

JOB: Job Orientation – Better fit



Manual for recruiting and onboarding



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Purpose and Scope of the Manual

This manual serves as a comprehensive guideline and its primary purpose is to outline practical methodologies and materials that companies, especially those in the construction sector and other sectors, can implement easily to improve talent acquisition and retention. The ultimate goal is to prevent training drop-outs by optimizing the match between applicants' professional interests and the actual requirements and expectations of companies. The manual focuses on building a cohesive strategy, recognizing that in the technical construction industry, recruitment is undergoing a profound transformation due to digitalization, sustainability, and changing regulations.

The report is structured around the key phases of the employee journey, covering the following essential information:

I. Future-Oriented Recruiting Strategies

This section defines forward-looking recruiting and addresses new trends in the construction sector. It outlines strategies necessary to stay competitive, such as analysing employment trends, mapping emerging skills (like BIM specialists or drone operators), and focusing on employer branding.

II. Matching Requirements with Competences

This central part of the report details a methodology for assessing candidates' existing skills and interests to ensure a good match with company needs, thus addressing potential qualification gaps.

- Key Requirements: It identifies essential competencies required by construction companies
- Assessment Tools: It presents useful methods adapted from potential analysis concepts, such as work samples, trial work, technical discussions, case studies, role-play, and easily accessible online assessment tests (for math, language, or safety knowledge) to identify strengths and training needs
- Job Interviews: It offers recommendations for structured job interviews

III. Recruiting Instruments

This section presents a wide range of useful recruiting tools. It's about attracting the "right" candidates and it focuses to showcase the diversity of opportunities online and offline.

IV. Preboarding and Onboarding

This section focuses on the systematic process of integration to maximize employee motivation, long-term loyalty, and productivity, counteracting issues like disappointed expectations and unclear roles that lead to early resignations.



Hiring for the future in construction: forward-looking recruiting

In the construction industry—traditionally rooted in manual and technical skills—recruiting is undergoing a profound transformation. Environmental challenges, technological innovation, and evolving regulations demand a new mindset: **it's no longer enough to fill today's roles; companies must anticipate tomorrow's needs.**

Surely recruitment strategies vary significantly between large companies and small businesses. These differences are shaped by organizational structure, available resources, and strategic goals. While large companies often rely on structured, tech-driven processes, small businesses tend to prefer more personal and flexible approaches.

Why traditional recruiting is no longer enough?

The construction sector is rapidly evolving due to:

- Digitalization of construction sites (BIM, drones, IoT sensors)
- New sustainable materials and green building techniques
- Stricter environmental and safety regulations
- Automation and robotics for repetitive or hazardous tasks

These trends are creating new professional roles and reshaping the skill sets required for traditional ones

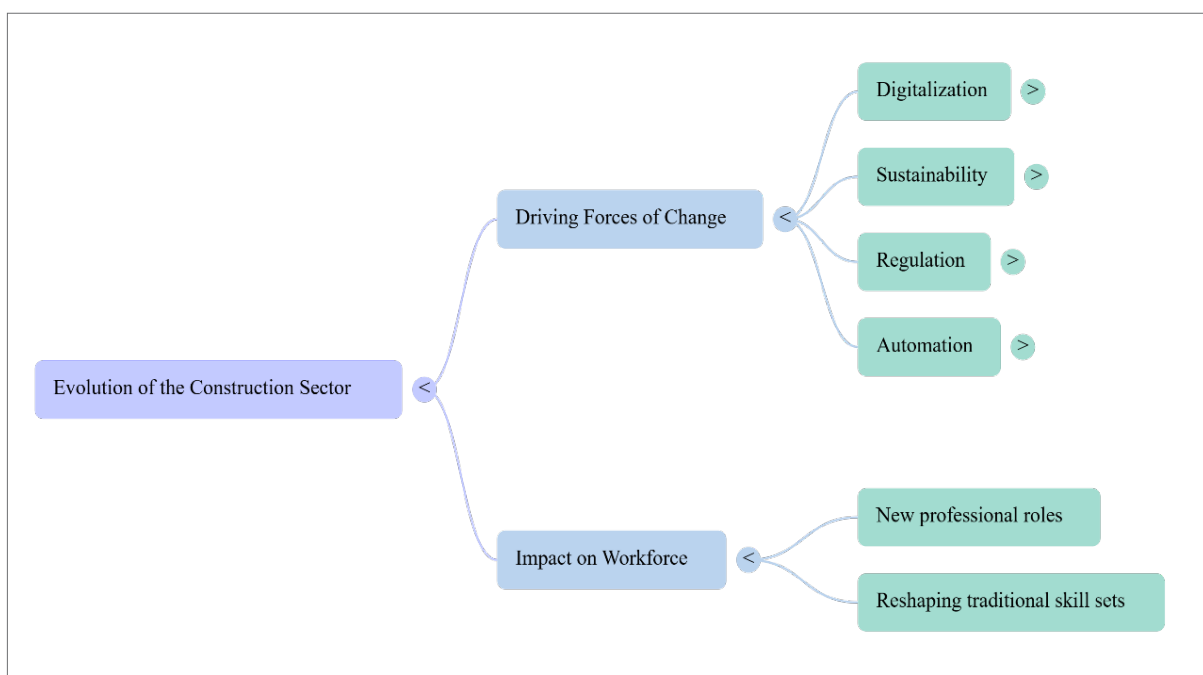


Figure 1: Changes into the Construction Sector



Future-oriented recruiting in construction

To stay competitive, construction companies need adopt a proactive approach based on:

1. Analysing employment trends

- Studying sector analysis
- Mapping emerging skills (e.g., BIM specialists, environmental technicians, drone operators)

2. Staying up to date with the innovative solutions

- Using collaborative platforms for project management
- Adopting predictive safety tools on-site

3. Collaborating with training institutions

- Partnering with vocational schools, technical schools and construction academies
- Offering continuous training programs to upskill the workforce

4. Employer branding and talent attraction

- Promoting an innovative and sustainable company culture
- Highlighting opportunities for growth and specialization

5. Aligning with business strategy

Future-oriented recruiting in construction must be integrated into the company's long-term vision. Key questions to ask include:

- What skills will be essential for building sustainably and safely?
- How can we attract young talent to a sector often seen as traditional?
- What investments in training and technology are needed today to stay competitive tomorrow?



New Trends in Construction Recruitment

The construction sector is undergoing a major transformation in how it attracts and retains talent. With a growing labour shortage and an aging workforce, companies are crucial to rethink their recruitment strategies to stay competitive and future ready.

One of the most significant shifts is the increased use of technology in both the recruitment process and on the job site. Companies can leverage AI-driven platforms to streamline hiring, match candidates more effectively, and reduce time-to-hire. At the same time, roles requiring digital skills—such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) specialists, drone operators, and construction tech managers—are in high demand.

Technology-driven platforms, diversity and inclusion efforts, skills-based hiring and focus on employer branding have revolutionised the way construction companies attract and retain talent. Embracing these advancements is essential for companies to stay competitive, adapt to changing demands, and build strong, dynamic teams capable of driving innovation and success in the modern construction world.

To **attract younger generations**, companies have to use social media, short-form video content, and mobile-friendly job platforms. These tools effectively highlight the modern, tech-driven nature of the construction industry while helping to break down outdated stereotypes.

In many countries, to address the skills gap, many companies are investing in apprenticeship programs, vocational partnerships, and on-the-job training. These initiatives help build a pipeline of skilled workers while offering young people a clear, debt-free path into a stable career.

Diversity and inclusion are becoming central to recruitment strategies. Companies should actively work to attract more women and underrepresented groups into the trades, recognizing that a more diverse workforce brings fresh perspectives and helps fill critical roles.

Finally, there's a growing emphasis on the candidate experience. From faster application processes to personalized communication and clear career development paths, construction firms are treating job seekers more like customers.



Matching requirements of companies with competences of applicants

Companies require their employees to have **manual skills and job-related specific competences**, e.g. to be able to operate tools, machines and equipment correctly and safely. Another occupation-related aspect involves **technical skills**, which are required in all countries, but which differ in terms of the requirements/training content of the occupations in the individual countries. In Greece, for example, analysing digital data is important, while the German framework curriculum for vocational training in the construction professions envisages that the use of digital media in consideration of the regulations on data protection and data security must be acquired as an overarching skill.

Physical fitness and stamina also matter, for instance to be able to lift heavy materials such as bricks or carry out demolition and chiselling work properly. In order to be able to work correctly and safely on construction sites, trainees and skilled workers must possess a good **knowledge of** the respective **national language** in all countries. In Italy, it is even mandatory that skilled workers have to be able to understand working and safety instructions.

This is even more important as **teamwork** is one of the soft skills that is considered important in all countries. In addition, companies expect **willingness to work and willingness to learn**. Other important soft skills identified in all countries are **reliability and flexibility**, for example being able to constantly adapt to changing working conditions when changing construction sites. More details on this topic can be found on www.joborientation.eu (Guideline for matching requirements of companies with skills and competences of applicants).

Due to different types of schools and different duration of training in the various countries, the knowledge level is different.

Knowledge of safety regulations and behaviour is important in Italy, Greece and Spain. In Germany trainees are expected to be aware of dangers. Safety regulations are part of their training. When looking for construction workers, this knowledge is not explicitly mentioned. Finally in Germany, as in Greece and Spain, it is important to have a driving licence.



It is interesting to note that despite the importance of BIM (Building Information Management) in construction, digital skills are surprisingly not required of skilled workers in all countries. For example, research in Italy has shown that knowledge of BIM is required for engineers and architects. The reason for this could therefore be that BIM is standard for managers, but not (yet) for skilled workers.

Language skills beyond the own national language are only required in Greece (English). Other skills such as organisation and planning, creativity are only important in Greece and Italy.

In terms of social skills, there are more similarities between the countries than differences. Only four points of difference were identified: Accuracy, Personal initiative, Communication skills and Problem Solving. Accuracy is important in Italy, Greece and Germany, but not in Spain. Personal initiative is required in Greece, Germany and Spain. The exception here is Italy. Germany is the exception when it comes to problem solving as well as when it comes to communication skills. Communication skills are not emphasised in this country but are important in Italy, Spain and Greece.

A clear picture emerges: the requirements for specialist knowledge and technical skills differ to some extent. This can be attributed to the different training paths and training periods or, as far as technical skills are concerned, to the different job-related competences.

■ A good example is the difference between the requirements of German apprenticeship applicants in the construction industry and for car mechatronics. The results for the non-occupation-specific competences are similar, as are the social competences. There is also greater agreement than differences between the countries for social skills.

Requested are manual skills and job-related specific competences combined with physical fitness and stamina to be able to carry out the profession properly. Furthermore, companies require good knowledge of the local language as well as willingness to work, willingness to learn, flexibility, reliability and the ability to work in a team.

Comparing requirements with skills and competences – General recommendations for companies

It is recommended splitting the job description in two parts to present basic requirements and an individual job description to present 'the ideal candidate'.

This allows applicants to better assess whether they fit the technical requirements of the position AND the culture within the company simultaneously. For this purpose, companies can also refer to the general competencies needed, e.g. spatial imagination and teamwork, allowing especially pupils to directly find out if they match good matching.

Since there are multiple skills and competences, companies are advised to choose the most important competence they seek for in



a candidate. Companies' individual key factors for employment (in a technical regard) or fitting in the team (soft skills) could be integrated in the job descriptions and/or in their engagement in schools.

During the demographic change and a smaller application pool, many companies only find suitable employees by accepting non-typical standards, documents or proofs. Their experience shows that a willingness to change, especially when it comes to antiquated requirements for an employment relationship, pays off. An openness towards unconventional target groups, which companies can train on the job according to their needs, often pays off in terms of long-term employee retention.

Identify important skills for construction

The tools below are designed to identify strengths and training needs. This applies to various target groups, such as the validation of non-formally acquired skills among people with professional experience as well as for young people with no previous work related training. Companies are able to customise the tools for their individual needs and desired target groups.

Work sample

The work sample can be used to determine (initial) professional skills. It usually involves small practical or mainly manual activities, such as manufacturing or repair work that can be carried out relatively quickly. Candidates can demonstrate that they perform

their tasks in a planned and structured manner, carry them out professionally and reflect on their work afterwards. Further knowledge such as compliance with safety standards can also be assessed.

Trial work

During a trial work period, the applicant works in the company for one or more days and is closely accompanied. In this way, the company can find out about technical, job-related competences and manual skills as well as the applicant's fit into the team, flexibility and reliability. For insurance reasons, it is recommended that the trial work is covered by an internship contract or other forms of insurance.

It is common to check previous experiences and prove workers during a trial period (max. 2-6 months in Germany, Italy and Spain, depending on the type of employment; in Greece 12 months in case of a permanent contract). However, the company and the person interested in an employment relationship can also agree on a shorter trial period of a few weeks. During this period, the employment relationship can be terminated by both parties (employer and employee) with a shortened (Germany) or no notice period at all (Greece, Italy, Spain). Of course, this depends on the specific terms outlined in the employment contract. In many cases, for instance, the contract may include a standard notice period such as two weeks.



Technical discussion

A technical discussion can be conducted during the execution of a specific assignment or a job interview to assess which decisions they make and why. The interviewer can scrutinise the candidate's actions throughout each work step and ask for justifications and basic knowledge. During a technical discussion, participants can also deal with a hypothetical case using verbal descriptions or materials (e.g. diagrams, photos, drawings) provided by the company.

Role-Play/simulated conversation

A role play is primarily used to assess communication skills, but also the flexibility to adapt quickly to new situations. In a role play, the candidate is placed in a simulated situation in which, for example, they have to advise a customer or explain workflows. Depending on the design of such a simulation, ideally a simulation with practical relevance, companies can also assess knowledge, e.g. about safety & security regulations, and cognitive skills.

Case studies

In a case study, the candidate is provided with realistic materials and a description of the behaviour of people in the workplace. The candidate is asked to use this information to develop and explain a solution strategy and/or approaches. The candidate can present the result of his/her work in various ways, either in writing (e.g. technical drawings or calculations) or by presenting the results (e.g. oral explanations of calculations, drawings or manufactured workpieces).

Presentation

Companies can ask candidates to present previous work results, e.g. workpieces or presentations from their school years. Alternatively, applicants can also be asked to present previous internships. Candidates should describe and evaluate the planning and realisation of their achievements and professional experience in retrospect.

Online assessment tests

Companies can use digital tools to evaluate the knowledge, skills and behaviour of their candidates. Those tests enable a personalized, real-time and scalable assessment, for example online-quizzes, adaptive tests, virtual simulations and AI-based feedback. However, companies should keep in mind that not all people have access to reliable tech and internet which could lead to concerns about fairness and reliability. However, instant feedback supports timely improvement and real-life skills can be evaluated.

This applies to various free online platforms that can be used to test maths skills in real time. For example, the learning platforms Khan Academy and Numbas offer freely accessible tasks for calculating areas and quantities, enabling construction companies to assess initial applied mathematical knowledge relevant to the sector. German companies can also use the free Azubitest for this purpose. Several of the 15 questions deal with calculating with quantities and basic calculations. There are also online tests for other shared requirements of companies that companies can use at a low threshold: Although the spatial reasoning test on www.123test.com is only available in English and German, it only com-



prises 10 questions, so that interested companies from the other project partner countries can easily translate it into other languages. The same applies to the Spatial Imagination Test from Psychology Today, which is published in English only. However, as it mainly involves visual assignments, it can be used globally (the questions can be automatically translated using the standard built-in browser extension).

www.Sprachtest.de offers tests (reading and listening comprehension, vocabulary as well as grammar), following the completion of which (15 minutes) an initial classification and information on the current level of knowledge is determined. The free language test is available for English, Business English, Spanish, French, Italian and German. For standardisation and comparability, the language level is divided into levels A1 - C2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Similar tests for other languages, including Greek, are offered by www.50languages.com and www.greek-out.com. The aforementioned Azubitest (only in German) can also be used to assess spelling skills as well as language and reading comprehension.

There is also a simulation-based online assessment test (in German and English) and an online quiz (in Italian) for the evaluation of knowledge of safety & security regulations on construction sites. In Spain, there is an Online Test on Occupational Risk Prevention (PRL - Prevención de Riesgos Laborales), a free online test with 10 questions designed to evaluate basic knowledge of occupational safety, personal protective equipment (PPE), risk types, and general safety proce-

dures. This type of test can be useful during recruitment processes to assess whether a candidate understands essential workplace safety concepts. Furthermore, modern browsers such as Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Opera, Safari and Microsoft Edge provide the option to easily translate the quiz with just one click. This allows it to be used in other countries, such as Greece, where there is no similar free online tool.

Digital skills can be assessed and verified with the free MyDigiSkills test. The test takes around 20 minutes, is based on the Digital Competence Framework for EU Citizens (DigComp) and is implemented in all EU languages. In addition to information and data literacy, (digital) communication and collaboration, digital content creation and technical problem-solving skills, this test can also be used to self-assess the skills regarding safety in digital environments. If the questions are answered truthfully, this self-assessment also provides companies with important insights into the competences of their applicants.

Of course, companies can also develop their own digital assessment test to evaluate the competences that are most important to them. Like the potential analysis, the digital assessment should be strengths-oriented while using self and external evaluations as well as a maximum of 25 questions. There are multiple online tools to create digital assessments in various forms (e.g. www.H5P.org, Kahoot, Mentimeter, Wordwall) but they are not free to use. Companies could also use survey tools to create their own quizzes, but they require the creation of an account (e.g. Google/Microsoft Forms).



Definition of specific work-related terms

Another low-threshold way for companies to find out the specialist knowledge of their potential employees is to ask for information on certain technical terms that are important for the profession.

The German Federal Employment Agency (BA) offers a free online database with terms from 10 professional fields, including construction professions. The database also offers explanations in 12 languages, so that this tool can also be used in the event of possible language difficulties or for self-study to fulfil the requirements of companies for a sufficient language level.

Translations are currently available for German, English and Greek. However, Italian and Spanish companies can also follow the same approach by focussing on individual technical terms that are important to them. Italian companies can also access a comparable glossary. Spanish companies can use the Diccionario de la Construcción to create their own technical vocabulary quizzes or exercises. This Construction Dictionary by the Fundación Laboral provides a technical glossary of over 2,000 construction-related terms, with illustrations and accessible explanations.

By defining important terms in everyday working life, relevant language skills and knowledge of safety & security regulations can also be assessed.

Results from career guidance in school

Career guidance in general education schools are good indicators of pupils' interests and skills and thus offer a first, unbiased step towards a career. Companies could ask for the strengths and interests identified during the school-based careers guidance and compare them with their own requirements.

Requirement	Tools
Spatial imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample (e.g. furnishing a flat based on a floor plan) • Trial work • Online assessment tests (www.123test.com, Psychology Today) • Results from career guidance in school
Manual dexterity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample • Trial work • Case studies • Results from career guidance in school
Job-related specific competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample • Trial work • Technical discussion • Role-Play/simulated conversation • Case studies • Definition of specific work-related terms (e.g. www.100fachbegriffe.planet-beruf.de/ (DE, EN, GR), www.studiopetrillo.com/glossario-termini-edilizia.html (IT))
Applied mathematical knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial work • Technical discussion • Role-Play/simulated conversation • Case studies • Online assessment tests (Khan Academy, Numbas database)
Technical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample • Trial work • Technical discussion • Case studies • Digital assessment tests (Europass platform, MyDigiSkills)
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample • Trial work • Technical discussion • Role-Play/simulated conversation
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial work • Technical discussion • Case studies • Presentation
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial work
Physical fitness and stamina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample • Trial work
Good knowledge of respective national language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial work • Technical discussion • Role-Play/simulated conversation • Case studies • Presentation • Online assessment tests (www.sprachtest.de, www.50languages.com, www.greek-out.com) • Definition of specific work-related terms (e.g. www.100fachbegriffe.planet-beruf.de/ (DE, EN, GR), www.studiopetrillo.com/glossario-termini-edilizia.html (IT)) • Results from career guidance in school
Knowledge of safety & security regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work sample • Trial work • Digital assessment tests (Lernportal BG Bau in EN and DE; www.testo-unico-sicurezza.com/DEMO/ in IT) • Technical discussion • Role-Play/simulated conversation • Case studies • Definition of specific work-related terms (e.g. www.100fachbegriffe.planet-beruf.de/ (DE, EN, GR), www.studiopetrillo.com/glossario-termini-edilizia.html (IT))



Alternative: Use low-threshold tests for other target groups

Competence assessment procedures should be low-threshold and, as described above, only identify the most important one or two competences from the company's perspective. However, existing skills assessment and recognition or validation procedures are not suitable for the target group of young people without vocational qualifications. A comparison of selected procedures from various European countries shows that these require prior knowledge, are not low-threshold or take too long and/or are costly that enable comparative analyses between subgroups (e.g. different training courses, education systems).

Companies can use online tests for certain professions, including construction, to obtain a valid, objective and meaningful assessment of an applicant's professional qualifications and thus judge whether a candidate is suitable for vacancies in their company.

In Germany, for example, there is the MYS-KILLS online test, which consists of 125 questions. The test was developed for people without a formal qualification but with demonstrable skills in a training occupation, but it can also be used to identify prior knowledge or qualification requirements before training begins. The result provides an overview of your applicant's professional competences - divided into operational fields of application (also known as fields of action). These are derived from the training regulations and the requirements in the workplace. In Germany, the full test is offered by selected organisations under the supervision of qualified instructors, resulting in a high-quality test lasting three to four hours. Companies can contact the local employer service at their local employment agency for more information.

Recommendations for job interviews

Job interviews are another helpful and important tool to find out whether an applicant matches the company properly. They are an integral part of the assessment process and are essential for determining the cultural fit. Therefore, companies ideally conduct interviews with two people and define the respective roles in advance, i.e. who leads the interview and who focuses more on observation.

How to ask the right questions

As described in the previous chapters, companies are also advised to focus on the 1-2 key competences they seek for in candidates when conducting interviews. Furthermore, companies are advised to establish a set of core questions to ask to all candidates. These are usually competency-based (also known as behaviour-based) questions that give applicants the opportunity to use examples to show that they meet the requirements of the job specification.

Helpful categories of questions are:

- basic interview questions
- questions about professional background
- questions about personality
- sector-related questions
- questions about the behaviour during the interview
- challenging questions

Suggestions

Companies can use the following exemplary questions to assess certain competences and individual strengths:

■ Questions to discover the motivation of the candidate:

- Why did you apply for this job?



- Tell me about your current or previous position.
- What are your greatest achievements?
- What do you consider to be your weakness?

■ Questions to assess mastery of essential criteria:

- What are your strongest areas of knowledge?
- How did you acquire your skills and knowledge?

■ Questions to identify key skills:

- Teamwork: Tell me about a time when you worked well as part of a team.
- Communication: How would you go about explaining a complex issue to a colleague?
- Problem-solving: Describe a time you identified and solved a problem before it became urgent.
- Achieve deadlines: How do you work under the pressure of tight deadlines?

Tips for conducting interviews

Conducting a successful interview requires preparation and a methodical approach. One effective framework to guide the process is the „5 Cs“ model, which includes Character, Culture Fit, Career Path, Competence, and Communication Skills. These five areas are crucial for determining whether a candidate is both technically skilled and compatible with the team and the company's values. Thus, adequate preparation is essential which can be achieved by designing a structured interview plan to ensure all key topics are covered. One of the primary goals is to build a rapport with the candidate, creating a comfortable environment where they feel encouraged to speak candidly.

During the interview, it is crucial to ask open-ended questions as it allows the candidate to provide detailed answers that reveal more about their experiences, values, and competences. The STAR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result) is particularly effective in this context. It prompts candidates to share specific examples, demonstrating their skills in action. This method can be used for behavioural and situational interview questions, for example:

- Tell me about a mistake you've made. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time you worked with other departments to complete a project.

Furthermore, active listening and careful observation throughout the interview are essential. Companies should pay attention not only to what the candidate says but also to their body language and tone. These non-verbal cues can offer deeper insights into their interests and engagement. Follow-up questions are another valuable tool for assessing the candidate's skill of flexibility as well as diving deeper into the candidate's answers and clearing up any ambiguities.

Evaluating cultural fit is another critical aspect. Does the candidate's work style and values align with the company's culture? This can be assessed through targeted questions and observations, e.g. reactions to cultural aspects such as teamwork or valuing work performance discussed during the interview. At the end of the interview, it is important to provide the opportunity for candidates to ask their own questions. This not only demonstrates respect for their perspective but also offers insights into what they value most in an employer.



Recruiting tools

Most countries make use of a wide range of instruments, including social media, company websites, and school visits to workplaces. There are many tools that can be used to attract young people. However, these tools are often adapted to suit the specific cultural and educational contexts of each country.

The use of digital tools (social media, websites, job platforms)

While digital recruitment tools are primarily used by large, well-structured companies, they can also serve as a valuable source of inspiration for smaller enterprises looking to modernize their hiring processes.

Smart tools, bright futures: digital engagement for apprentices and young employees

To attract and engage future apprentices or young workers, a company should consider creating a dedicated section on its website specifically designed for students. This space should reflect a youthful and dynamic tone, using visuals, language, and design elements that resonate with a younger audience. It could showcase what the apprenticeship involves, how the training is structured, and what career paths are available afterward. Introducing the team, highlighting the company culture, and sharing stories from current apprentices or young workers can help make the experience feel more relatable and inspiring.

Social media and digital tools in recruitment: a strategic approach

Social media has become a cornerstone of modern recruitment strategies, particularly for engaging younger generations. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts are ideal for sharing short, dynamic videos that offer a glimpse into company life, showcase apprenticeship opportunities, and highlight the human side of the workplace. Tools like WhatsApp Business complement these platforms by enabling direct, personal communication with potential candidates.

Job boards are online platforms where employers post job openings and job seekers can search for employment opportunities. They serve as a centralized resource for finding and applying for jobs across various industries and locations. Popular examples include Indeed and LinkedIn.

Smaller enterprises may face limitations in terms of budget, staff, and technical expertise. However, they can still benefit greatly from digital recruitment by adopting a more agile and authentic approach. Even with limited resources, smaller companies can create engaging content using smartphones, free editing tools, and organic social media engagement. Their strength often lies in their ability to communicate directly and personally, which resonates well with younger audiences.



A strong content strategy is essential for both small and large companies. Companies should post regularly, sharing a mix of informative, entertaining, and authentic content that reflects their brand identity. The goal is not just to inform, but to build a sense of community around training and career development.

Engagement is key. Responding to comments, answering questions, and encouraging dialogue helps create a two-way relationship with followers. This interaction fosters trust and positions the company—large or small—as approachable and responsive. Beyond content, the application process must be optimized for mobile devices. Young candidates expect a fast, intuitive experience that allows them to apply directly from their phones in just a few steps.

The benefits of digital recruitment extend beyond visibility. Online platforms allow companies to reach a wider audience, including candidates from different regions and with specific skill profiles. They also help reduce costs, as digital tools often lower the expenses associated with traditional advertising and recruitment management. Larger companies often use advanced tools like Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to manage candidate flows, streamline communication, and personalize the recruitment journey. While these systems may be out of reach for some smaller businesses, there are affordable or even free alternatives that can still improve organization and efficiency.

Finally, digital recruitment can be integrated with broader marketing strategies, strengthening the employer brand and aligning recruitment with overall communication goals. Technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning—more commonly used by larger firms—are increasingly automating parts of the selection process, such as CV screening and candidate matching.

Ultimately, digital recruitment tools contribute to a more respectful and engaging candidate experience. By making the process more transparent, interactive, and user-friendly, companies of all sizes can leave a positive impression—even on those who are not ultimately selected.



Most known digital recruitment platform across the participating countries:

Country	Platform	Type	Main Purpose	Main Users
Spain	Orienta Line	Education & career guidance	Helps secondary students choose study and career paths through questionnaires and information on degrees and VET options.	Students, families, counsellors
Spain	Talent Map (Mapa de Talento)	HR strategy (concept)	Approach to identify and plan internal and external talent, supporting skills matching, succession planning, and workforce planning.	Companies, HR departments
Spain	Educa Madrid	Digital education platform	Public digital environment for online learning, communication, and educational resources.	Students, teachers, families
Greece	JobFind.gr	Job portal	Generalist job board supporting job ads, CV uploads, and career resources in Greek and English.	Jobseekers, employers
Greece	Recruit-Greece.gr	Job portal	Smaller recruitment platform connecting employers with talent in Greece.	Employers, jobseekers
Greece	Skywalker.gr	Job portal	Long-established job portal offering job listings, CV tools, and career guidance.	Jobseekers, employers
Greece	ApplinterN	Public VET & employment platform	Connects VET students with apprenticeships, internships, and jobs; supports mentoring and dual education.	VET students, employers
Italy	BLEN.it	Sector job platform (construction)	National platform matching construction workers and companies; includes training and certification information.	Workers, companies, training bodies
Germany	Lehrstellenbörse	Sector job platform (crafts including construction)	Free online database for apprenticeship opportunities provided by the Chambers of Crafts and the Chambers of Commerce	Students, companies, chambers



Direct and spontaneous applications through the company website

Most companies today include a dedicated section on their official website—often titled „Careers“ or „Work with Us“—where candidates can submit their applications directly to the Human Resources department. This channel offers a valuable opportunity for individuals to introduce themselves to a company, even in the absence of a specific job posting.

Submitting a spontaneous application allows candidates to proactively present their professional profile, skills, and motivation. It demonstrates initiative and genuine interest in the company, which can make a strong impression on recruiters. Unlike traditional applications that respond to advertised vacancies, this approach opens the door to potential opportunities that may not yet be publicly listed or that could arise in the near future.

For companies, receiving unsolicited applications can be equally beneficial. It helps build a talent pool of motivated individuals who are already aligned with the company's values and culture. In some cases, a well-crafted spontaneous application can even lead to the creation of a new role tailored to the candidate's strengths.

To make the most of this opportunity, candidates should ensure their application is personalized, clearly explains why they are interested in the company, and highlights how their background could contribute to its success.

Online vs. traditional job advertisements: reaching different audiences

When it comes to recruiting both skilled workers and apprentices, companies today often

find themselves choosing between online job advertisements and more traditional print ads in local newspapers. Each method has its own strengths and is suited to different target audiences.

Online job adverts have become increasingly popular due to their wide reach and efficiency. They allow companies to connect with a large pool of potential candidates quickly and directly. These platforms often enable real-time communication, faster response times, and easier application processes. Additionally, online ads tend to be more cost-effective and flexible, allowing for frequent updates and targeted campaigns.

On the other hand, traditional job advertisements in newspapers still hold value, particularly when targeting skilled workers with strong local ties or individuals who may not be very active online. Print ads are often perceived as more formal and trustworthy, which can appeal to older generations or those who prefer a more traditional approach to job searching.

The choice between the two often comes down to the intended audience. Online platforms are especially effective for reaching younger people, such as recent graduates or apprentices, who are accustomed to digital communication. In contrast, newspaper ads may be more effective for reaching experienced professionals or older job seekers who are less engaged with digital media.

Ultimately, a balanced recruitment strategy that combines both online and traditional methods can help companies reach a broader and more diverse range of candidates.



Constructing futures: engaging talent through education, experience and peer inspiration

Laying the foundation: school partnerships and alternative hiring in construction

To ensure a steady and skilled workforce, construction companies must adopt effective recruitment strategies. One of the most impactful channels are establishing contact with schools and utilizing other recruitment methods. Building relationships with vocational schools, technical institutes, and (high) schools allows companies to engage early with students who are developing relevant skills.

This not only helps fill entry-level positions but also fosters long-term workforce development. In addition, companies can broaden their reach through other channels such as online job platforms, job fairs and recruitment agencies.

Together, these approaches create a robust and diverse talent pipeline essential for the industry's growth and sustainability.

Building interest: the power of practical experiences in recruitment

To attract new talent to the construction industry, companies could embrace inclusive and targeted recruitment strategies commonly used in other sectors. Beyond establishing direct connections with schools, some firms are also opening their doors to the public through open house events, offering firsthand insights into the industry and its career opportunities. Company visits for students, often organized in collaboration with schools, offer a valuable opportunity to introduce young people to the world of work.

These experiences allow students to observe how a company operates, learn about different professional roles, and understand the skills required. They also help students make more informed decisions about their educational paths and future careers.

At the same time, open house days allow companies to engage a broader audience, including teachers, parents, students, job seekers, and the general public.

During these events, students can participate in hands-on workshops and speak with apprentices, while parents and teachers can learn more about training programs and career development opportunities. Job seekers can explore working conditions and continuing education options, and the wider community can help spread the word about further job openings.

Through these initiatives, construction companies could not only promote their sector, but they could also build a concrete bridge between education and employment, encouraging new generations to consider a future in construction.

Across countries, in-person company visits and experiential activities are used to introduce students to vocational careers. Germany widely applies school-company visits. Spain relies on short internships, trial work periods, and "Try the Trade" workshops, often combined with school fairs and supervised site visits. In Greece, similar exposure mainly occurs through STEM-focused events. In Italy, such tools are limited, with PMI Day being the main national initiative where companies open their doors to students.



Apprentices as ambassadors: inspiring careers through peer connection

Peer-to-peer ambassador programmes play an important role in promoting vocational education and apprenticeships across Europe. Germany's program "Ausbildungsbotschafter" and Spain's Somos FP Dual demonstrate how trained young ambassadors can effectively inspire students by sharing real-life experiences and challenging stereotypes about vocational careers. Greece and Italy do not yet have fully structured national programmes, but both show growing use of youth-led, experience-based guidance through local or informal initiatives. Overall, these approaches highlight the value of young people as credible role models in supporting informed career choices and strengthening VET pathways.

between academic learning and the professional world, allowing individuals to gain hands-on experience, explore career paths, and build valuable networks within their chosen field. One of the most significant advantages of internships is the practical experience they provide. Interns get to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, which not only deepens their understanding but also enhances their professionalism and work ethic. Alongside this, internships are a powerful tool for skill development, helping individuals refine existing abilities and acquire new ones that are directly relevant to their future careers.

Internships also serve as a form of career exploration. They allow young people to test different roles and industries, helping them

Country	Program Name	Type of Ambassadors	Key Features	Web site
Germany	Ausbildungsbotschafter	Young apprentices or former apprentices	Peer-to-peer, school visits, communication training	www.ausbildungsbotschafter.online
Spain	Somos FP Dual	Students or graduates of Dual VET	Testimonials, events, social media, school outreach	somosfpdual.es
Greece	Business Ambassadors / EU Projects	Entrepreneurs, former students, mentors	VET promotion, mentoring, testimonials, EU-funded projects (e.g., ApplInterN,)	
Italy	Local initiatives / Erasmus+	Former students, teachers, peer educators	Local projects, peer education, testimonials, school orientation	

From classroom to career: the power of internships

Internships are a common and widely utilized tool for gaining practical work experience and they play a crucial role in shaping the early careers of students. They offer a bridge bet-

make more informed decisions about their professional paths. Moreover, the networking opportunities they offer — through interactions with colleagues, mentors, and industry professionals — can open doors to future job opportunities.



Internships should never be left to chance—they require thoughtful preparation and planning to ensure a meaningful experience for both the intern and the company. One of the most important aspects is assigning a dedicated contact person who will guide the intern throughout their time in the company. Ideally, this person could be a current apprentice, which helps create a peer-to-peer connection and makes the intern feel more at ease.

The first day is crucial. A warm and structured welcome sets the tone for the entire internship. The responsible contact person should introduce the intern to the team, provide an overview of the company, and clearly explain what has been planned for their stay. This helps the intern feel included and understand the purpose and expectations of their role.

At the end of the internship, it's important to hold a feedback interview. This is a chance to reflect on the experience, discuss what went well, and identify areas for improvement. If possible, the company should also provide a

written reference or certificate of participation, which can be a valuable addition to the intern's future applications.

In short, internships are more than just temporary roles — they are strategic stepping stones that enhance employability, build confidence, and often lead directly to long-term career opportunities.

Standing out at job fairs

Participating in a job fair can be a valuable opportunity for companies to connect with potential candidates, showcase their brand, and promote available positions. However, making the most of this opportunity requires thoughtful planning and an engaging presence.

There are two main categories of events that address different needs:

- Fairs for students and young people in training, designed to help school students, to discover internship opportunities and career prospects.
- Fairs for skilled workers and professionals looking for new opportunities or seeking new challenges.





Work while you learn: the dual VET revolution

Dual VET (Vocational Education and Training) is a model of education that combines theoretical learning with practical training. Is called “dual” because students split their time between:

- A vocational training centre or school, where they study the theory behind their profession.
- A company, where they apply what they’ve learned in a real work environment.

This setup helps students understand not just how things work, but why — and gives them a chance to develop both technical and soft skills.

Dual Vocational Education and Training plays a crucial role in preparing young people for the workforce. By giving students hands-on experience in real work environments, it helps them build the skills and confidence they need to transition smoothly into employment.

Another key advantage is that it greatly improves employability. Many students are offered jobs by the very companies where they completed their training, as employers already know their capabilities and how well they fit into the team. This creates a direct and effective pathway from education to employment.

Finally, Dual VET strengthens the connection between schools and the world of work. By involving companies in the training process, education becomes more dynamic and aligned with the actual needs of the labour market. This ensures that students are not only learning theory but are also gaining relevant, up-to-date skills that industries truly value.

Here is a visual comparison chart of the Dual VET systems in Germany, Spain, Italy, and Greece, highlighting their structure, duration, company involvement, compensation, and key challenges:

Country	Structure	Duration	Company Involvement	Compensation
Germany	Typically, 3-4 days/week in company, 1-2 days in school	2 to 3.5 years	Strong involvement of chambers and companies in training and certification	Paid (monthly salary ¹)
Spain	Alternating weeks or block formats between school and company	Typically, 1-2 years	Companies co-design training plans with schools	Often paid (salary)
Italy	School-work alternation, dual apprenticeship programs	1-3 years depending on program	Partnerships between schools, training centers, and companies	Paid (apprenticeship contracts)
Greece	EPAL and IEK programs with in-company training	1-2 years	Supported by Public Employment Service and EU projects	May include stipend ¹ or apprenticeship contract

¹ A salary is a regular payment made to employees in exchange for their professional work
A stipend is a fixed amount of money provided to individuals—such as interns, apprentices, or students—to support them during a period of training or education. May not include benefits and are taxed differently depending on the country and situation.



Public and private intermediation

How public employment services support companies in finding skilled talent

Public Employment Services (from here defined “PES”) offer a range of free or low-cost services that can support companies in finding the right talent.

These services maintain large databases of jobseekers, including profiles of skilled tradespeople, apprentices, and general labourers. By posting job vacancies through PES platforms, companies can reach a broad and diverse audience, including individuals who may not be active on commercial job boards. PES also offer pre-screening and matching services, helping employers identify candidates whose qualifications and experience align with the job requirements. In some countries, they provide financial incentives or subsidies for hiring unemployed individuals, young people, or those undergoing re-training—making it more cost-effective to bring new workers on board.

For apprenticeships and internships, PES often collaborate with vocational schools and training centres, helping companies connect with young people looking for hands-on experience. They can also support career fairs, information sessions, and company visits, which are particularly useful for promoting construction careers to students and jobseekers.

Moreover, PES can assist with administrative processes, such as contracts, onboarding, and access to training programs, reducing the HR burden on smaller construction firms.

From CVs to careers: the full-service role of employment agencies

Employment agencies can help companies find the right candidates for open positions, whether temporary, permanent, or on a project basis. They do this by posting job ads, screening candidates, conducting interviews, and often managing the initial stages of the employment relationship. For job seekers, these agencies offer access to job opportunities that may not be advertised, as well as support in preparing CVs, improving interview skills, and managing the application process. Many agencies specialize in specific sectors, such as construction. This specialization allows them to better understand employers’ needs and candidates’ qualifications, allowing for more accurate matching. Some agencies also focus on international recruitment, helping workers move across borders within the EU, often helping with visas, housing, and legal documentation. However, the significance of this recruitment tool varies considerably across countries.

Adapting recruiting instruments to the individual company

Before starting any recruitment process, it’s crucial for a company to take a step back and assess its specific needs. This initial phase lays the foundation for everything that follows, ensuring that each decision aligns with the company’s goals, values, and operational capabilities.

A key part of this step is defining the ideal candidate profile. This means identifying the technical and soft skills that are essential for



the role, as well as the qualifications, experience, and personal traits that would make someone a good fit for the company culture. It's also important to clarify what the company expects from new hires—not just in terms of daily tasks, but also in terms of long-term contribution and growth.

Once the profile is clear, the next step is to choose the right tools for recruitment. Rather than using every available platform, companies should focus on a few targeted tools that are most effective for their industry and hiring needs. It's also important to consider the company's capacity—both in terms of budget and technical skills—when selecting these tools.

With the tools in place, the company should develop a clear recruitment strategy. If social media is part of the plan, a content calendar can be extremely helpful. This ensures consistent, well-timed posts that attract the right audience. All recruitment messaging should also reflect the company's brand—its values, tone, and visual identity—so that candidates get a true sense of what the company stands for.

Transporting your employer brand

It's about building and communicating a strong employer brand—one that authentically represents who you are as a company.

Authenticity is key. Candidates today are looking for transparency. They want to see real stories, hear from real employees, and get a genuine sense of the company culture. Consistency across all platforms—whether it's your website, social media, or job ads—is

essential to building trust and credibility.

Effective communication with candidates is another crucial element. It shows respect and makes candidates feel more comfortable and engaged. Beyond language, communication should be tailored to the needs and expectations of the applicant. This includes the tone you use, the format of your messages, and the channels through which you reach out.

Building a strong employer brand also requires a **willingness to invest time and resources**. Content creation, campaigns, and candidate engagement all take effort—but the return on investment can be significant. If a company is struggling to attract the right candidates, it may need to reflect on its current practices and be open to change. This could mean rethinking job offers, updating internal policies, or simply listening more closely to feedback from applicants and employees.

Ultimately, **embracing a change of mindset** is essential. The job market is constantly evolving, and companies that are flexible and willing to adapt are more likely to succeed. Employer branding should be seen as an ongoing process—one that is regularly reviewed and refined.



Preboarding and Onboarding

Preboarding is an essential part of the onboarding process. Onboarding refers to the process of systematically integrating new employees into a company. The aim of onboarding is to make the transition as smooth as possible so that new team members quickly feel comfortable, understand the corporate culture, and can effectively take on their tasks. Well-planned and structured onboarding promotes motivation, retains employees in the long term, and increases productivity. Onboarding activities range from maintaining contact and preparing for the first day at work to integrating the employee into the company both professionally and socially. The process therefore accompanies new employees during their first weeks and months. Structured measures and open communication make it easier for them to settle in and lay the foundation for successful cooperation and long-term loyalty.

A structured onboarding process begins before the first day of work and accompanies new employees during their first weeks and months at the company.

For companies, searching for new employees takes time and money. It is more frustrating when, after a laborious search, the new employee resigns after a short time.

■ An example: In Italy, for many companies, retention challenges begin during the onboarding phase. According to a Gallup study, 78% of employees reported that their onboarding experience was poorly executed. Additionally, 43% of managers acknowledged that their company's onboarding process was ineffective.

Important reasons are usually, for example, disappointed expectations, unclear roles, lack of feedback from superiors. A systematic, structured onboarding process can counteract this.



Onboarding process - 4 Key pillars for integration

To ensure a smooth and effective integration of new hires into the team the company should focus on four pillars: Compliance, Clarity, Culture and Connection

Compliance

- The mandatory measures required for new employees
- Documents required from the new employee or the provision of workplaces and work materials

Clarification

- How well new employees understand their roles and performance expectations

Culture

- Inform new employees about the company culture - both formally and informally

Connection

How accepted and valued new employees feel

The onboarding process

Companies should design their onboarding process in such a way that it covers all relevant levels in order to successfully integrate new employees. The process itself is divided into three phases and covers the technical, content-related and social levels. It is therefore not just a matter of imparting technical skills, but also of social integration into the team and identification with the corporate culture. A new employee must feel welcome and valued in order to be motivated and productive.



The phases of onboarding:

Preboarding

The period between signing the contract and the first day of work.

Orientation

From the first day of work to approximately 3 months

Integration

Approximately until the end of the 6th month.



Companies should implement a structured onboarding process with:

- regular contact
- clear performance criteria
- feedback meetings
- emphasis on company values and interpersonal interactions.

Surveys have shown that employees particularly value three key onboarding measures: introductions to colleagues, a concrete induction plan and a fully equipped workstation. It is precisely these aspects that help new employees quickly settle into their new company. For many, having a personal contact person is also important.

Therefore the key measures include:

- Welcome pack before the first day of work with all important information
- Welcome and detailed introductory meeting on the first day of work provide a good overview of the company and the expectations of the new employee
- Introducing the team is the basis for integration into the team

- Induction and possibly training familiarise new employees with important processes, systems and tools.
- Regular feedback meetings allow open questions and uncertainties to be clarified at an early stage
- Assigning a buddy/mentor usually makes it easier and quicker for new colleagues to find their feet in their new environment.

The description presents an ideal process. Not all measures will be fully implementable for everyone. That is not the aim either. The aim is to highlight the possibilities for implementing the process.

Preboarding

This period between signing the contract and starting work is crucial for establishing a solid relationship with the new employee resp. apprentices, binding them to the company and preparing them internally for their entry into the company.



In this phase, **communication is key!** Companies should use this time to communicate regularly with the new employee and consistently seek contact. The period is important for building commitment, preparing a smooth start and it offers many opportunities to stay in touch: Companies should share key information about the company, team, and role, clarify open questions, and—if relevant—support relocation with practical tips. Doing so, the new employee will be well prepared for his tasks and attuned to the company.

Internally, companies should prepare a structured plan for the first weeks, with clear tasks and goals, ensure that workplace and equipment are ready, and schedule feedback meetings weekly for the first three months. Informing existing staff about roles, responsibilities, duties and induction plan is particularly important.

Assigning a trained buddy or mentor supports early integration. Before the first day, the new employee should receive the first-day schedule, ideally as part of a welcome package including a welcome letter or small gesture.

Especially for trainees, the preboarding phase is important for a successful start to working life. The measures are similar: it is also important to maintain close contact with future trainees. The closer the contact, the more difficult it is for young people to turn down the offer. Information about the training programme and the company before starting the apprenticeship is also welcome. In order to retain new trainees, it is advisable to assign mentors whom they will meet before the training programme begins (e.g. during a company tour) and who are available to answer their questions during this period. It is advi-

sable to begin integrating trainees as soon as the contract is signed. A suitable way is, for example, to organise a joint lunch with other trainees and employees or team-building activities. In Germany preboarding is particularly important for dealing with the “ghosting” of apprentices: apprentices who have signed an apprenticeship contract but do not show up on the first day of training.

Effective preboarding strengthens early engagement and reduces the risk of early drop-out for both – new employees and apprentices. There are many ways to build loyalty to the company before starting to work for both.

Orientation phase

First day at work

The first day is crucial: after a successful preboarding, it is essential that the new employee's expectations are met on his first day at work. The aim is to make the new employee feel welcome. He has already been informed about the schedule for the day in advance and therefore know what to expect. Here is an example of a successful schedule:

- Welcome from management and staff as well as welcome and introduction to buddy/mentor
- Brief introductory meeting with management
- Tour of the company
- Handing over important items for the workplace (tools, work clothes, keys, etc.)
- General company information (business area, organisational chart, company mission statement, important contact persons, etc.), to discuss and hand over
- Discussion of the induction plan



- Introduction to colleagues
- Lunch/coffee with supervisors and colleagues
- Invitation to important appointments (regular meetings, departmental meetings, etc.)
- Final meeting with management or department heads at the end of the first day (1st feedback meeting):
 - Have expectations been met?
 - Do you still have any questions?
 - What is your impression of the first day?

The first day is special for trainees and can also be marked by nervousness. So create an atmosphere in which young people feel comfortable. This implies that their new colleagues are open towards them and informed about them. The above-described procedure for the first day at work should be adapted to trainees.

- For a larger group of new trainees, it is advisable to organize a “welcome event” that focuses on providing information about the training program, trainers and the company and allowing the trainees to get to know each other.

First week at work

A structured induction plan with clear tasks and goals gives new employees guidance and reassurance right from the start. The plan is crucial in ensuring that employees know what is expected of them and how they can settle into their role. During their first week at work, new employees familiarise themselves with their areas of responsibility. Their buddy/mentor helps them settle in. At the end of this first week, it is important to have a detailed feedback meeting.

The first week at work at a glance:

- Responsibilities have been discussed
- Meetings with colleagues to introduce the new employee have been arranged
- An initial meeting with the manager has taken place
- Regular meetings with the buddy/mentor have been arranged
- Expectations, goals, schedule and task for the first 6 months have been discussed
- Company induction measures (e.g. training courses, etc.) have been scheduled
- Training on the IT system has been provided
- Formal procedures have been explained (e.g. time recording, holiday requests, overtime, substitution rules, etc.)
- Feedback meeting at the end of the week has been scheduled:
 - What did the employee enjoy during the week?
 - What did he not enjoy?
 - Clarification of open questions

A feedback meeting after the first week is also recommended for trainees, in which positive and negative experiences are discussed and any uncertainties are clarified.

First three months

In the first few weeks, the presence of managers/supervisors and discussions are crucial for integrating employees into the company in the long term. Regular feedback meetings (once a week) also support employee development and are essential for accompanying and adapting the onboarding process. In addition, regular feedback meetings are also recommended to support trainees.



Recommended measures after 4 to 8 weeks are:

- Feedback discussions with the supervisor have taken place
- Target agreements have been established
- Development opportunities were discussed
- Required further training was discussed

After 3 months

- Feedback meetings with the supervisor have taken place
- Evaluation of the onboarding process

Integration phase

During the integration phase, the employee should gradually take on more responsibility and be given and expected to work more independently. Feedback meetings are also essential for onboarding during this phase. Regular feedback meetings with the supervisor/manager should be scheduled during this time. Discussions with the buddy/mentor continue to be helpful during this phase.

Regarding apprentices it is recommended that the period between two feedback meetings during the course of the whole apprenticeship should not exceed three months, as otherwise issues may accumulate to such an extent that they are no longer easy to resolve. Again, the principle applies: communication is key! A good example is a study in Germany (Ziellauf initiative of the WHKT: see references). According to the findings it is primarily a lack of communication and conflict resolution skills that causes most problems in training relationships. Either existing problems were not recognised in the first place, or they were not discussed. Yet conflicts, often caused by learning and performance difficulties

and thus motivation problems, are the main reasons for training dropouts, which can be identified early and often resolved through regular, honest communication in order to prevent dropouts.

Feedback discussion in an onboarding process: a few rules and tips

Feedback discussions play a central role in an onboarding process. They represent a deeper exchange of professional and personal skills. A good feedback culture benefits everyone. It is an effective but also demanding tool. In order to give feedback correctly and also to accept feedback, there are a few points to consider.

Giving feedback can include both positive and negative aspects and behaviours. When giving feedback, it is crucial to communicate the points in such a way as to avoid defensiveness or frustration. As a rule of thumb, the person who gives feedback should always start from his personal impression. Respond to requests and behavioural changes that would make working together easier.

The best way to learn how to handle feedback discussions is to follow these rules:

- Create a friendly and calm atmosphere
Do not conduct the conversation in passing, but find a quiet setting where you can talk without being disturbed. When offering criticism, make it clear that you value the apprentice or employee as a person, but that you are dissatisfied with their work performance, for example.



- **Maintain a respectful manner and tone**
This creates openness and trust and includes giving the other person space to express their dissatisfaction and criticism, so that the company also receives feedback for improvement.
 - **Describe behaviour, don't judge!**
The situation or the other person's behaviour should be described as objectively as possible. Avoid judgements such as 'I didn't like that at all'.
 - **Be specific in your statements**
Describe specific situations and examples that are not too far in the past. And above all: no generalisations!
 - **Justify your own point of view**
The more substantiated your feedback and advice is, the greater the chance that it will be accepted.
 - **Address changeable facts**
Address constructive suggestions and solutions that the recipient of the feedback can actually change.
 - **Important basic rule: Use 'I' messages (not 'you' messages)**
An example: 'I perceived you as...' Avoid phrases such as: 'You did that completely wrong.'
 - **Describe how you felt in certain situations and your reaction to them**
This helps to increase your conversation partner's understanding.
 - **Ensure that feedback is welcome and that the recipient is open to suggestions**
 - **Do not only address negative points**
Also use praise and words of appreciation.
Tip: Use the sandwich tactic for negative criticism: the suggestion for improvement is addressed between two positive points.
- It is advisable to prepare well for the feedback meeting. For preparing assessment forms can be used; a sample can be found in the appendix. It is important to note that giving feedback does not mean giving instructions. A feedback meeting is not intended for minor changes to work processes, but – as mentioned above – for a more in-depth exchange of professional and personal skills. Thoughts, suggestions for improvement and requests are noted down for the meeting. The feedback is then formulated and reviewed: Is it understandable? Does it contain only negative points? Is it free of blame and does it include specific suggestions for improvement?
- The feedback meeting gives the supervisor/manager/trainer the opportunity to describe their view of things. The employee has the opportunity to improve, as he learns what he is doing well and where is still potential for improvement.
- Ideally, the key points of the conversation should be recorded in written form, especially if goals have been set and specific measures agreed upon. This makes it easier to follow up later and makes the agreements more binding. It is therefore also advisable to give the apprentice or employee a sample of the result.



Support measures for integration

Numerous coaching and support measures were mentioned in the description of the various onboarding phases.

The **buddy/mentor** plays a particularly important role in onboarding. Accordingly, they should be prepared for their tasks. This starts with the selection process: an experienced colleague with social skills who knows the company well, is a strong communicator, empathetic and trustworthy should be chosen. Their role must be clearly defined. Their task is to support the social and cultural integration of the new employee or apprentice in order to promote trust and a sense of belonging. To this end, the mentor is briefed in advance on the company's expectations and the process. In order to fulfil their role, the buddy must be given sufficient time and the training plan for the new employee.

Internal support and coaching measures also include:

- Building trust
- Strengthening self-esteem (conveying recognition and a sense of belonging)
- Establishing a supportive relationship
- Communication on equal terms
- Active listening
- Giving constructive feedback
- Be objective oriented
- Empowerment – promoting independent action
- Promoting self-learning skills and self-empowerment among young employees and trainees
 - Promoting independent learning
 - Challenging but achievable tasks
- Provision of resources

In addition to these internal support measures, external support measures are also offered in the project partner countries. In Greece and Germany, support is available for digital and business skills. In Germany, language courses, sustainability seminars and exam preparation courses are also offered. Online learning opportunities as well as on-line mentoring and coaching courses are available in Spain.

Onboarding in partner countries: Similarities and differences

There are certainly some similarities between the project partner countries Germany, Italy, Spain and Greece. For example, that an onboarding process is more commonly used in large companies than in SMEs. The tools used in the onboarding process itself are also similar. A certain relevance of onboarding can also be observed in all countries.

On the other hand, there are some significant differences with regard to onboarding. In most of these countries, the concept of preboarding is little known or unknown and not used. In **Germany**, as said before, preboarding is particularly important in the training sector. It is important for dealing with the 'ghosting' of apprentices.

The Competence Centre for Securing Skilled Labour (KOFA) publishes in Germany scientific articles focusing on SMEs and offers free, practical support for personnel planning and management, including recommendations, checklists and examples for recruitment and retention. The last example is the „VerAplus“ mentoring programme. The programme,



run by the „Senior Expert Service“ is aimed specifically at trainees. The aim is to improve training success rates. The VerAplus programme brings trainees together with retired professionals and is based on a one-to-one principle (1 trainee, 1 expert). The programme helps with problems in training companies or vocational schools and with personal concerns. Trainees receive further measures with external support from the youth agency and training support through training-related assistance. Trainers can undergo further training to become ‘trainee coaches’ or ‘learning guides’.

In **Italy and Greece**, only a few companies offer a multi-stage onboarding process. Institutions also provide little support for the importance of the onboarding process in the construction industry. In **Spain**, on the other hand, regulations are very important. For example, safety regulations and safety training are mandatory in the onboarding process. In contrast to Italy, many onboarding tools are used online in Spain.

In addition, in **Germany**, the chambers of commerce as well as the chambers of crafts and skilled trades offer support and advice on onboarding and also later on in the process, for example to resolve conflicts and thus prevent training dropouts. Apprentice supervisors (“Lehrlingswarte”) from craft guilds are also available for advice and mediation. Companies can draw on further support options for learning and performance difficulties, which can often lead to motivation problems as another major reason for training dropouts.

For example, the German employment agencies offer the „Assistierte Ausbildung“ (assisted apprenticeship) program where a supervisor helps young people complete a training program, including studying for exams, staying on track at vocational school, resolving

a private dispute, solving a problem at work or improving German language skills. There are no costs for the company or the apprentice, as these are covered by the employment agency. The support plan is drawn up in consultation with the company providing the training and the vocational school.

Retention management

Finally, let’s take a look at the phase after onboarding: retention management.

Effective retention is based on increasing employee motivation and satisfaction. Employees are more likely to stay when they feel valued, supported, and able to develop professionally.

Key focus areas include:

- Career and development prospects
Clear career paths, regular feedback, and access to training support long-term commitment. Showing prospects is also an important factor in retaining trainees. Discuss during the training programme what opportunities are available after the training and how the company can support their trainees in this regard.
- Positive corporate culture
Transparent communication, employee involvement, and a respectful feedback culture strengthen identification with the company. Team activities help build cohesion.
- Recognition and appreciation
Acknowledging performance through feedback, increased responsibility, or promotion.

Regarding trainees, strengthen your trainees’ skills in areas where they have weaknesses. Let them take on responsibility, e.g. by developing and maintaining a page for the company on social media channels.



Final remarks

The “Job Orientation – Better Fit” manual provides a structured and practical framework to support (construction) companies in improving recruitment and onboarding. It responds to a rapidly changing labour market shaped by digitalisation, sustainability requirements, demographic change, and increasing skills shortages. The findings and methodologies presented confirm that preventing early training drop-outs and improving workforce stability requires a holistic approach, addressing the full employee journey from the first contact to long-term integration.



About the Project

“Job Orientation – Better Fit (JOB) is an Erasmus+ funded project. The overall objective of JOB is to reduce the rate of drop-outs by optimising the match between applicants’ professional interests and companies’ actual requirements/expectations of applicants, also incorporating the onboarding phase. This primarily involves providing individualised support for new trainees or new employees right from the start in order to compensate for deficits and ensure a successful transition into the team. The focus is on career guidance, recruiting, and individual support for new employees or trainees.

As part of the project, company requirements have been analysed and compared with the potential of applicants. Based on this, suitable measures and tools for recruiting and onboarding have been defined and finally summarized in this manual. These measures were ultimately supplemented by workshop-based training for practical implementation in companies.

Project Consortium

Five partners from four countries participated in the project: Germany, Italy, Spain, and Greece

www.joborientation.eu





Annex 1

Onboarding Checklist

The following checklist covers preboarding and the various onboarding phases. It should be adapted to your own circumstances and needs.

CHECKLIST

1. Before the first day of work (pre-boarding phase)

Start: After signing the contract

Communicate with the new employee!

- **Maintain regular contact with the employee**
- **Provide important information** about the company, the team and the position
- **Clarify any open questions**
- **Invite them to company events**

Administrative preparations

- ☐ Create personnel file
- ☐ Request documents (social security card, etc.)

Equip the workplace (as required)

- ☐ Access data
- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Email address
- ☐ Telephone and telephone number
- ☐ Licenses
- ☐ Seat
- ☐ Enter employee in lists, distribution lists, and organizational charts
- ☐ Employee ID card
- ☐ Name tag
- ☐ Business cards
- ☐ Keys
- ☐ Parking permit
- ☐ Public transport ticket
- ☐ Work clothing
- ☐ Tools
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Prepare information about the company (as needed)

- ☐ Organizational chart
- ☐ Company Guideline and values
- ☐ Work style
- ☐ Business etiquette
- ☐ Important external contacts
- ☐ Upcoming training courses
- ☐ Code of conduct
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



Preparation and information internal employees (as needed)

- ☐ The workforce is informed about the new colleague
- ☐ Responsibilities are defined
- ☐ The new employee's area of responsibility has been agreed upon and communicated to colleagues
- ☐ The training plan including responsibilities has been created and communicated
- ☐ A buddy/mentor has been found and prepared
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Information for the new employee

- ☐ The new employee has been informed about the schedule for their first day at work (When does work start? Who will pick up the new employee and where? What does the new employee need to bring with them? When does the first day of work end?)
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Welcome package (as needed)

- ☐ Welcome letter
- ☐ Schedule for the first day of work
- ☐ Invitation to team events and employee meetings
- ☐ Relevant company information (see also above)
- ☐ Welcome gift
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Additionally: for new employees who need to relocate (as needed)

- ☐ Information on finding housing
- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ Schools
- ☐ Leisure activities
- ☐ Moving companies
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



CHECKLIST

2. The first day of work

Procedure

- ☐ Personal welcome by the management or department head
- ☐ Welcome and introduction to the staff
- ☐ Initial brief introductory meeting with the management
- ☐ Tour of the company (materials storage, restrooms/washrooms, break rooms, kitchenette, cafeteria, copier, emergency exits, etc.), with management, department head or supervisor
- ☐ Handing over of all relevant items for the workplace (work clothes, tools, telephone, access data, keys, etc.)
- ☐ Handing over and discussing general company information, e.g., organizational chart, company mission statement, business area, important contacts, etc.)
- ☐ Discussion of the induction plan (department head or supervisor)
- ☐ Introduction to colleagues incl. buddy/mentor
- ☐ Lunch/coffee with supervisor and colleagues
- ☐ Invitation to important appointments (regular meetings, departmental meetings, etc.)
- ☐ Final meeting with management or departmental management at the end of the first day:
 - Have expectations been met?
 - What questions remain unanswered?
 - What are the new employee's impressions?
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

3. First week of work

General (as needed)

- ☐ Exchange dates with colleagues have been agreed: The team introduces itself
- ☐ Responsibilities have been discussed
- ☐ An initial meeting with the supervisor has taken place, further appointments have been scheduled
- ☐ Expectations, goals, schedule, tasks, and projects for the first 6 months have been discussed
- ☐ Regular meetings with the buddy/mentor have been arranged
- ☐ Company induction measures (such as training, introductory courses, etc.) have been scheduled
- ☐ Meetings with suppliers, customers, and service providers have been arranged
- ☐ Training on the IT system has been completed
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Formal procedures were explained (as needed)

- ☐ Time recording
- ☐ Vacation requests
- ☐ Document filing
- ☐ Substitution rules
- ☐ Overtime
- ☐ _____



CHECKLIST

4. After 4 to 8 weeks

- ☐ Feedback meeting with the supervisor has taken place
- ☐ Target agreements have been set
- ☐ Development opportunities have been discussed
- ☐ Required further training has been determined and planned
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

5. Ongoing or until the end of the onboarding phase

- ☐ Regular appreciative exchange meetings with the buddy/mentor have taken place
- ☐ Regular appreciative feedback meetings with the manager/supervisor (e.g. half-yearly) have taken place
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



Annex 2

Template for an internal assessment form for staff members

Name of the staff member: _____

Assessment for the period from: _____ to _____

Areas of application/tasks performed:

WORK ETHIC	1	2	3	4	5
INTEREST IN WORK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMMITMENT/MOTIVATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PERSISTENCE AND RESILIENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELIABILITY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DILIGENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
INDEPENDENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WORK RESULTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PUNCTUALITY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	1	2	3	4	5
DEALING WITH SUPERVISORS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEALING WITH COLLEAGUES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Remarks:

Date

Signing



Annex 3

Learning and Testing Platforms

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numbas.mathcentre.ac.uk

www.europa.eu/europass/digitalskills/screen/home
www.mydigiskills.eu/

www.123test.com/spatial-reasoning-test/
www.psychologytoday.com/us/tests/iq/visual-spatial-intelligence-test

www.50languages.com/de/test/start-test/el/1
www.greek-out.com/
www.sprachtest.de/

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lernportal.bgbau.de
www.testo-unico-sicurezza.com/DEMO/

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