing training with innovative teaching methods (e.g., gamification, in-house academies, other ?).
- Contribute to local initiatives and projects to attract talents

21. Are there any other skills related to knowledge management (managing upskilling and reskilling processes) that you consider strategic for the HR professionals (currently and in the future perspective)?

22. Thinking about the development plans of your company in the next 5 years, how important do you consider the following skills to manage diversity/complexity generated by the coexistence of workers with different ages, cultural backgrounds, personal/individual situations? Not important at all, Slightly important, Fairly important, Extremely important

- Communication skills
- Ability to adapt leadership style
- Knowledge and use of team-building techniques
- Facilitation, mediation and conflict resolution skills
- Active listening skills and understanding of individual needs
- Foreign languages and culture

- Mentorship skills
- Awareness and management of unconscious bias (prejudice)
- Ability to customize career paths and development
- Knowledge and use of participatory design techniques

23. Are there any other skills related to diversity/complexity management that you consider strategic for the HR professionals (currently and in the future perspective)?

24. In your opinion, what does promoting employee well-being mean? Please indicate the 2 most relevant options
- Promotion of employees' mental health (e.g., psychological support or counseling, stress and burnout prevention, etc.).
- Promotion of workers' physical health and safety
- Taking care of employees' happiness
- Ensuring career prospects
- Work-life balance and work flexibility (e.g., flexible hours, remote working)
- Creating an inclusive and respectful work environment

25. In your opinion, what are/would be the main challenges your company faces when implementing diversity and inclusion practices? Please select the 2 most relevant options
- Internal resistance to changing organizational culture
- Lack of resources to implement inclusive policies
- Difficulty in recruiting talent from underrepresented groups
- Need for specific diversity and inclusion training for leaders and teams
- Lack of formal policies or strategic guidance on diversity and inclusion
- Limitations in adapting the physical environment to the needs of people with disabilities
- Difficulty in measuring the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION AND FOLLOW-UP

26. With respect to the topics covered in this survey (in the area of HR) do you think you can briefly indicate one/more best practices that your company is currently carrying out?

27. Would you be available to be contacted again for an in-depth interview regarding these practices?
- Yes
- No

28. Would you be interested in being involved in the future activities of the project and in the training?
- Yes
- No

29. What kind of training methodology would you be more keen on?
- In presence training
- Online training
- Project work
- Peer to peer learning
- Design thinking
- Competency-based learning
- Experiential learning
- Problem-based learning

PERSONAL INFORMATION

-Your name and email address

-Your email address

-Educational qualification
- Secondary/High school
- Vocational/Technical education
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)
- Professional degree (e.g., JD, MD, MBA)

-Gender
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

-Age
- ≤25 years old
- 26-35 y.o.
- 36-45 y.o.
- 46-55 y.o.
- 56-65 y.o.
- ≥65 y.o.

-How long have you been working in the company?
- Less than 1 year
- 1–3 years
- 4–6 years
- 7–10 years
- More than 10 years

- How long have you been involved in HR management (regardless of the working environment you are in now)?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–3 years
- 4–6 years
- 7–10 years
- More than 10 years

Thank you for your contribution!

Annex 2 – Focus group template

	Goal	Questions/Inputs
Phase 1 - Intro	**Warm up**	• Welcome and thank the group for participating • Ask permission to record (start recording) • You might start by asking "Do you mind if I address you by your first name?" • Introduce yourself (and other colleagues who may be present) and have the participants introduce themselves (name, organisation, working area). You might use an icebreaker. • Brief presentation of the research (EU project, goals) • Remind participants of the purpose of the meeting, ground rules and duration
Phase 2 – Ice Breaking session	**Bring the focus on the topic**	Start focusing **on the present** to engage the discussion on key topics: **What does HR management mean today?** • How would you describe the evolution of the HR role in recent years? What main changes have you observed? • Which responsibilities, tasks and competences have become more central for HR compared to the past? Why? • Are there any traditional activities or skills that have become less relevant? Why?
Phase 3 - Changes	**Explore possible development trajectories**	**How do you expect the HR manager role to evolve in the coming years?** • What do you see as the most pressing challenges HR will face in the next 5 to 10 years? • How might global trends like the twin transition, demographic dynamics (ageing population, migration…), changes in individual/societal values, etc impact on the labour force within organisations? / Are there any specific economic, social, or technological changes that, in your opinion, will shape the future of HR? • How do these evolutions/processes affect HR manager's priorities? • How can HR prepare to address transformations related to digital transition, sustainability, and skills shortages?

		• Do you think that the challenges identified will be more relevant for Knowledge Intensive Organisations? Or will they affect organisations/companies in general?
Phase 4 – Competence and Skills	**Focus on Competences, Skills and Knowledge for the "future" HR**	**What specific competences (= tasks) do you think will be essential for HR professionals to manage future challenges effectively? What skills/knowledge will be strategic for HR managers to carry out new tasks?** • What specific skills will be required to manage upskilling and reskilling processes within companies? • What does it mean, in your opinion, "to manage diversity/complexity" within companies? Try to explore the different facets of this concept… • What specific skills will be required to manage diversity /complexity within companies?
Phase 5 – Get inspired	**Explore possible solutions, innovative practices, instruments**	**Use this last phase of the FG to identify possible best practices/study cases for the interviews and case studies** • Are you already working to meet the challenges/changes identified? • What solutions, measures, strategies do you plan to use? • Could you share some examples of best practice that you know or you have heard of?

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Annex 3 – In-depth interviews format

The aims of the field research are: (1) to identify **the need for new competences, skills and knowledge for HR managers** (especially within Knowledge Intensive companies), to address the challenges posed by the twin transition and the increase in the people shortage phenomenon; (2) to collect insights and useful information on **possible gaps** to focus on; (3) to support the interpretation of the results of the transnational survey.

This document represents a guide to collect the information gained through the field research activities each partner is responsible for (Activity 2.2.2 - focus groups and Activity 2.2.3 - in-depth interviews).

When collecting information, take into account the **Hierarchy of Competence, Skills and Knowledge** included in the Guidelines. **Competences** represent a broader set that includes the use of multiple skills, behaviours, and attitudes, often in more complex contexts and with greater autonomy and responsibility. To "simplify" the *competencies* in the research are treated as "tasks". **Skills** are defined as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems; they are specific and operational, related to the ability to perform precise tasks.

1. What does it mean being an HR manager today?

According to the information collected on the field, how would you describe the evolution of the HR role in recent years? How is this role perceived by the actors involved in the research activities? What are the main changes and challenges affecting the HR management within companies? Focus on the present. [max. 500 words]

This section is meant to be a sort of "introduction". You are asked to briefly describe how the role of HR manager is perceived today and what are the main challenges/changes perceived by the people involved in the field research.

2. Possible evolution trends in HR management

Please, describe how the role of the HR manager is expected to evolve in the coming years in response to various economic, social, and technological transformations. HR managers will likely face pressing challenges such as adapting to rapid digital transitions, addressing skills shortages, and promoting sustainability within organizations. Global trends, including the twin transition (digital and green), demographic shifts like an aging population and migration, and evolving societal values, will significantly impact the labor force. **With a specific reference to your**

territorial context, how and to what extent these trends are going to affect HR management strategies within companies? Focus on underline future prospects. [Max. 1500 words]

Please provide a summary of the information collected on the field on:

- *Changes/challenges that will most underline directly affect HR management in the next (5) years (e.g. …)*
- *Changes/challenges that will most affect the labour force in the next (5) years (and that consequently will have an underline indirect impact on HR managers within companies)*
- *underline New priorities for the "HR managers of the future"*
- *Possible underline new and innovative strategies to cope with the challenges identified*

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3. Competences, skills & knowledge for the HR manager "of the future"

According to the information gathered during the focus groups and the interviews, what are the key competences (=tasks, duties) and the skills and knowledge needed to manage each competence (or perform each task)? Consider both technical and soft skills. Try to focus on new and innovative aspects compared to what was found in the parallel section of the desk research.

Please provide a brief description (underline the following competence are only examples)

Competence 1: MANAGING UPSKILLING/RESKILLING PROCESSES AND COMPANY KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
Skills and Knowledge:
- *Being familiar with skills forecasting tools*
- *Ability in designing and managing training with innovative teaching methods (e.g., gamification, in-house academies, etc.)*
- *Ability to detect professional needs (job profiles, competences and skills to be trained)*

Competence 2: DIVERSITY/COMPLEXITY MANAGEMENT
Skills and Knowledge:
- *Facilitation, mediation and conflict resolution skills*
- *Foreign languages and culture*
- *Ability to customize career paths and development*

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4. Insights from local best practices

According to the information gathered during the focus groups and the interviews, are there any best practices at the local level that could be inspirational for our project? Please provide a brief description of successful strategies, innovative approaches, measures and solutions already in place or planned for the future [Max. 1500 words]

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Please provide a description of each best practice you heard of during the field research, highlighting the added value and the innovative aspects in coping with the above-mentioned challenges (i.e):

-Knowledge Management practices and tools used,

-Concrete actions to support Diversity introduced,

-(Perceived) role of legislation, legal institutions and fiscal/administrative opportunities in supporting diversity

Etc.

Annex 4 – Visual General and Countries' Skill Matrix

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Twin Transition, the demographic changes and the phenomenon of labour shortage.

What are the strategic skills for an HR Manager today?

The HR+ Skill Matrix is the result of a 6 month transnational research (October 2024 – April 2025), within the Erasmus+ HR+ project, which involved over 250 HRs from 6 countries (Italy, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, France, Belgium) through:

- **6 countries desk analysis (i.e. CCNL declarations, job vacancies)**
- **250 respondent's transnational survey**
- **5 focus group**
- **8 cases study**
- **18 in-depth interviews.**

Starting from the 3 most relevant trends (Twin Transition, Demographic Change, Migration Policies) in the 6 investigated countries, the HR+ Skill Matrix identifies:

- **10 HR managers Challenges**
- **5 HR Strategies to face them**
- **10 Key Competencies (Digital, Hard, and Green)**
- **Practical examples of how the Key Competency is operationally declined in HR contexts**
- **The importance value (on a scale from 1 to 5) for HR Managers in the 6 countries investigated as emerged from the research.**

HR+ GENERAL SKILLS MATRIX

Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Detected competencies/examples	Type of competency (hybrid jobs model)	Main fields of application for HR manager (employee journey model)	Italy - Veneto	Italy - Emilia Romagna	Portugal - Norte	Spain - Galicia	Hungary - Centre	France	Belgium
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artifcial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	To implement cybersecurity measures and strategies to protect personal data and business information from cyber threats	Digital skills	a. attracting candidates c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees e. assessing performance f. managing compensation, promotion g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
				To implement privacy and data protection regulations	Digital skills								
				To use office automation tools and data analytics	Digital skills								
				To manage digital systems and platforms/tools (i.e. LinkedIn Recruiter, SAP SuccessFactors, and Power BI for HR intelligence, etc)	Digital skills								
				To use integrated software systems for managing HR information (employee records, attendance, benefits, career paths, etc.)	Digital skills								
				To make on-boarding digital, ensuring an effective onboarding process	Digital skills								

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HR+ GENERAL SKILLS MATRIX

Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers			To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	To integrate technology and green practices into HR operations	Green skills	b. hiring employees d. developing employees e. assessing performance f. managing compensation, promotion g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	3	4	5	3	4	4	5
				To use digital tools for remote work management	Green skills								
B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition				To maintain and control the updated personnel file in documentary and/or computerised form, in order to facilitate the flow of information throughout the company, in accordance with the regulations and internal organisation	Hard skills								
				To perform administrative support to the tasks of selection, training and development of human resources	Hard skills								
				To manage the information and filing systems in conventional and computerised support	Hard skills								
				To handle office applications in information and documentation management	Hard skills								
				To comply with labour laws and regulations	Hard skills								

HR+ GENERAL SKILLS MATRIX

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	To detect professional needs: job profiles, competences and skills to be trained connected to the organision development (strategic workforce planning)	Hard skills	a. attracting candidates b. hiring employees f. managing compensation, promotion	4	4	4	5	5	4	4
				To use forecasting tools on skills/labour market, included big data	Hard skills								
				To manage local labour market and its dynamics/transformations	Hard skills								
				To be updated on macro-trends/transformations (international, national, local) affecting the labour market	Hard skills								
			To attract, recruit and select talents	To optimise recruitment process, streamlining the application and hiring process using softwares such as ATS (Applicant Tracking System), chatbots and AI-drriven solutions	Digital skills	a. attracting candidates b. hiring employees c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees f. managing compensation, promotion	5	4	5	4	5	5	5
				To use talent intelligence & retention analytics	Hard skills								
				To match organisation skills demand/staff competencies	Hard skills								
				To network and manage external relationships	Hard skills								
				To contribute to local initiatives and projects to attract talents	Soft skills								
			To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	To develop employer branding through digital channels to attract talent	Hard skills	a. attracting candidates	4	5	3	5	4	3	3
				To implement digital recruitment strategies (e-recruitment platforms, social media recruiting)	Digital skills								

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HR+ GENERAL SKILLS MATRIX

TWIN TRANSITION

B. Cultural/value changes in society
C. Automation
D. Labour supply/demand mismatch
E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants
F. Adaptation to climate change
G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence
H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force
J. Adaptation to the twin transition

To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation

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To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how

Task	Skill type
To map competencies needs and analyse gaps according with organisation development and innovation processes	Hard skills
To design and manage training with innovative teaching methods (e.g., gamification, in-house academies, etc.)	Hard skills
To analyse employees' digital and green skills, to identify gaps and plan retraining and skills development programmes (reskilling and upskillng)	Hard skills
To design training courses to improve employees' environmental awareness and green skills	Green skills
To manage continuous learning environments, with the support of digital tools, included e-learning platforms	Digital skills

a. attracting candidates
c. integrating employees into the organisation
d. developing employees
g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace

4	4	5	5	5	4	4

To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees

Task	Skill type
To implement and respect environmental policies and regulations on sustainability and pursue ESG goals for the organisation	Green skills
To design/implement welfare plans/company benefits systems that incorporate sustainability and CSR principles	Green skills
To raise awareness on climate change and participation: engaging employees with HR-sponsored volunteer, communication and learning programmes to raise awareness	Green skills

a. attracting candidates
b. hiring employees
c. integrating employees into the organisation
d. developing employees
f. managing compensation, promotion

3	4	4	2	3	2	3

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HR PLUS GENERAL SKILLS MATRIX

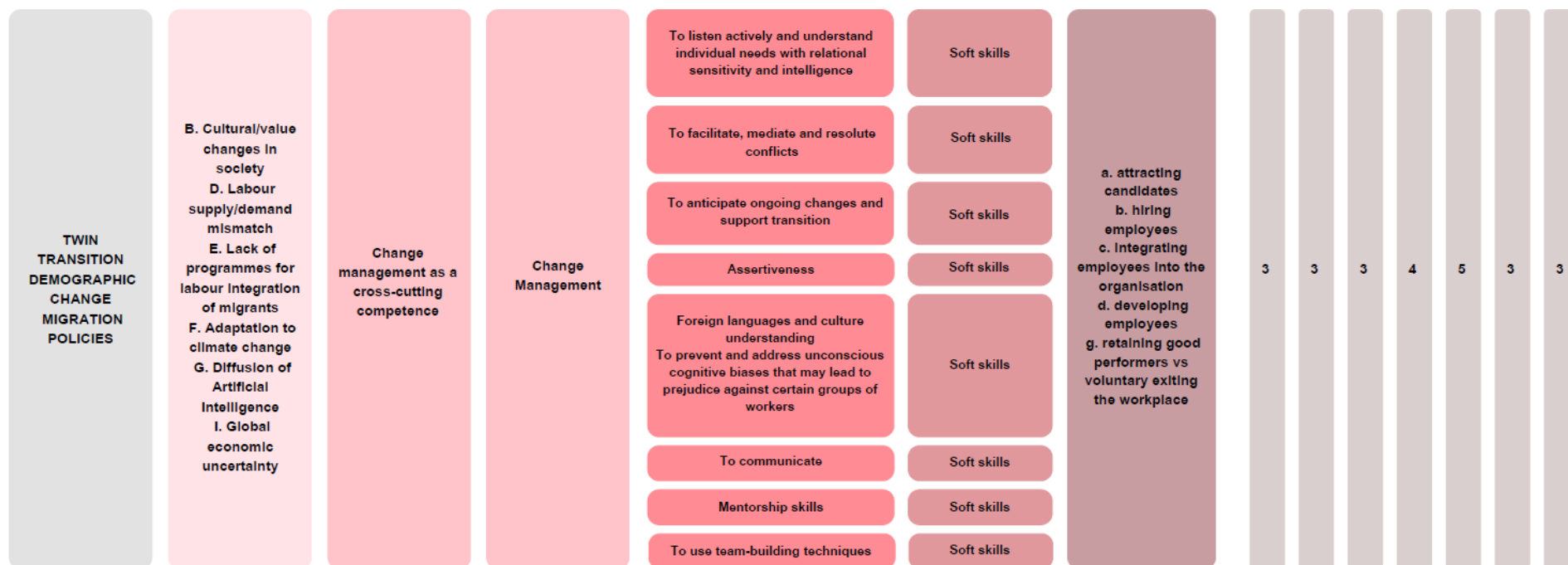| TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	Complexity management and Inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	To design and manage welfare policies and job innovation, adapting measures and work-life balance solutions to employers' needs	Hard skills	a. attracting candidates c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
				To use digital collaboration tools (Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom, etc.).	Digital skills								
				To implement bias-free HR practices identifying critical aspects that may exclude certain workers	Hard skills								
				To simplify workflows by automating business processes related to human resources, reducing the use of paper-based tools and facilitating the use of dedicated work management software.	Digital skills								
				To provide training and support to employees, helping them understand how to use organisation's softwares and platforms, and benefit from available training programmes	Hard skills								
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	To customise career paths and development	Hard skills	b. hiring employees c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees f. managing compensation, promotion g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	5	4	4	4	5	4	4
				To design inclusive organisations in complex and hybrid contexts adapting diversity management to uniqueness of people	Hard skills								
				To promote employee well-being	Hard skills								

HR⁺ GENERAL SKILLS MATRIX

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management										
				To listen actively and understand individual needs with relational sensitivity and intelligence	Soft skills	a. attracting candidates b. hiring employees c. integrating employees into the organisation d. developing employees g. retaining good performers vs voluntary exiting the workplace	3	3	3	4	5	3	3
				To facilitate, mediate and resolute conflicts	Soft skills								
				To anticipate ongoing changes and support transition	Soft skills								
				Assertiveness	Soft skills								
				Foreign languages and culture understanding To prevent and address unconscious cognitive biases that may lead to prejudice against certain groups of workers	Soft skills								
				To communicate	Soft skills								
				Mentorship skills	Soft skills								
				To use team-building techniques	Soft skills								

HR PLUS COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

ITALY

HR+ SKILL MATRIX VENETO (IT)				Territorial relevance - (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Italy - Veneto	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	Complexity management and inclusion	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	The impact of digital tools on HR managers day by day tasks is growing in the last two years, due to the market availabilty of innovative suites from new providers and the new features in the traditional platform already adopted by organisations (i.e. SAP, Zucchetti etc). At this stage HR managers are using this tools to enhance their productivity automating routinary tasks and activities, fostering their hard and technical skills thanks to innovative digital skills; on the other side they're starting to be more confident with data management for reporting and decision making purposes.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations	3	Despite the demand for innovative competencies for organisational transition, HR managers are still often deeply rooted in staff administration tasks. The related hard skills are cross-cutting administrative, legal and fiscal fields and are usually developed with traditional courses and training paths both from school, university and VET system.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

ITALY

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	4	In the recent years uncertain scenario, it's quite difficult to clearly plan skills needs for the company, but it's important for HR manager to be aware or involved in the decision making process for the organisation, in order to align the staff strategies with the investments and market strategies.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Attracting talents is the first issue in Veneto Region in HR fields. Starting from 2021, companies have hired several professionals (mostly psychologists, human and social sciences specialists) to start new activities on this topic. Ongoing experiences have focused up to now on employer branding and selection/hiring process and can greatly benefit from the adoption of the employee journey model.
			To manage digital communication processes	4	This is one of the main field of activity for HR managers to face the people shortage, mostly based on social networks, digital platform and online communication. There's a risk about effectiveness of this activities if they're not embedded in a general strategy for the company needs.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	4	Upskilling and reskilling are essential to retain talent and address labour market mismatches. In Veneto the company is the main field of learning for hard, soft and digital skills (work-based learning) and the knowledge management strategies is becoming one of the central issues for HR managers.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviors and practices among employees	3	The expected green shift is based also on the change of people behaviours, being more aware of the impact of their actions on the environment. HR managers are being progressivly involved in designing and implementing sensitisations campaigns as well as in provide solutions eco-friendly to the staff.

HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

ITALY

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty kill labour force	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	This key competence is related to the ability of HR managers to positively contribute to the innovation of the organisational model of their company, in order to better match emerging needs from the staff. Digital tools and platforms can be used to provide solutions as remote working, timetable flexibility, calibrate and monitor tasks and goals potentially for each employees, without losing the general coherence of the organisation.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	5	Among the more effective strategies to attract and retain talents, HR managers can use the employee journey model to clearly plan and personalise career paths in a more transparent and reliable system, increasing the value offer for potential workers and using different schemes besides salary.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	3	HR managers are asked to be leaders in ongoing the transformation processes and can greatly contribute in the trasnistions of the industrial system and the regional society. This skill has already been recognised by public institutions and can be already developed thanks to a wide offer both from private and public training system.

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COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

ITALY

HR+ SKILL MATRIX EMILIA ROMAGNA (IT)				Territorial relevance - (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Italy - Emilia Romagna	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	Complexity management and inclusion	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	For Emilia-Romagna companies HR managers it is essential to know and manage digital systems, platforms and reporting tools because these technologies allow them to optimize HR processes, support strategic talent management and ensuring evidence-based decisions. In an advanced and competitive manufacturing context like the Emilia-Romagna one, the effective use of these tools helps monitoring performance, train staff and foster innovation, improving the efficiency and adaptability of organizations.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations	4	The labor regulatory framework is articulated and constantly evolving. HR Managers must apply national and supplementary territorial or company collective agreements, which in Emilia-Romagna often also have sectoral specificities (e.g., engineering, agribusiness, logistic). Emilia-Romagna is distinguished by a production fabric characterized by SMEs, districts and integrated supply chains. This implies: - Need to manage different types of contracts (fixed-term, apprenticeship, administration, intermittent work, smart working). - Ability to deal with production and organizational flexibility demands typical of the area. Administrative and management skills make it possible to modulate contractual tools in compliance with the rules and to protect the business. All these skills are the subject of ongoing, constantly evolving training.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

ITALY

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	4	Mapping training and vocational needs means having a clear view of: - present competencies, - competencies missing or to be strengthened, - resources needed according to company goals. An HR manager performing this activity ensures that the organizational structure is consistent with the company's strategic plan, avoiding mismatches between ambitions and actual capabilities. Without accurate mapping, HR decisions risk being reactive and disconnected from real business priorities.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	
			To manage digital communication processes	4	The level 4 priority assigned to the management of digital communication processes reflects a still significant importance in the current context. The role of digital tools to support remote work and internal communication despite the pandemic does not yet seem to be fully integrated and valued within business logics in Emilia-Romagna. Therefore, it still represents a priority, although we can speak of a consolidation phase process.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	4	Updating and retraining are essential factors for attracting and retaining talent and tackling labour market misalignment. However, in the Emilia-Romagna companies there is a lack of knowledge management strategy with serious consequences on competitiveness. The process of capitalisation and formalisation of know-how is therefore a crucial factor for HR managers.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviors and practices among employees	4	In Emilia-Romagna, environmental and sustainability issues are gaining increasing visibility in organisations. There is a growing attention to the social dimension of sustainability, in particular to employee wellbeing and work-life balance, and the integration of environmental objectives in HR strategies is, albeit laboriously, expanding. Therefore, this competence is expected to gain more relevance in the near future, driven by regulatory pressures and increasing social awareness of environmental issues.

HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

ITALY

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty kill labour force	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	In Emilia Romagna the use of digital tools and automation is rapidly growing, especially after the pandemic. Their application is often partial and focused on specific areas and, although there is growing attention to the subject, it does not yet reflect a complete transformation of the working environment. However, this competence is set to gain in importance with technological developments and the pressure for greater efficiency.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	For the Emilia-Romagna companies' HR Managers, planning and implementing personnel development policies is crucial to sustain the competitiveness of a territory characterised by strong industrial and manufacturing innovation. These competencies help to bridge the mismatch between demand and supply of skills, which is particularly relevant in a highly specialised manufacturing context. Moreover, they help strengthen relations with the territory, in synergy with schools, universities and training centres, supporting regional economic growth. Finally, they can guarantee companies greater resilience and adaptability to technological and market changes, key elements for success in Emilia-Romagna.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	3	The Change Management competence is fundamental for an HR Manager of companies in Emilia-Romagna because it allow him/her to guide people in adapting to the rapid technological, organisational and market changes that characterise this territory with a high industrial and innovative vocation. At the same time, this competence appears to be widely recognised by all the actors of the system (public and private) and is disseminated thanks to an extensive training offer, both public and private.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

HUNGARY

HR+ SKILL MATRIX – BUDAPEST (HU)				Territorial relevance - (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Hungary - Centre	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	5	Digitalisation of HR processes is widespread in Hungary. Field and case research show a shift from manual to automated systems, improving efficiency and transparency. HR job postings frequently list digital tool proficiency as a requirement. This competency is essential for data-driven decision-making and administrative accuracy.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnelcomplying with industrial relations and labour regulations	4	Labour law compliance and administrative HR tasks are deeply embedded in the Hungarian HR profession. Though not novel, ongoing legislative changes and digital monitoring tools require HR managers to stay up-to-date. Job postings confirm that legal and regulatory understanding is a core expectation.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

HUNGARY

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	5	Skills mapping is a strategic necessity. Research shows organisations are increasingly focusing on reskilling and upskilling, yet lack systematic tools. HR managers need to anticipate workforce shifts, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors. This is confirmed by field interviews and development plans.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Labour shortages are a severe and well-documented issue in Hungary. Talent attraction and recruitment are considered top priorities. HR leaders are employing digital tools and employer branding strategies, which are frequently mentioned in both job postings and interviews.
			To manage digital communication processes	4	Digital communication practices such as internal newsletters and HR platforms are emerging but not yet fully institutionalised. Field data shows companies are adopting such tools unevenly. Communication skills through digital channels are listed in several HR manager vacancies.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labor supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	5	Upskilling and knowledge retention are crucial responses to workforce transformation. Several companies have launched internal academies and gamified training. HR postings often include training design and career development responsibilities. The field research confirms its strategic value.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	3	Environmental and sustainability issues are increasingly recognised but not yet a key HR focus in Hungary. While ESG roles exist, environmental integration is generally handled outside HR departments. Still, this competency is expected to grow in relevance as regulatory pressures rise.

COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

HUNGARY

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	Workplace digitalisation is accelerating, particularly post-pandemic. While not universally implemented, remote work tools and digital collaboration platforms are becoming more common. HR postings reflect this trend with references to remote management and flexible work environment support.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	5	Staff development planning is essential in response to high turnover and career stagnation concerns. HR managers are increasingly expected to personalise career paths and ensure leadership continuity. This is validated by field insights and HR job descriptions emphasising succession planning.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	5	HR professionals are at the centre of managing rapid organisational change. Research shows that digital transformation, generational transitions, and business restructuring require strong change management skills. Job postings often require experience in leading transformation projects.

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COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

SPAIN

HR+ SKILL MATRIX – GALICIA (ES)				Territorial relevance - (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Spain - Galicia	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	**B.** Cultural/value changes in society **C.** Automation **D.** Labour supply/demand mismatch **F.** Adaptation to climate change **G.** Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence **J.** Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	Digital proficiency is increasingly important across all sectors in Galicia. Companies are adopting new tools for communication, collaboration, and data management. While awareness is growing, full integration of digital systems and cybersecurity practices is still in progress, particularly among SMEs. This competence is considered highly relevant for HR professionals but not yet universally mastered.
	A. Negative demographic trends **D.** Labour supply/demand mismatch **E.** Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants **H.** Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnelcomplying with industrial relations and labour regulations	3	This is a standard and well-established HR function in most organisations. Legal compliance and administrative tasks are typically well handled, often with the support of external consultancies or dedicated departments. While still important, this competence is not perceived as a priority area for innovation or upskilling, but rather as a standard operational skill.

HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

SPAIN

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	5	This is a top priority in Galicia. Employers report difficulty in identifying emerging roles and future skill demands. Rapid changes in technology and industry practices require HR professionals to be proactive in workforce planning. Focus group participants emphasised the need for tools and competences to conduct proper skills forecasting
			To attract, recruit and select talents	4	Galician employers consistently struggle with talent shortages, especially in technical and digital fields. While recruitment systems are in place, there is a strong need to modernise and personalise the approach to attract diverse and qualified candidates. This competence is highly valued and undergoing transformation, though some tools are already in use.
			To manage digital communication processes	5	High strategic relevance confirmed in focus groups and national report. With hybrid work and employer branding gaining importance, effective digital communication is increasingly expected from HR. While tools exist, many organisations still struggle to implement coherent, strategic internal communication practices.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	5	Upskilling and reskilling are essential to retain talent and address labour market mismatches. In Galicia, continuous training is seen as a strategic HR function, especially as many companies face difficulties hiring externally. This competence enables internal mobility and development, which are key for organisational sustainability.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	2	Although environmental goals are central at EU level, this area is still underdeveloped in HR practices in Galicia. Few companies have integrated sustainability into their HR strategies, and the concept of "Green HR" remains marginal. While its importance will grow, it is not currently a priority for most local employers.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

SPAIN

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	Post-pandemic, there's been a notable shift towards more flexible, wellbeing-oriented work environments. However, the implementation of structured welfare policies still varies widely. HR is increasingly expected to lead this transition.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	A major priority in the Galician context. Developing internal talent and creating growth opportunities are key strategies to cope with limited hiring options and to strengthen long-term organisational resilience.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	4	Change management is a highly relevant competence in Galicia, particularly given the ongoing digital transition, restructuring in traditional industries, and the evolving expectations of younger workers. While some larger organisations have formal processes in place, many SMEs still approach change in a reactive or informal manner. HR professionals are increasingly expected to play an active role in planning, facilitating, and communicating change across teams. This competence is seen as key to ensuring agility and long-term organisational resilience.

HR⁺ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

PORTUGAL

HR+ SKILL MATRIX – NORTE (PT)				Territorial relevance - (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Portugal - North	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	In Portugal, there has been a growing adoption of digital tools, especially after the pandemic, improving internal communication and enabling remote work. Digital tools like Zoom are used to support communication and remote work. However, advanced use of digital systems and reporting tools remains limited. Technical skills development is ongoing but not yet part of a fully strategic and continuous approach.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnel complying with industrial relations and labour regulations	5	In Portugal, one of the organisations involved in the study highlighted the importance of structured HR policies aligned with labour regulations. Personnel management is decentralised but guided by the HR department, ensuring compliance and consistency. Practices such as internal mobility and transparent telework criteria reflect strong regulatory awareness. This competency is seen as essential for fair, effective, and legally compliant HR management.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

PORTUGAL

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	4	Anticipating skill needs is acknowledged as important by the Portuguese organisations that took part in the study, which use performance evaluations to identify training priorities. This approach has supported targeted upskilling and reskilling efforts. Nonetheless, actions tend to address immediate needs rather than follow long-term strategic planning. Strengthening foresight mechanisms could improve alignment with future organisational challenges.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	It was considered a high priority since talent attraction and recruitment in Portugal are essential due to the growing focus on employee well-being, work-life balance, and career development. Internal recruitment, flexibility, and reskilling are key strategies to meet these demands. The use of digital tools also supports these processes.
			To manage digital communication processes	3	The level 3 priority assigned to managing digital communication processes reflects a moderate importance in the current context. While the role of digital tools in supporting remote work and internal communication is recognised, especially after the pandemic, these are already relatively well integrated into the organisation's routine. Therefore, they do not represent an urgent challenge, but rather a process in consolidation. The main focus remains on human-centered aspects such as well-being, development, and talent retention, with digital communication serving as a relevant but not critical support.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	5	We can verify a significant investment in upskilling and reskilling, which are essential actions to ensure employees continuously adapt to new demands, promote career development, and prepare the organisation for future challenges. Training is integrated into a performance evaluation system, allowing individual development to align with strategic objectives, making this area a key priority.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	4	In Portugal, environmental and sustainability issues are gaining increasing visibility in organisations, but they do not yet represent a clear priority in human resource management. Although there is a consolidated focus on the social dimension of sustainability, notably on employee well-being and work-life balance, the integration of environmental objectives into HR strategies remains incipient. Nevertheless, this competence is expected to become more relevant in the near future, driven by regulatory pressures and growing social awareness of environmental issues.

HR⁺ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

PORTUGAL

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	In Portugal, the use of digital tools and automation has been growing, especially after the pandemic. However, their application is often partial and focused on specific areas, not reflecting a complete transformation of the work environment. This skill tends to gain greater relevance with technological evolution and the pressure for greater efficiency.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	In Portugal, workforce development policies are recognised and implemented, with a focus on continuous training, retraining and talent management. However, the strategic and comprehensive implementation of these policies varies between organisations. Increasing regulatory pressure and the need to adapt to technological and demographic changes indicate that this competency will gain greater relevance in the future.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	3	In Portugal, change management is recognised as an important competency, particularly in contexts of organisational transformation. However, its structured application is not yet widespread and is often limited to specific projects or isolated initiatives. As organisational adaptation becomes more critical and training opportunities expand, this competency is expected to gain greater relevance in the near future.

COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

BELGIUM

HR+ SKILL MATRIX - BELGIUM				Territorial relevance - (1-5)		
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	Belgium	Reasoning	
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	Belgian HR professionals highlighted similar shifts toward digital HR tools. The use of HR platforms and integration of AI-based systems for analytics and automation reflects a strong relevance of this competence.	
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnelcomplying with industrial relations and labour regulations	5	Compliance is highly relevant in Belgium due to the intersection of EU regulations and local laws. Interviews, especially from public and international organisations, stressed that HR must rigorously ensure regulatory alignment.	

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COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

BELGIUM

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	4	Belgian interviewees discussed skill mapping initiatives, such as internal mobility programmes and structured talent development frameworks, particularly in the public sector and large organisations.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Belgian HR leaders stressed employer branding, international recruitment, and use of digital tools to attract diverse candidates. They also noted increased competition for talent in multilingual and cross-border contexts.
			To manage digital communication processes	3	Belgium's HR context includes remote teams and multilingual staff. While tools are in place, interviews showed digital communication is generally used to support processes rather than being an advanced strategic skill.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	4	Belgian HR professionals emphasized the importance of ethical frameworks around AI use, particularly in international or governmental contexts. They see HR as a key player in ensuring ethical compliance and data responsibility.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	3	Strategic HRM is a strong theme in Belgium, particularly in large and international institutions. HR is involved in shaping organizational direction and planning for future skill needs based on labour market trends.

HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

BELGIUM

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artficial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	Belgian interviewees identified managing transformation as core to HR, particularly when introducing hybrid work or AI tools. Structured onboarding and engagement initiatives were used to support transitions.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	Belgian HR professionals are actively managing culture across distributed teams. Virtual coffee breaks and inclusive policy development were cited to maintain cohesion in hybrid environments.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	3	Belgium's HR practices include resilience training and structural measures to support employee adaptability. HR professionals noted the role of coaching and flexible scheduling as key support mechanisms.

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COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

FRANCE

HR+ SKILL MATRIX - FRANCE				Territorial relevance - (1-5)	
Most relevant trends	Impacts on HR role and challenges for HR managers	Main HR managers strategies	Key competencies	France	Reasoning
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To develop hard skills and digital tools mastering	To manage digital office tools, digital systems, platforms and reporting	4	Interviewees in France emphasized the importance of digital systems and HRIS in modern HR practice. For instance, AI-driven dashboards and automation of administrative tasks were mentioned as common tools in HR departments.
	A. Negative demographic trends D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force		To administrate and manage personnelcomplying with industrial relations and labour regulations	4	HR managers in France must navigate strict labour laws and GDPR regulations. Compliance with evolving national labour frameworks and data protection laws is a fundamental component of their daily responsibilities.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

FRANCE

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force	To match staff demand from the organisation with labour market	To map and anticipate skill needs for the organisation	4	French HR professionals noted that anticipating skill gaps and focusing on internal development is increasingly necessary. One expert emphasised the risk of stagnant experience and the need for continuous learning systems.
			To attract, recruit and select talents	5	Talent attraction and recruitment were described as increasingly data-driven and strategic. French HR managers discussed AI-based CV screening and remote hiring strategies to broaden the talent pool.
			To manage digital communication processes	3	Digital communication tools are widely used in French organizations, but are not yet a strategic HR competence. While hybrid work has normalised Teams/Slack use, communication management remains more operational.
TWIN TRANSITION	B. Cultural/value changes in society C. Automation D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force J. Adaptation to the twin transition	To manage and develop knowledge and skills in the organisation	To design and manage learning opportunities to cultivate organisation's knowledge and know how	4	French HR interviews reflected growing awareness of ethical implications in using AI for recruitment and performance monitoring. The need to balance automation with human oversight was highlighted.
			To align HR strategies with environmental goals, including fostering of sustainability-oriented behaviours and practices among employees	2	HR managers in France are expected to align HR strategies with company goals. Interviews noted a shift to strategic roles, with a growing need for data-driven decision-making and long-term talent planning.

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HR+ COUNTRIES SKILLS MATRIX

FRANCE

TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	A. Negative demographic trends B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants G. Diffusion of Artficial Intelligence H. Lack of specialised training to upskill and reskill labour force I. Global economic uncertainty	Complexity management and inclusion	To reshape the work environment using digital tools and automation	4	French HR leaders described managing change and transitions as a key challenge, especially in the context of digitalisation and new work models. HR plays a central role in change communication and support.
			To plan and implement organisational staff development policies	4	Organisational culture and employee experience were frequently mentioned in France, particularly post-pandemic. HR focuses on team rituals, feedback loops, and inclusion as part of employee well-being strategies.
TWIN TRANSITION DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE MIGRATION POLICIES	B. Cultural/value changes in society D. Labour supply/demand mismatch E. Lack of programmes for labour integration of migrants F. Adaptation to climate change G. Diffusion of Artificial Intelligence I. Global economic uncertainty	Change management as a cross-cutting competence	Change Management	3	Resilience and adaptability are seen as vital. HR in France is implementing mental health programmes, stress management workshops, and policies promoting work-life balance.