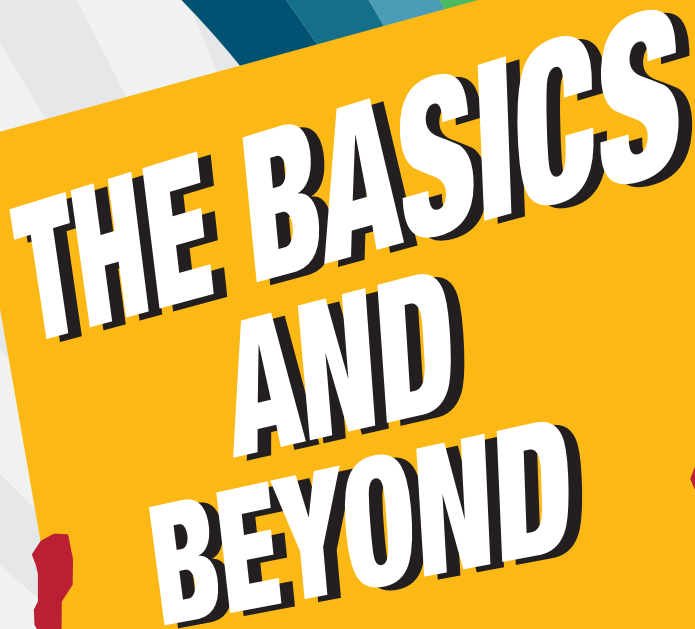




GREAT
PLACE
TO
WORK®


Best
Workplaces 2015
Europe



THE BASICS AND BEYOND



The Basics and Beyond

A photograph of a crowd of people at a festival or concert, with a straw hat in the foreground. The image is partially obscured by large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of red and orange.



Great Place to Work® releases its 13th Annual 100 Best Workplaces in Europe List; NetApp, Davidson Consulting and Cygni take top honours.

New research shows the best workplaces in Europe get the basics right, like honest, fair management and proper equipment for the job.

But they also create emotionally healthy, fun, participatory workplaces.

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Introduction

For several decades, Belgian shoe retailer Torfs was a decent place to work.

The family-owned chain of stores was fair and caring to employees. But it was a traditional “top-down” company.

“It was more, ‘The company says how it has to be, and the coworkers just execute,’” recalls Els Van Keymeulen, Torfs HR Manager. “They have to follow.”

Things began to change in the mid-1990s under Wouter Torfs, the third-generation leader of Torfs. As part of a broad plan to for the shoe company to take larger strides, Wouter Torfs started empowering his staff. He began to bring all employees together twice a year to share information about the company’s direction. And gradually these meetings became more interactive and engaging. In 2009, for example, Torfs employees were asked to help come up with the company values. They defined the values to include a family feel, a focus on results and *goesting*—a Flemish word that roughly translates to “enthusiasm.”

The company’s “goesting” was in full force at the last semi-annual employee summit, when store employees were asked to get into small groups and design a sneaker. “Things got crazy,” Van Keymeulen says of the activity. “The energy that generated was amazing.” At the meeting, Torfs employees voted on the two best designs. The winning designs are currently in production and will be sold in all the stores—the first time Torfs will sell its own shoe.

In recent years, Torfs also has beefed up its philanthropic efforts. Working with a Flemish development agency, it helped build an orphanage in South Africa in 2007 and since 2012 has provided aid to schoolchildren in Nepal. Employees have travelled to Nepal to work directly with community leaders. And when a massive earthquake shook Nepal in late April, Torfs organised a fundraising campaign at stores.

The employee involvement, the excitement and the social purpose have helped fuel better business results, Van Keymeulen says. The number of shops has more than doubled from 30 stores two decades ago to 73 today. The number of employees has jumped from 235 to more than 600. And revenue has doubled in the past five years, to EUR 140 million in 2014.

“We want to inspire customers,” Van Keymeulen says. “If we want to inspire customers, we have to inspire our employees first.”



Torfs employees work on a sneaker design

Torfs is part of a broader pattern of the best workplace in Europe. As Great Place to Work® releases our 13th annual list of the region's best workplaces, a new analysis shows that management basics like honesty, fairness and providing employees with the resources they need to do their job are significant factors for employees feeling that their workplace is great.

Introduction

Torfs employees



Our examination of some 270,000 employee responses to our Trust Index® survey also shows that the best companies in Europe go beyond the basics. Key features of these top workplace cultures also include a psychologically and emotionally healthy climate, a fun atmosphere and a measure of workplace democracy in which employees have a voice.

These findings related to making a workplace great in Europe provide a road map to business leaders in the region. In addition, the companies that have earned a place on this year's regional list serve as successful role models. Topping this year's list are NetApp, in the category of the Best Multinational Workplaces in Europe; Davidson Consulting in the category of Best Large Workplaces in the region (500+ employees); and Cygni, a

Swedish information technology firm, in the category of Best Small & Medium Workplaces in Europe (50-500 employees).

These companies are part of a broader, worldwide movement. The best workplaces in Europe, along with their counterparts in other regions of the globe, are leading the way into a brighter future. We call it the **"Great Workplace Era,"** and it refers to a time when all people can expect to work at a company where they trust their leaders, take pride in what they do, and enjoy their coworkers. When work makes for a better world, one worker at a time.

Els Van Keymeulen is one of them. Taking part in Torfs' journey to become a more democratic, philanthropic firm has fed her soul.



a great
place
to work
& to

Els Van Keymeulen



“

I feel very honoured to have been able to participate in building up a company that doesn't only exist to make money, but that works to make better lives, that works to make people happier.”

About Great Place to Work®

Great Place to Work® has conducted pioneering research on the characteristics of great workplaces for more than 25 years.

We believe all companies can become great workplaces, and our mission is to help them succeed. Our Great Place to Work model is recognised as the standard for assessing great workplaces. In more than 50 countries around the world, we are proud to:



Recognise

best workplaces for their achievements through our international and national Best Workplaces lists. In Europe we publish 19 national lists and worldwide we publish lists in roughly 50 countries.

Help

companies create and sustain great workplace cultures through our advisory services. Our data collection tools (e.g. the Trust Index® employee survey, focus groups, 360-degree professional development tool); educational workshops and training programmes; action planning system; and strategic advisory services support the transformation process within any organisation. Great Place to Work's unique access to best workplace data allows us to offer unparalleled benchmarking opportunities, best practice information, and transformation insight for our consulting clients.

Share

resources, best practices, and research through our events and education services. These include peer networking groups, workshops, conferences, and publications, which enable organisational leaders to learn directly from each other, as well as benefit from our wealth of knowledge and lessons learned from best workplaces and our clients.

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Background and Findings

European companies experienced a slightly improving economy on the whole in 2014. The Euro area grew 0.9% last year, compared to contractions of 0.5% in 2013 and 0.8% in 2012.¹ Still stronger growth is forecast for 2015. But as a recent *Economist* commentary put it, “It’s hard to get excited. France and Italy, the zone’s second- and third-largest economies, stagnated in the final quarter of the year. Greece’s return to the headlines has the potential to unsettle markets. And fears grow that the 19-member currency club may fall into deflation.”²

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115&plugin=1>

² <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/04/european-economy-guide>

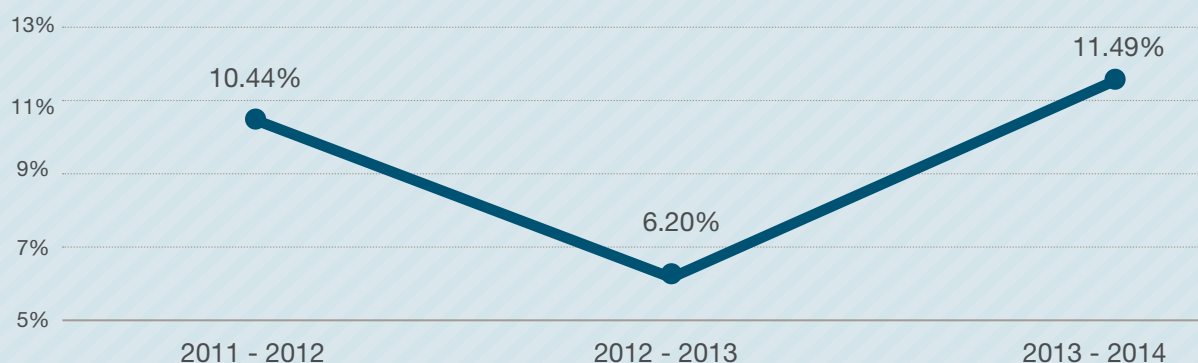
The precarious recovery makes it particularly important to develop a great workplace culture. That's because best workplaces have proven, in Europe and worldwide, that they outperform competitors in good times and bad. A paper published last year by the European Corporate Governance Institute studied data from 14 countries and concluded that higher levels of employee satisfaction—reflected by earning a spot on a best workplaces list generated by Great Place to Work®— corresponded to stock market outperformance in countries with high levels of labour market flexibility, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Overall, the study found stock market outperformance by best workplaces in 11 of the 14 countries examined.³

3 Alex Edmans, Lucius Li, Chendi Zhang, "Employee Satisfaction, Labor Market Flexibility, and Stock Returns Around The World," European Corporate Governance Institute (ECGI) - Finance Working Paper No. 433/2014, July 2014, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2461003.

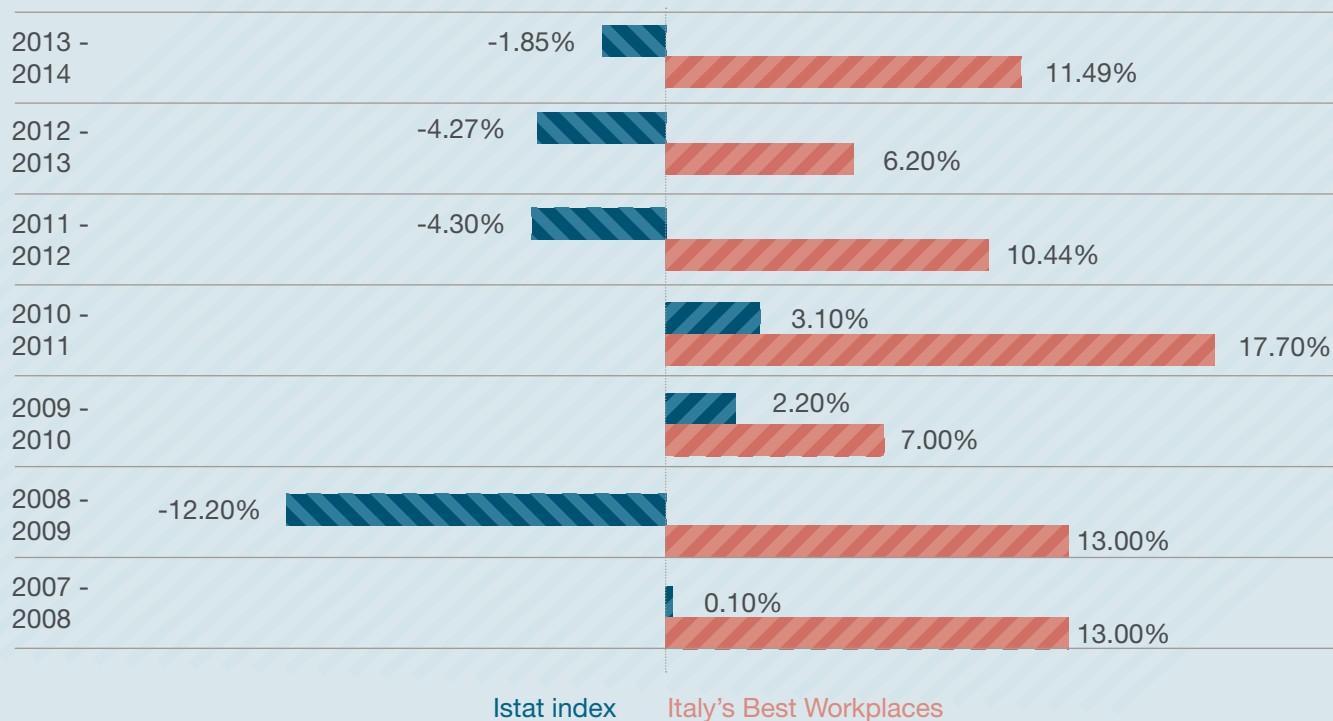
Studies from specific countries bolster the business case for a great workplace. In Italy, for example, while the overall economy shrank each of the past three years, the country's best workplaces have posted annual average growth of at least 6.2%. What's more, Italy's Best Workplaces have posted better revenues than their competitors in the same industry for seven straight years.

Danish best companies, for their part, experience significantly lower absenteeism due to illness—which translates to higher productivity. While private sector companies in Denmark have a 3.1% absenteeism rate, the best Danish workplaces have a rate of just 2.5%. Employee turnover also tends to be lower at best workplaces, saving on recruiting costs and improving productivity. In Denmark, overall employment turnover is 25% annually, compared to 9% at Denmark's best workplaces.

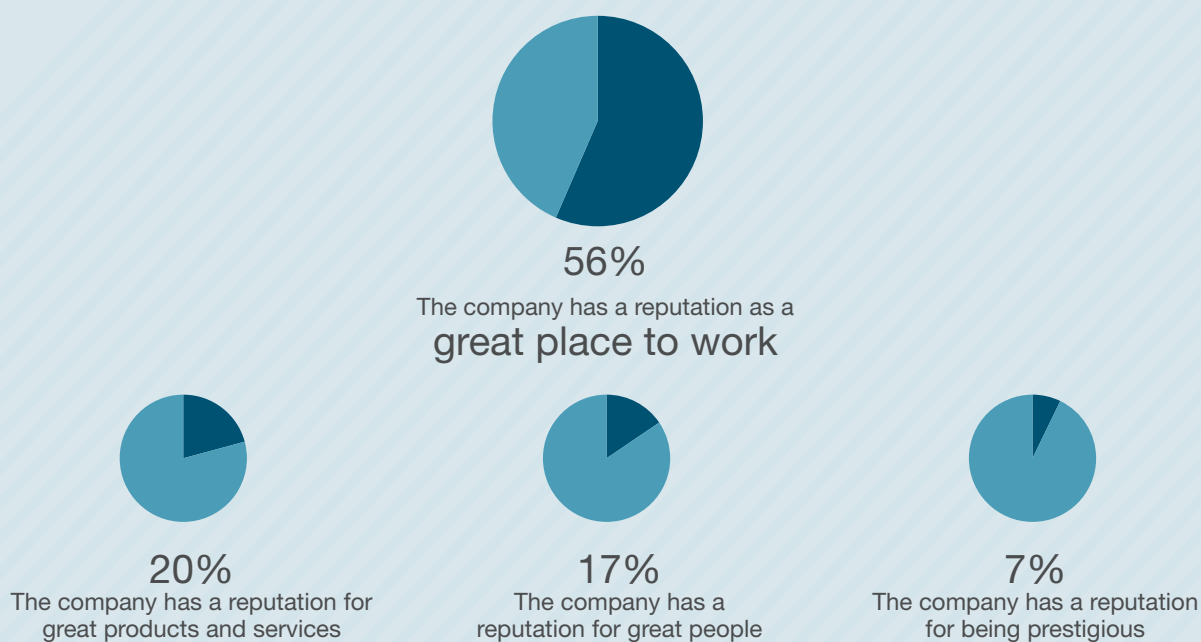
Italy's Best Workplaces: Revenue Growth



Revenue Growth: Italy's Best Workplaces vs. Industry Peers



Which of the following would be the most important if you were to consider a new job?



Source: LinkedIn, Talent Trends 2014

Should the sunny economic forecasts prove accurate, the “war for talent” is likely to heat up—again putting great workplaces at an advantage. A LinkedIn study last year concluded that the most important consideration for job seekers, by far, was a company’s reputation as a great workplace.

Ireland is among the countries where attracting and keeping talent are now critical. “Ireland has well and truly recovered from the recession and is now registering the highest grow rates in Europe,” says John Ryan, CEO of Great Place to Work® Ireland. “This has brought its own challenges in the world of HR as the great issue is talent management and performance. With many global organisations choosing Ireland to headquarter EMEA operations the war for talent is fierce.”

Great Place to Work® UK likewise has found that hiring is top of mind for employers. So is developing talent. Talent management and succession planning posed the single most important people issue for 49% of organisations entering the Best Workplaces Programme in the UK. Keeping employees satisfied and therefore productive is also a priority. “Employee engagement and its impact on the bottom line has been the most important issue for over 9% of organisations, confirming that creating great workplaces with high trust, high performance cultures is a key issue for UK employers,” says Tom O’Byrne, CEO of Great Place to Work® UK.

Employers may be focused on engaging talent, and the economy may be improving, but that hasn’t necessarily translated into better times for workers in Europe. In the UK, for example, our survey of nearly 82,000 employees last year found a drop in perceptions that their organisation was a psychologically and emotionally healthy workplace. Also declining year-on-year were employees’ ability to participate in decisions that affect their jobs and employees’ sense that they could fulfill their career aspirations working there.

“Mental health at work, and particularly stress, is a growing concern for the UK economy,” O’Byrne says. UK employees aren’t the only ones itching for a mentally healthy workplace where they have a measure of control over their destinies. Consider the findings of our survey of Polish employees’ desires. “In order to capture the ‘Polish dream,’ we run national opinion surveys,” says Dr. Maria Zakrzewski, Chair and Head of Research at Great Place to Work® Poland. “Poles expect to be treated by management in a humane and partnership manner and expect leaders to be honest and ethical in business practices.”

In general, Europe’s best workplaces meet the needs of workers far better than typical companies. In Poland, for example, the 2015 Best Workplaces outperform average Polish organisations by 42% on the Trust Index® survey.

Trends Among The Best

We asked our leaders throughout Europe what trends they have noticed among the top workplaces in their countries and the region as a whole. A number of developments have stood out to them. “We have seen a change of focus from the great workplace being a goal in itself to the great workplace being a means to executing on the strategy,” says Ditte Vigsø, Managing Director of Great Place to Work® Denmark. “This means that creating and sustaining a great workplace is clearly linked to talent and leadership development, performance reviews, organisational development as well as strategy, culture and values.”

A willingness to let employees work remotely and arrange their work hours also characterises Europe’s best workplaces, says Antonino Borgese, President of Great Place To Work® Italy. “Organisations’ growing requests for flexibility and high performance standards make the work more and more demanding in most European economies,” Borgese says. “The best companies help people face these challenges by offering them more flexibility and autonomy, such as choosing the time and place to do their job.”

Europe’s leading employers also are working to improve the diversity of their leadership ranks. In France, nine of the 62 best workplaces have women as CEOs. That’s up from six last year. Says Patrick Dumoulin, General Manager of Great Place to Work® France: “We’re noticing that an increasing number of women CEOs are leading the companies on our list, even if their number isn’t enough!”

Key Driver Analysis

Great Place to Work has found that the core elements of trust in managers, pride in the job and camaraderie with co-workers are central to great workplaces around the world. But outstanding workplace cultures take on the flavour of their particular country and region. To help companies in Europe get a better understanding of how to get better and become great, we studied factors associated with workplace greatness in the region this year.

In particular, we examined which of the 58 statements on the Trust Index® employee survey were key drivers of workplace greatness.⁴ We found the following five statements to be the most significant drivers of employees viewing their workplace as great:

Statements

1. This is a psychologically and emotionally healthy place to work.

2. Management is honest and ethical in its business practices.

3. This is a fun place to work.

4. I am given the resources and equipment to do my job.

5. Managers avoid playing favorites.

⁴ For this analysis, we used regression techniques to determine which Trust Index statements were the most significant drivers with respect to the overarching Trust Index statement, “Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work.”

These five drivers speak to the way European companies have to cover the “basics and beyond” to be great. Credible, high-integrity managers, a sense of fair treatment from leaders and the resources to do the job right are foundational to an excellent workplace. And the importance employees place on them is perhaps not surprising given scandals in the executive suite over the past decade and the way many workers have been asked to do more with less in the wake of the global slowdown of the late 2000s and the uneven recovery that has followed.

But employees at Europe’s best workplaces expect more than the cornerstones of credibility, fairness and proper resources and equipment. Most of all, they want an emotionally healthy workplace. That’s something understood by the leaders of Torfs, which ranked as our 2nd best large workplace in Europe this year. Consider what CEO Wouter Torfs did last year when one of his 600 employees weathered the difficult situation of both her parents being treated for cancer on the very same day. Torfs took the time to post an encouraging message on the Facebook page of his employee, store manager Sally Wouters. That act of caring was in keeping with the positive relationship Wouters says she and her peers have with the Torfs leadership team. “We have a great connection with all of them,” she says. “They are there for us.”

Wouter Torfs has even become a thought-leader when it comes to going beyond the traditional way of running a company. His book, *The Soul is in a Shoebox*, is about how work and business should be about more than making money.

Frank Hauser, Managing Director of Great Place to Work® Germany, notices heightened efforts by best workplaces to be healthy places for employees. “We see an increased level of activities and services supporting both physical and mental health and wellbeing,” he says.

Fun is a close cousin of emotional wellbeing, and the best workplaces in Europe are pumping up the playfulness. Cygni, which earned the top spot as the region’s best small workplace for the second year in a row, takes fun seriously. The firm sponsors a summer party, an annual kick-off meeting and party at a nice hotel, a winter ski trip and a Christmas party. There’s also such a thing as fun work. And Cygni works hard to make sure the projects its employees tackle are challenging and engaging. For example, earlier this year, the company announced a deal with gaming company Svenska Spel. “They, like many of our other gaming and media clients, opted for a modern and very interesting development platform,” Cygni Consultant Per Rasmussen said in a blog item about the deal. “Since our vision is to be Sweden’s top employer for skilled software developer it is extremely important for us to work with customers who can offer the best consulting projects.”

Workplace Democracy

Another important feature of workplace greatness in Europe is employees having a say in decision-making. A participatory culture was not among the top five drivers in our analysis. But workplace democracy can play a significant role not only in employees feeling great about their organisation but in company performance.

Consider the dramatic way Dutch consulting firm &samhoud consultancy involves employees in decision-making. For the past year, &samhoud's top leaders have been holding weekly meetings on strategy and other key issues surrounded by dozens of employees. And those employees participate in the discussions. The transparency and inclusion of these "fishbowl" gatherings translate into improved communication within the firm as well as more effective meetings, says Jeroen Geelhoed, a partner at &samhoud. "If you sit in the middle of 50 people listening to you, then the way you do your meetings will be much more efficient, and the quality will go up," Geelhoed says.

Nicolás Ramilo, CEO of Great Place to Work® Spain, makes a similar observation about the power of participatory cultures and the teamwork they produce. "Everyone feels more involved when there is team building, rowing together in the same direction and achieving the best results," he says. "Also, such companies are more innovative by encouraging their employees to share ideas and be more creative."



If anything, the importance of shared decision making increases during times of economic crisis, suggests Dimitris Ganoudis, General Manager of Great Place to Work® Greece. Businesses in Greece have faced very difficult economic conditions over the past year, and the best workplaces have embraced the involvement of employees to make it through the stormy climate. "Managers more than ever realised that honest communication and dialogue with employees was the appropriate way to finding solutions," Ganoudis says. "Employees and management came closer in decisions and joint strategy because the crisis was now the common enemy and left no room for hidden agendas."



The frustration many Europeans feel as consumers and citizens may make them particularly grateful for democratic workplaces, says Patrice Brun, General Manager of Great Place to Work® Luxembourg. People often cannot reach a human being when they have a customer service problem, and many sense they have little power in political systems, Brun says. “People find their vote is not useful and that decisions taken by politicians are not connected to their everyday challenges and are not aligned with their lives,” he says. “So when the opportunity of a voice at work is offered, people appreciate it.”

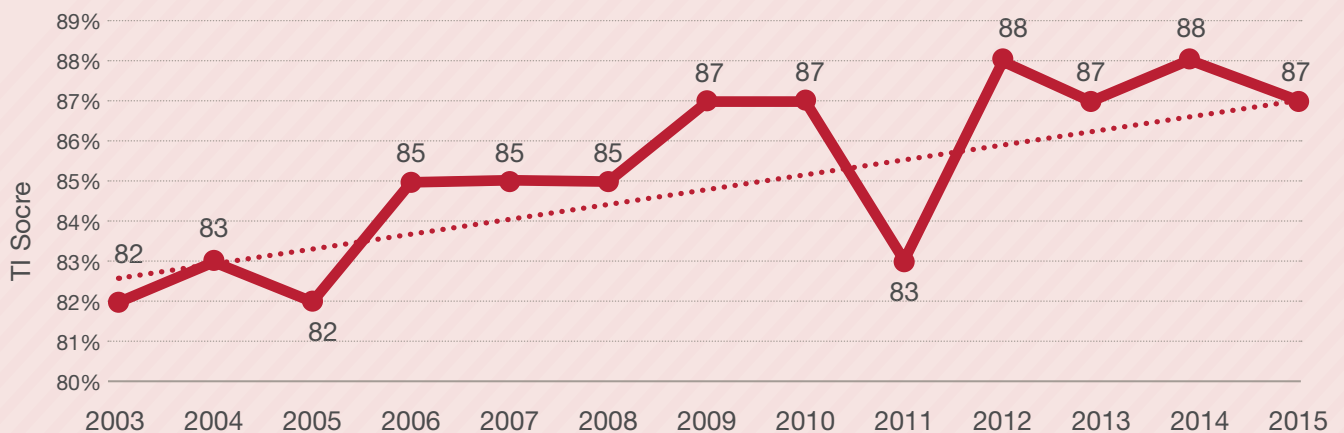
Workplace democracy not only speaks to contemporary European concerns, but also has deep historical roots. A long legacy of democracy in Switzerland leads employees there to expect to be involved in business decisions, says Michael Hermann, CEO of Great Place to Work® Switzerland. Hermann adds that while a participatory culture can slow down firms, it also can energise and engage employees. “Involving employees in decisions of course leads to more discussions and might take some more time,” he says. “But on the other hand involved employees also show a much higher commitment to solve a problem, feel responsible for more topics and show a much higher engagement in times of change.”

Truly becoming a more democratic workplace is not easy. It requires dedication and a willingness to share power, says Erik van Riet, Director of Great Place to Work® Netherlands. “The best organisations do not only listen to their employees, but they, very importantly, actively involve them in the follow up,” he says. “This shows the employees that the organisation really listens to them and takes them – and their suggestions – seriously. In order to achieve this, you have to let go of the urge to control, as a manager you have to trust your employees all the way, not only in words, but also in actions.”

The Great Workplace Era Takes Shape in Europe

Overall, Europe's best companies maintained a similar level of workplace excellence in the eyes of employees this year. The Trust Index® benchmark for Europe's best workplaces – that is, their average score on the Trust Index® – dipped slightly compared to last year. But the trend over the past 13 years is clear: Europe's best are getting better.

Trust Index© - Historic Development of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe, 2003 - 2015



Europe's best workplaces are part of a broader, worldwide movement. The best workplaces throughout the globe have been getting better and are leading the way into a brighter future.⁵

We call this new economic age the **"Great Workplace Era,"** and it refers to a time when all people can expect to work at a company where they trust their leaders, take pride in what they do, and enjoy their co-workers.

A variety of forces are propelling businesses toward better cultures. Among them:



Millennials

They want balance and meaning at work.

Innovation

Individual employees are more likely to risk sharing novel ideas in a climate in which they feel a measure of security and are proud of what they do. In addition, collaboration, which is increasingly central to effective innovation efforts, is fueled by friendships among co-workers.



Evidence

The data has become clear that great workplaces crush the competition.

Transparency

Increasing visibility into the inner workings of organisations is rewarding good employers and punishing less-than-good ones.



Awareness

There's greater recognition among business leaders that trust and culture are paramount to business success.

Wellbeing

The global push by people for greater physical, emotional and spiritual health is forcing companies to make their workplaces better.



⁵ See <http://www.greatplacetowork.com/best-companies/worlds-best-multinationals/2014-report>

The Great Workplace Era Takes Shape in Europe

Part of what makes for an emotionally and spiritually healthy workplace is a mission that stirs the soul. Torfs has added such a compelling purpose in recent years. In 2007, it began a partnership with Belgium-based development organisation Cunina, which works to help disadvantaged children in poorer countries. The company has engaged its customers in these efforts, in part by offering to donate the cost of a shopping bag to its charitable work if buyers forego a bag. And employees are intimately involved in the mission. In 2012, several Torfs employees visited Nepal and the school in the village of Sekha that the company has aided.

The devastating earthquake that killed an estimated 8.000 people in Nepal demonstrated just how much the Torfs charitable effort meant to employees. Isabel Van Goethem, a marketing employee at Torfs, wrote a blog on the company Web site about how her own children were anxious to hear about whether one of the Torfs' "godchildren" in Nepal, Nikesh, was okay in the wake of the earthquake.

"The devastation is enormous, we see the images on the news but also the pictures that we see from our Nepalese friends," Van Goethem wrote. "My heart sinks into my shoes."

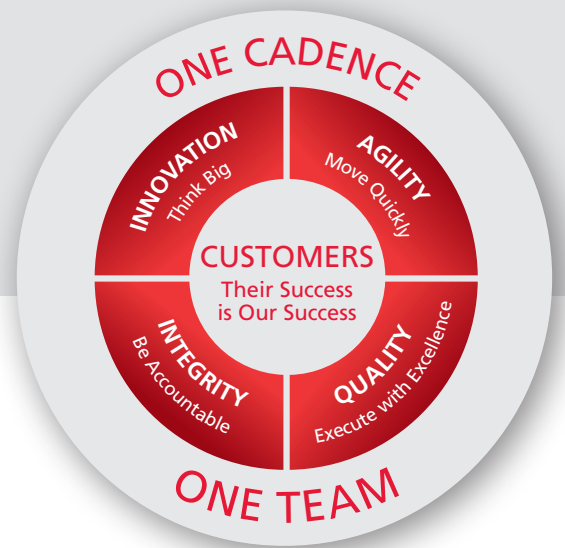
As of late May, Van Goethem and her colleagues still awaited news about the 31 children they have helped in Kathmandu. But hearts lightened some as Torfs employees learned that the Nepalese children they have bonded with in Sekha survived the big quake and aftershocks.

And more generally, Torfs has elevated the spirits of its employees. It has helped them work towards goals larger than themselves, it has created a kind of home-away-from-home, engaged their creativity, and given them a voice.

In other words, like other best workplaces in Europe, it has gone beyond the basics to become great.



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“It is the passion, intelligence, and integrity of our dedicated employees that drive our success and make Cadence a great place to do great work.”

Lip-Bu Tan, CEO and President

Company and Employee Profiles

&samhoud consultancy

Cooking up a great culture at &samhoud consultancy

You can almost taste how great the workplace culture is at &samhoud consultancy. Wait, actually you *can* taste it. Because the Netherlands-based advisory firm opened up two Amsterdam restaurants in 2012. And the fine-dining version has earned a coveted Michelin two-stars rating, even as the company is trying to develop sustainable food products like a “hamburger” made entirely of tomatoes.

It may seem strange for a management consulting firm to get into the restaurant and food invention business. But leaders of &samhoud viewed the restaurant venture as a chance to demonstrate their belief that organisations of all stripes can be set up in ways that work for employees, customers, shareholders and society.

“It’s always that sort of impossible mission,” says Jeroen Geelhoed, a partner at &samhoud consultancy. “But it really inspires and it leads to new ideas all the time.”

On the strength of an inspiring, people-focused, transparent culture, &samhoud earned the fifth spot on Great Place to Work®’s 2015 list of the Best Small & Medium Workplaces in Europe. The honour is &samhoud’s fourth recognition on Great Place to Work’s list of Small & Medium Workplaces in Europe – including a first place finish in 2010.

&samhoud stands out for taking current employee concerns and addressing them in surprising fashion. Consider work-life balance. To help defend employees’ personal time, &samhoud gave out a EUR 250 bonus to employees if they didn’t use their phone, send emails or look at their calendar for work purposes over the summer holiday.

Or take executive transparency. For the past year, &samhoud’s top leaders have been holding their Monday meetings in a “fishbowl” setting. That is, executives discuss strategy and other key issues surrounded by 30-70 employees. And those employees can – and do – speak up. “Everyone gives their input, their opinion,” Geelhoed says. “It was a radical move.”

One positive effect of the open meetings is that less communication follow-up is needed, given that employees are present as decisions are taken and understand the rationale. Another benefit is that company leaders have to be on top of their game every Monday morning, Geelhoed says.

Company and Employee Profiles

Nikki Spoor, a 28-year-old consultant at &samhoud, appreciates the transparent meetings for another reason – they are a window into how to become an executive. “It is really interesting to see how the leadership team talks to each other, and how they lead,” Spoor says. “It is like a classroom.”

Hiring and orientation also are areas in which &samhoud has broken the mold. When Geelhoed was looking to get a job at the firm about 20 years ago, the company didn’t bring him in for a traditional interview. Instead, it invited him to a kind of gala party, with some 60 &samhoud employees, 20 customers and 80 fellow applicants. While there, he had to discuss what excellent service meant, solve a client problem and even play basketball against the clients. &samhoud continues to use unconventional hiring methods – last year the company organised a soccer event to find the right junior consultant.

Once hired, &samhoud does more than give beginning employees a traditional orientation week. It sends them on a walking journey. They might walk the Pieterpad in the Netherlands, the Camino de Santiago in Spain or visit Delphi in Greece. New employees talk to each other, telling one another their life stories, and also reflect on their own identities. Spoor was moved by her five-day, new-employee pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago several years ago. “I



thought, ‘Wow!’ The vision of the company, about the core values of authenticity and friendship, I really felt it,” Spoor says. “You learn about the company, but also about yourself.”

&samhoud’s human-centered, serve-all-stakeholders culture stems from the firm’s origin some 25 years ago. Founder Salem Samhoud was working for consumer products giant Unilever in a troubled South Africa. Amid deadly riots, he found himself next to a billboard with people of all races and these words: “Together we’ll build a brighter future.” It was a sign of hope and an inspiration to Samhoud. The initial ampersand in the firm’s name stems from the idea of people connecting for a better world. Not long after his time in South Africa, Salem Samhoud took a course on the “service profit chain,” which teaches that employee satisfaction leads to customer loyalty and eventually profits.

The mix of hard-headed business logic and soft-hearted hopefulness has proved to be a recipe for success at &samhoud. The firm now employs about a hundred people, and is growing. Revenue jumped 24% last year to EUR 11.9 million and the company earned a profit of EUR 1.2 million. &samhoud also is investing, having recently opened offices in Dusseldorf and in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Spoor, who advises clients on talent management matters, loves the way &samhoud lives up to its ideals. “They stand for connection and inspiration,” she says. “And that’s what you feel every day.”

The company has no intention of retreating from its “impossible mission” of improving society even as it pleases its other stakeholders. &samhoud decided to enter the food industry several years ago in part because food is so central to the planet’s well-being, Geelhoed says. It teamed up with noted chef Moshik Roth to start its &samhoud places restaurants and begin its experimentation with sustainable, meatless yet scrumptious dishes. The company now has a line of ready-to-eat meals, and the “&Tomeato” burger is poised to please palates, Geelhoed says.

“The taste is very good,” he says. “And we are going to bring it around the world.”

If &samhoud succeeds with that burger, you’ll be savoring not only a yummy alternative to beef, but a workplace culture that is delicious all around.

Sally Wouters of Torfs

A Great Fit at Torfs

The shoe fits for Torfs employee Sally Wouters.

Wouters has worked at the Belgian shoe retailer for 10 years, moving up from store associate, to assistant manager, to shop manager. Torfs has not only allowed her to develop professionally, but also grow as a person. And it has given her – as well as all employees – a voice in workplace decisions.

At this point, the company is like family to Wouters. Or, you might say, like a pair of comfortable, custom-fit shoes.

“I can be me. Just me. Not anybody else,” says Wouters, a 42-year-old who lives and works in Antwerp. “I can be me, with all my enthusiasm, but also my flaws.”

Torfs ranks as the second best large workplaces in Europe this year. The 600-employee, family-owned company neatly embodies the way Europe’s best companies excel at the basics – such as honest, fair leadership – but go beyond

Company and Employee Profiles

these core elements to create emotionally healthy, fun, participatory work environments.

Wouters has experienced these features of Torfs first-hand.

A few years ago, she and her supervisor did not see eye to eye and their relationship soured. Company CEO Wouter Torfs himself intervened, sitting down with the two women and hearing each of them out. The CEO chided Wouters for not speaking up sooner, but arranged for them to work independently. Wouters was struck by his fairness. “He listened to me. That was the most important thing,” she recalls. “He didn’t just listen to her. He always wants to hear everyone.”

That listening impulse extends beyond conflict resolution to how Wouter Torfs makes decisions. Wouters and other employees regularly are given a say over the way the company runs itself.

She points to a small but telling example of workplace democracy in action at Torfs: how shop employees greet customers. A few years ago, company leaders wanted to go beyond saying “Hi” to customers by offering a more inviting greeting of “Welcome.” But rather than mandate this as a policy, executives asked employees to experiment with the warmer salutation. Wouters appreciated the inclusive approach. “It’s not a boss emailing at a computer telling us, ‘here’s our new policy.’ It’s always, ‘Let’s do it together, and how can we do it together?’” Wouters says. “It’s very important, because I’m a person. I’m not a number. I’m a person with my own opinion.”



Wouters also credits the company with helping her to mature as a person overall. Prior to coming to Torfs, for example, Wouters had quit two jobs after getting into spats with coworkers. Wouter Torfs’ mediation between her and her supervisor helped Wouters gain the courage to speak up when she has a conflict on the job. She also has been working with a sales coach, Annemie Smeulders, who is pushing her to do a better job of giving positive feedback in a face-to-face setting. Writing down praise is easy for Wouters, but she struggles to talk with people directly about how they’re doing well.

“It has something to do with how I was raised,” she says. “I didn’t experience this from my parents.”



Sally Wouters, second from the left in the front row, with other Torfs employees. CEO Wouter Torfs is in the rear holding the wine glass.

The way Wouters' sees her personal life intersecting with her professional one may seem odd to some workforce observers. But it speaks to the way Torfs is a "second family" to Wouters. She is quick to call Smeulders with good news about the shop she manages. She also called in tears when half her staff of 10 was out sick and Wouters felt overwhelmed. "She said, 'OK, I'm coming,'" Wouters recalls. Smeulders quickly found employees at other shops to help out. For nearly her entire career, Wouters has been able to rely on Smeulders for support. "She's a little bit like my mother," Wouters says. "I adore her."

Wouters feels connected to Torfs leaders in general, including her CEO. She points to the time last year when both her parents were being treated for cancer – her mother for breast cancer, her father for colon cancer – on the very same day. Wouter Torfs posted an encouraging message on Wouters' Facebook page.

One of her friends could not believe that Wouters' CEO had taken the time to do that. But such above-and-beyond caring is what Wouters has come to expect from her workplace. And she can't believe anyone would settle for a job defined by unpleasantness. Where work is like wearing an ill-fitting, uncomfortable pair of shoes.

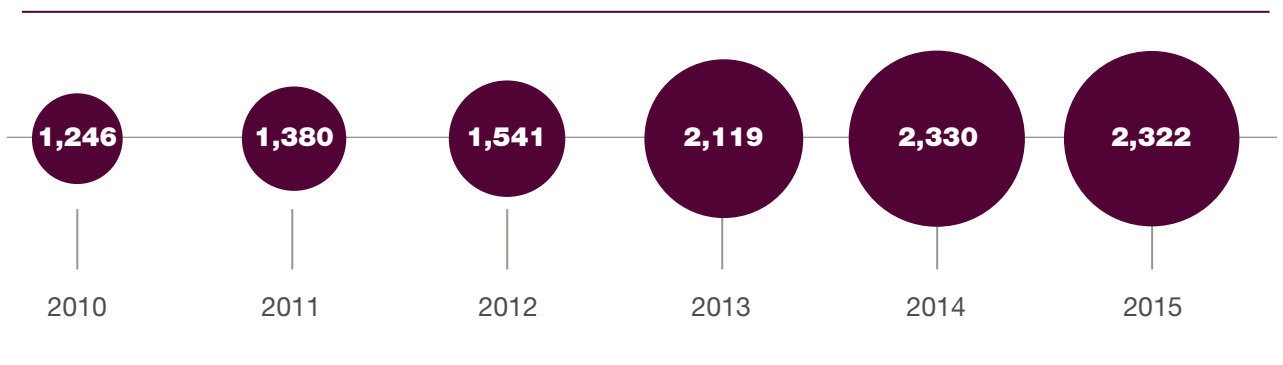
"I cannot understand how people could go to work every day and not like it there. I could not go to work for money alone," she says. "You are there almost 38 hours a week, so you have to enjoy it."

Fast Facts about the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2015

Participation and Overall List Data

Data Point	2015	2014	Difference	Percentage increase
Great Place to Work® countries contributing to list makers:	19	19	-	-
# of participating companies in the contest:	2,322	2,330	-8	-0.3%
# of employees represented in the competition:	1,573,788	1,555,540	18,248	1%
# of valid surveys received	775,323	681,848	93,475	14%
# of employees represented by the 100 companies:	271,046	256,452	14,594	6%

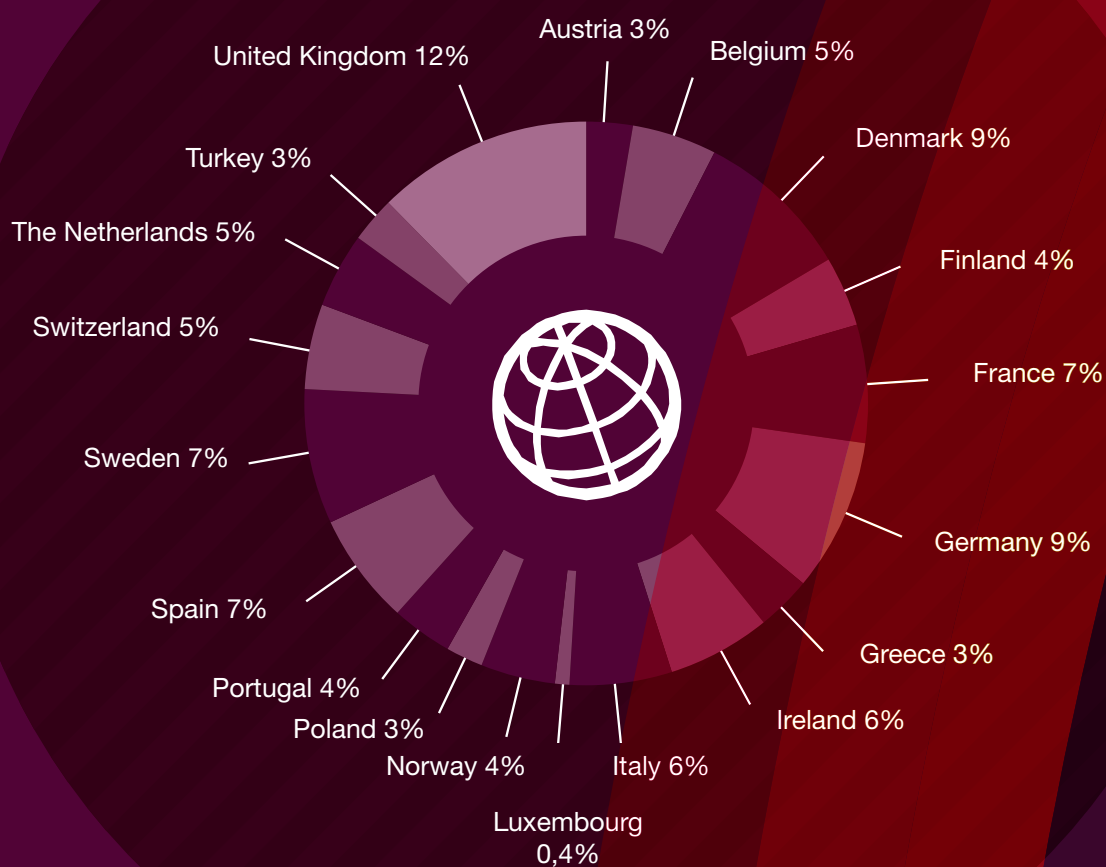
Number of Participant Companies, 2010-2015



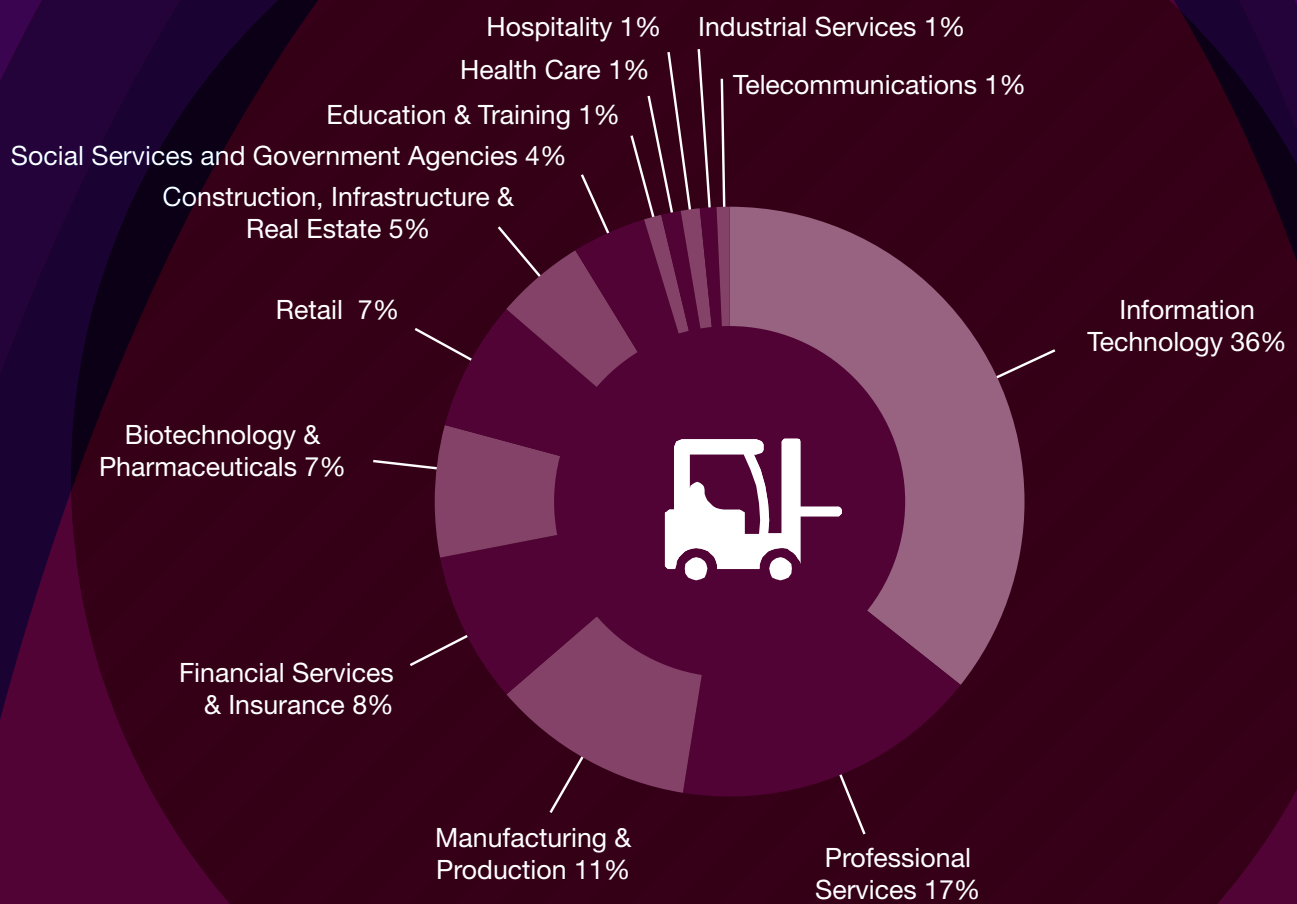
Number of participating companies



Country Distribution for Companies on 2015 list



Industry Distribution for Companies on 2015 list

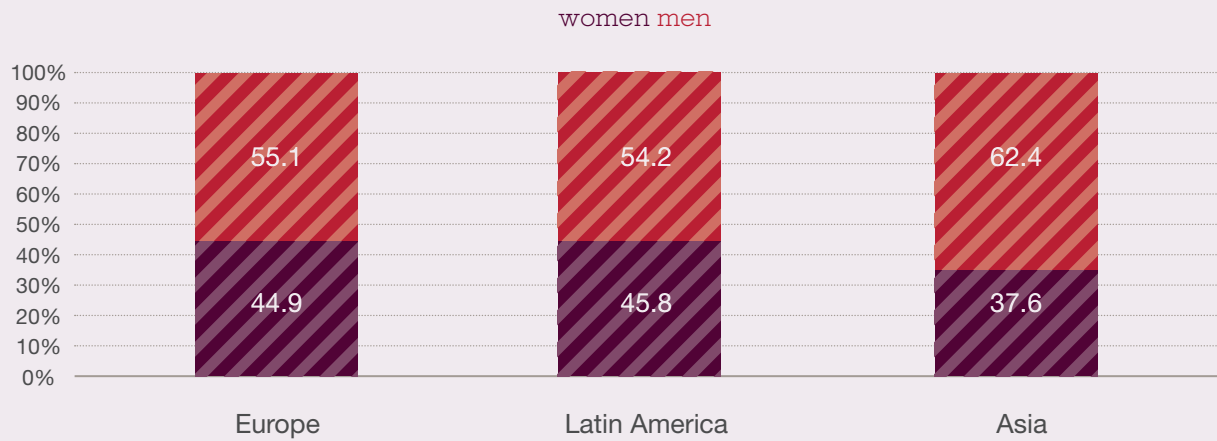


Fast Facts about the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2015

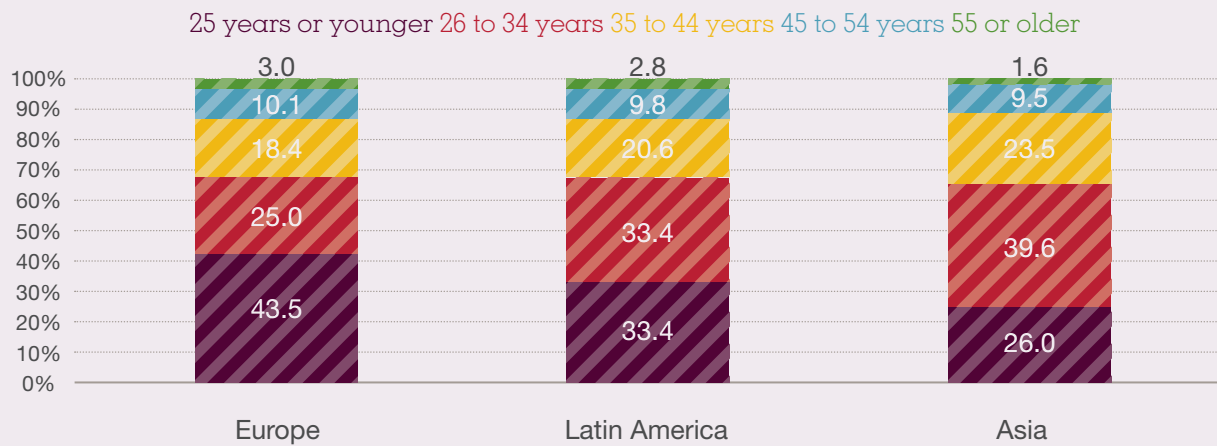
Data Point	2015	2014	2013
Average age of company	33	30	31.9
Oldest company	Kronenbourg (France) – 351 years old	Irma (Denmark) and SC Johnson – 128 years old	R Twinings and Company (UK) – 307 years old
Growth by number of employees	10%	6%	7%
Net new jobs since previous year	18,917	15,835	7,172
Women in executive management positions	29%	26%	26%
Average full-time voluntary employee turnover	12%	11%	NA
Median full-time voluntary employee turnover	6%	6%	NA
Average application rate (job applications per existing employee)	10.78	9.38	8.61
Maximum application rate (the highest ratio of applications per employee)*	Janssen-Cilag (Spain): approximately 113 applications	Key Solutions (Sweden): approximately 106 applications	Balumba (Spain): approximately 77 applications
Absenteeism	3%	2%	NA
% of companies that support employees with classes not related to work	68%	51%	NA
% of employees who answered positively to the overall Trust Index® statement “Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work.”	92%	92%	92%

*The maximum application rate is calculated by dividing the number of applications received in a year by the average of the total number of employees now and the total number of employees 12 months prior.

Employee Distribution by Gender



Employee Distribution by Age

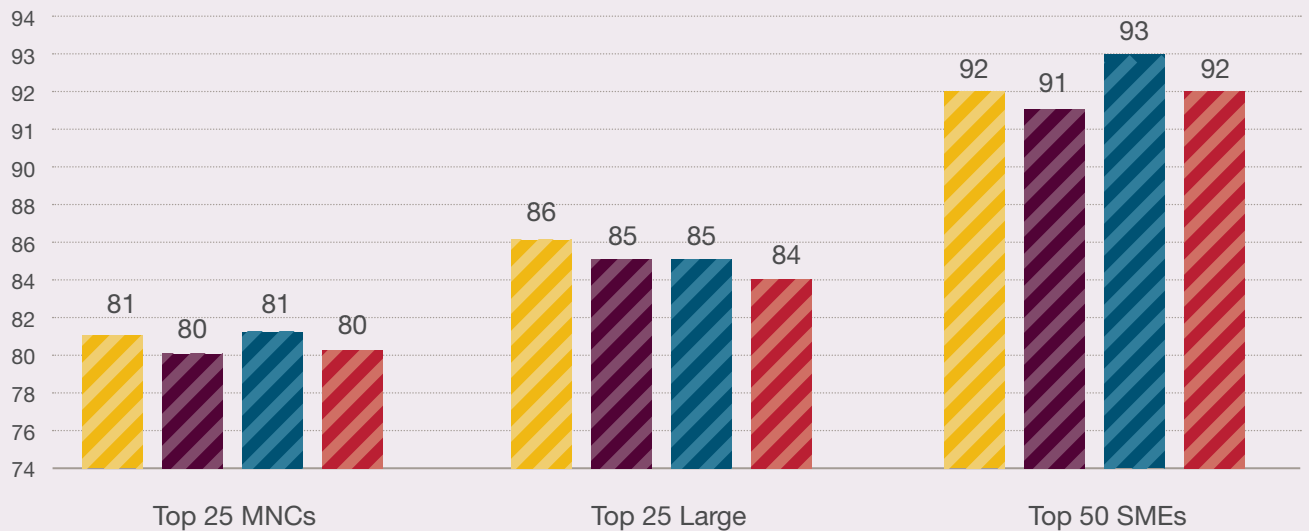


Employee Distribution by Job Type

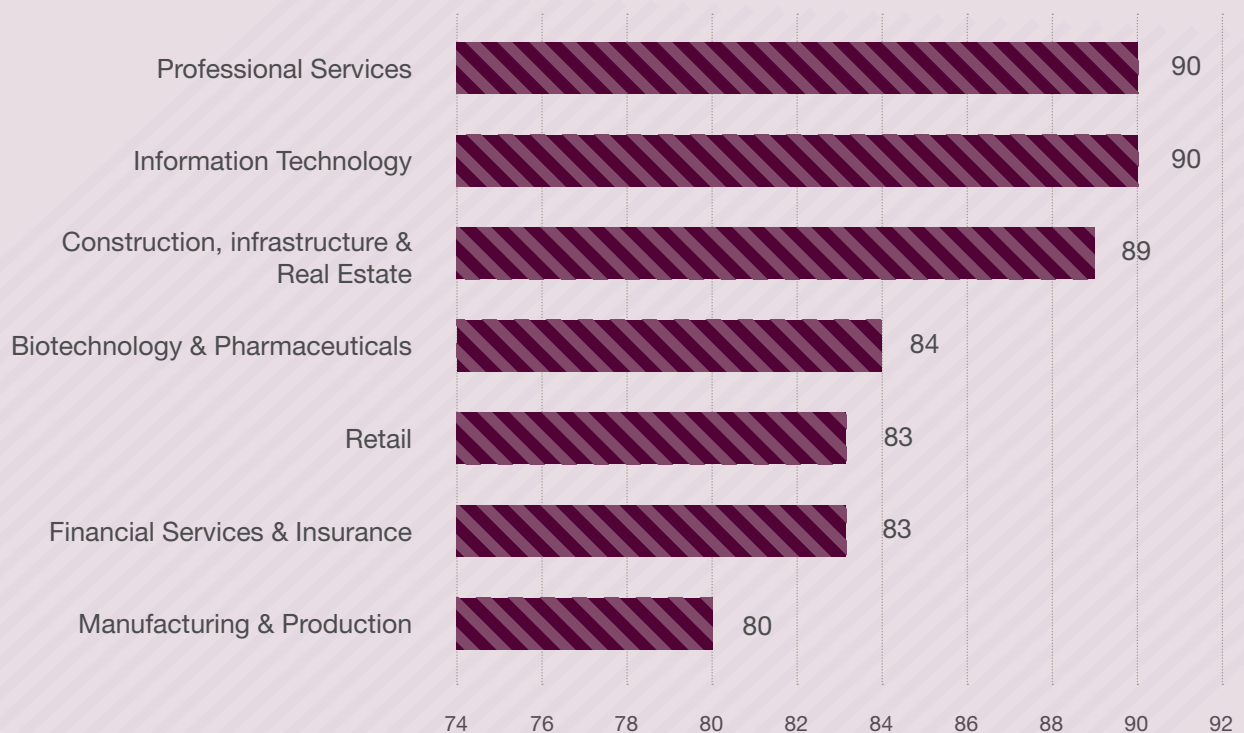


Fast Facts about the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2015

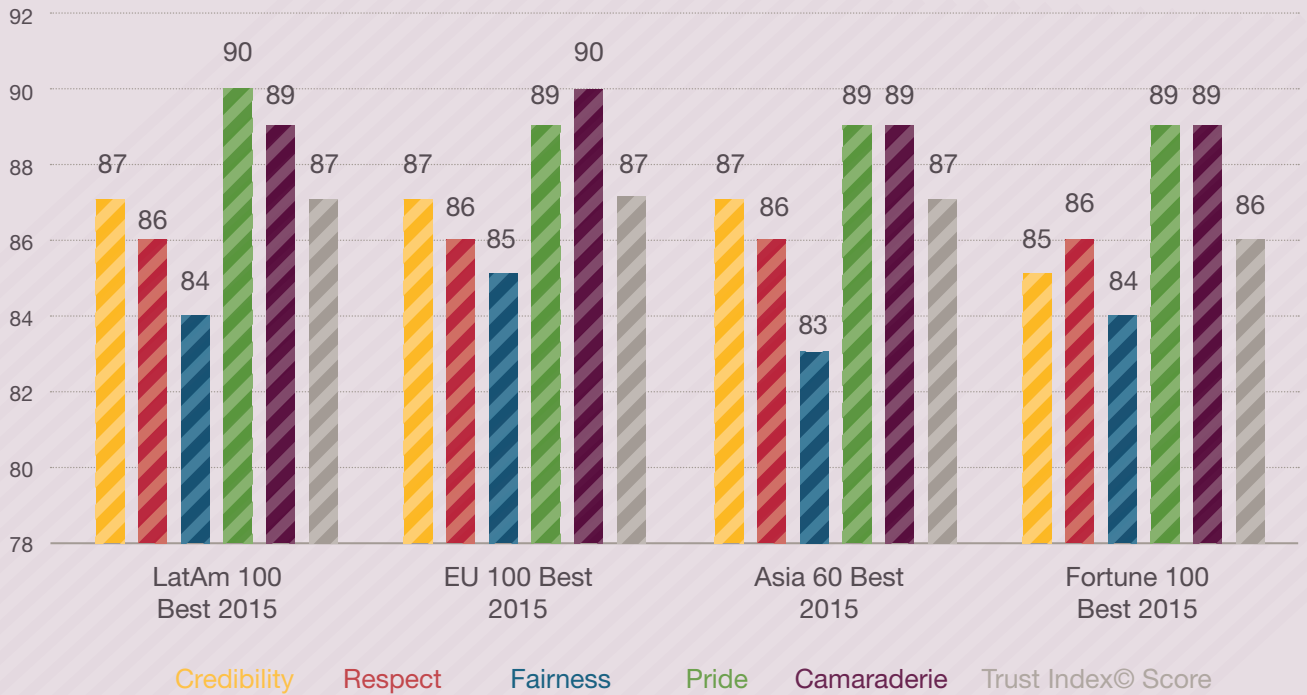
Trust Index® Results by List Category
2012 - 2013 - 2014 - 2015



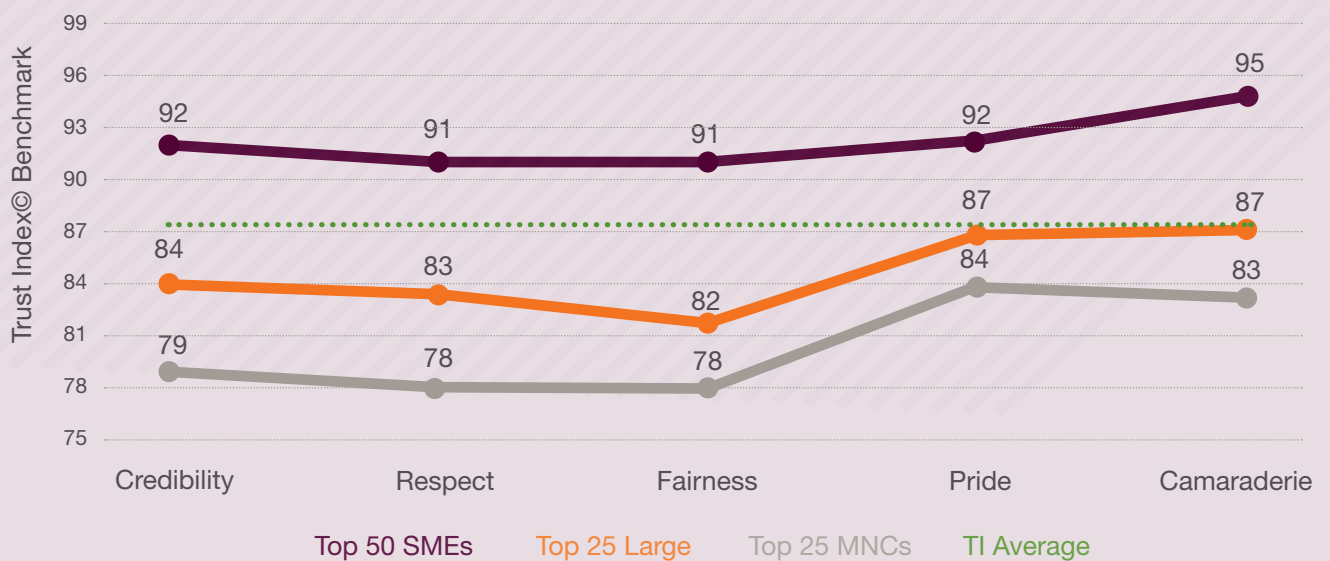
Trust Index® Score by Industry (2015)



Trust Index® Dimension Scores by Region

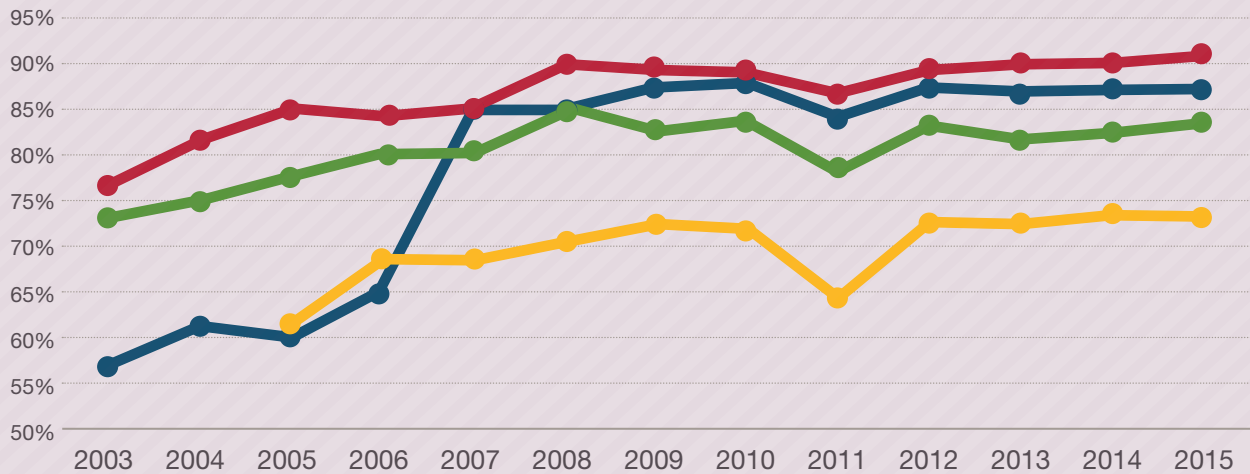


Trust Index® Dimension Score by List Category (2015)



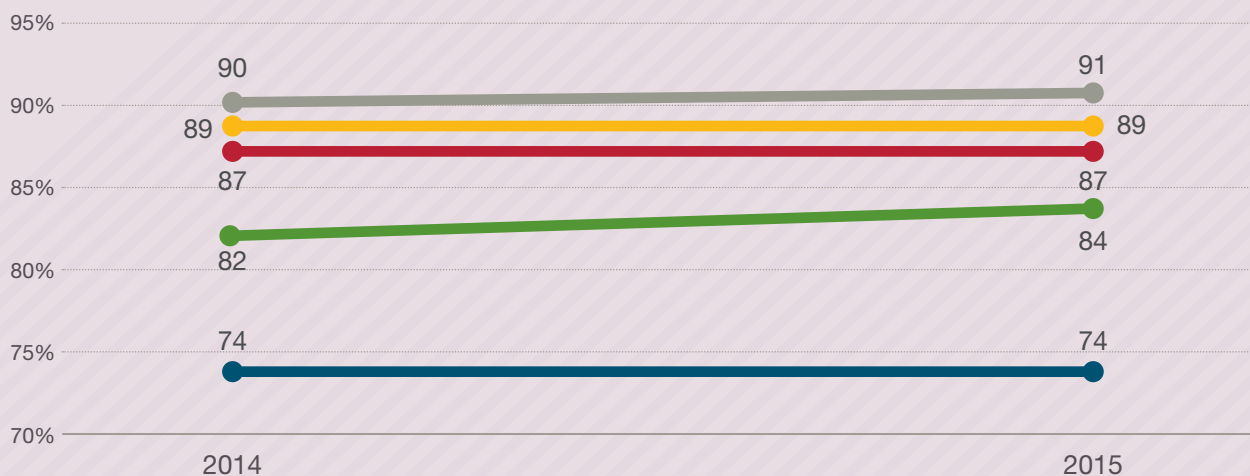
Fast Facts about the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2015

Most Improved Trust Index® Statements Since 2003



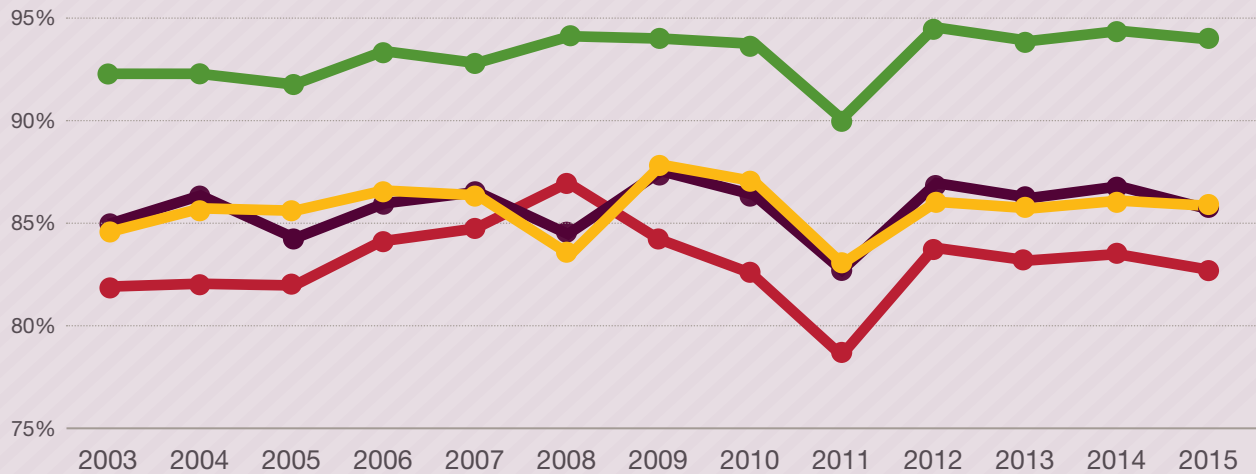
I am able to take time off from work when I think it's necessary
 We have special and unique benefits here
 I feel I receive a fair share of the profits made by this organisation
 I want to work here for a long time

Most Improved Trust Index® Statements Since 2014



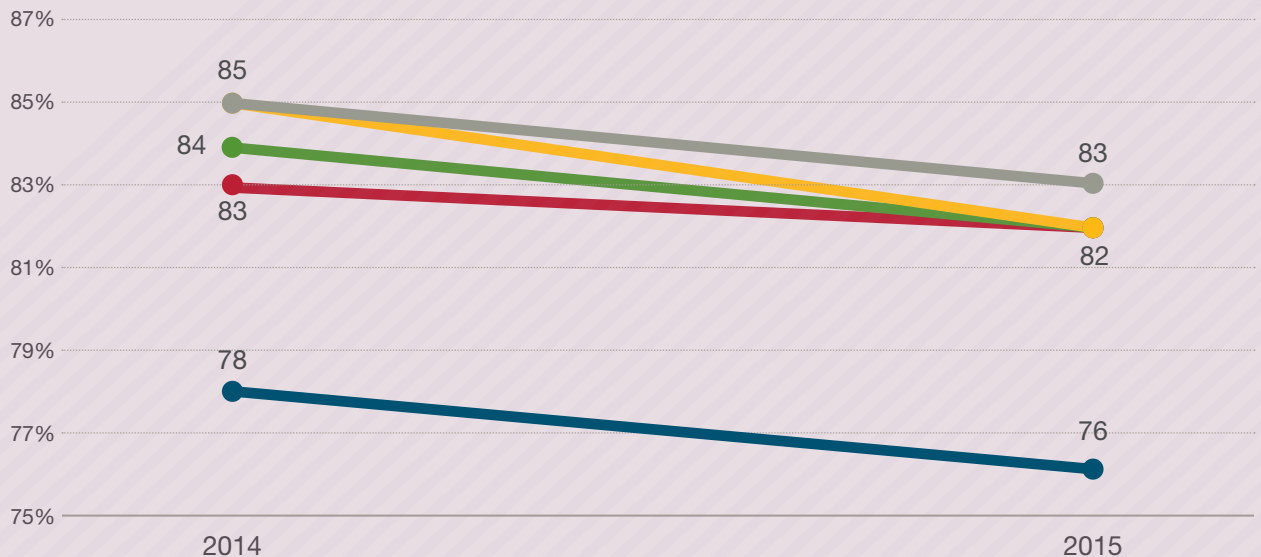
I am able to take time off from work when I think it's necessary
 I feel good about the ways we contribute to the community
 I want to work here for a long time
 We have special and unique benefits here
 I feel I receive a fair share of the profits made by this organisation

Least Improved Trust Index® Statements Since 2003



Management has a clear view of where the organisation is going and how to get there
 This is a friendly place to work
 My work has special meaning: this is not "just a job"
 I am offered training or development to further myself professionally

Trust Index® Statements Declining Most Since 2014



Management shows appreciation for good work and extra effort
 Management keeps me informed about important issues and changes
 People are encouraged to balance their work life and their personal life
 Everyone has an opportunity to get special recognition
 Managers avoid playing favorites

The List of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe

25 Best Multinational Workplaces in Europe 2015

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
1	NetApp	France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, UK	Information Technology / Hardware	1,585
2	EMC	Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Turkey, UK	Information Technology / Storage/Data Management	7,723
3	W. L. Gore & Associates	France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK	Manufacturing & Production	2,261
4	Admiral Group •Admiral Group (France, UK) •Balumba & Qualitas Auto (Spain) •ConTe.it (Italy)	France, Italy, Spain, UK	Financial Services & Insurance	5,943
5	Microsoft	Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, UK	Information Technology / Software	8,515
6	SAS Institute	Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands	Information Technology / Software	1,282
7	Mars •Mars (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain) •Mars Group† (Greece, Poland, Portugal) •Mars, Incorporated† (Switzerland) •Royal Canin (Italy) •Wrigley (Sweden)	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy (2), Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland	Manufacturing & Production / Food Products/Beverages	9,207
8	H&M	Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Turkey	Retail / Clothing/ Textile/Foodware	11,343
9	Coca-Cola •Coca-Cola Hellas* (Greece) •Coca-Cola Italia SRL* (Italy)	Denmark, Italy, France, Greece, UK	Manufacturing & Production / Food Products/Beverages	541

The List of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
10	Cisco	Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, UK	Information Technology	5,202
11	Novo Nordisk	Finland, Greece, the Netherlands	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals / Pharmaceuticals	232
12	Hilti	Denmark, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey	Manufacturing & Production	5,067
13	Adecco Group •Adecco (Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, UK) •Ajilon (The Netherlands) •DIS AG (Germany) •Spring Personnel Limited (UK) •Spring Technology (UK) •Computer People (UK) •Office Angels Limited (UK)	Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands (2), UK (5)	Professional Services / Staffing & Recruitment	7,147
14	Janssen-Cilag •Janssen (Spain)	Austria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals / Pharmaceuticals	1,786
15	eBay •eBay (Denmark, Ireland) •Gittigidiyor Bilgi Teknolojisi San. ve Tic. A.S. (Turkey)	Denmark, Ireland, Turkey	Retail	3,183
16	Philips	Austria, Spain, Switzerland	Manufacturing & Production / Electronics	1,439
17	Mundipharma	Austria, Germany, Spain, Switzerland	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals	1,078
18	AbbVie	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Turkey, UK	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals / Pharmaceuticals	4,762
19	McDonald's	Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, UK	Hospitality / Food and Beverage Service	139,056

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
20	PepsiCo •PepsiCo-Tasty Foods (Greece)	France, Greece, Ireland	Manufacturing & Production / Food Products/Beverages	2,014
21	Biogen Idec	Germany, Italy, Switzerland, UK	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals	997
22	Medtronic	The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals	1,928
23	IFS	Denmark, Germany, Sweden	Information Technology	718
24	Monsanto	Belgium, France, Italy, Spain	Manufacturing & Production / Chemicals	2,384
25	National Instruments	France, Italy, UK	Manufacturing & Production / Electronics	280

*The organisation's marketing division, not manufacturing

†Includes Mars and Royal Canin; also includes Wrigley in Poland and Switzerland

50 Best Small & Medium Workplaces in Europe 2015 (50-500 Employees)

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
1	Cygni	Sweden	Information Technology / IT Consulting	60
2	Key Solutions	Sweden	Professional Services / Business Process Outsourcing / Call Centers	88
3	Vincit	Finland	Information Technology / Software	107
4	Conscia	Denmark	Information Technology / IT Consulting	69
5	&samhoud consultancy	The Netherlands	Professional Services / Consulting – Management	103

The List of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
6	Tenant & Partner	Sweden	Construction, Infrastructure & Real Estate / Real Estate	62
7	Centiro Solutions	Sweden	Information Technology / Software	104
8	Frontit	Sweden	Information Technology / IT Consulting	97
9	Center for Socialpsykiatri Lolland	Denmark	Social Services and Government Agencies / Human Health and Social Work Activities	87
10	HERNING KOMMUNALE TANDPLEJE	Denmark	Social Services and Government Agencies / Human Health and Social Work Activities	67
11	Core Media	Ireland	Professional Services	178
12	Globoforce	Ireland	Professional Services	287
13	Middelfart Sparekasse	Denmark	Financial Services & Insurance / Banking/ Credit Services	239
14	Goodman Masson	United Kingdom	Professional Services / Staffing & Recruitment	130
15	EiendomsMegler 1 Midt-Norge	Norway	Construction, Infrastructure & Real Estate / Real Estate	189
16	One Vision Housing	United Kingdom	Social Services and Government Agencies / Housing	238
17	EASI	Belgium	Information Technology	125
18	Iterio	Sweden	Professional Services / Consulting Engineering	53
19	Hartmanns	Denmark	Professional Services / Staffing & Recruitment	115
20	Mindzet	Denmark	Information Technology / IT Consulting	61
21	Liquid Personnel Ltd	United Kingdom	Professional Services / Staffing & Recruitment	71
22	Relekta Gruppen	Norway	Industrial Services / Vehicle Repair & Maintenance	99
23	sepago GmbH	Germany	Information Technology / IT Consulting	58

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
24	Netpioneer GmbH	Germany	Information Technology / Software	89
25	Forsen Projekt	Sweden	Construction, Infrastructure & Real Estate	141
26	Gofore	Finland	Information Technology / IT Consulting	71
27	IT Gården	Sweden	Information Technology	79
28	mnemonic	Norway	Information Technology	117
29	Webstep	Norway	Information Technology / IT Consulting	324
30	Arcusys	Finland	Information Technology / Software	72
31	ICM Opleidingen & trainingen	The Netherlands	Professional Services / Education and Training	101
32	St. Gereon Seniorendienste	Germany	Health Care / Residential Care Services	391
33	Center for Neuropædagogik	Denmark	Social Services and Government Agencies / Human Health and Social Work Activities	66
34	Investec Ireland	Ireland	Financial Services & Insurance / Investments	231
35	PASCOE Naturmedizin	Germany	Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals / Pharmaceuticals	174
36	Teleopti	Sweden	Information Technology / Software	105
37	MaibornWolff GmbH	Germany	Information Technology / IT Consulting	115
38	Workday	Ireland	Information Technology / Software	240
39	Accuracy	France	Professional Services / Consulting-Actuarial/ Risk Assessment	119
40	Version 1	Ireland	Information Technology / Software	400
41	Nitor	Finland	Information Technology / IT Consulting	51
42	Morgan McKinley	Ireland	Professional Services / Staffing & Recruitment	207
43	Octo Technology	France	Information Technology / IT Consulting	199

The List of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
44	AE	Belgium	Information Technology / IT Consulting	176
45	Vitari	Norway	Information Technology / Software	74
46	Capital Properties UK Ltd	United Kingdom	Construction, Infrastructure & Real Estate	62
47	Impact International	United Kingdom	Professional Services / Consulting – Management	84
48	Solita	Finland	Information Technology / IT Consulting	296
49	Protime	Belgium	Information Technology / Software	115
50	The Irish Stock Exchange	Ireland	Financial Services & Insurance	103

25 Best Large Workplaces in Europe 2015 (500+ Employees)

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
1	Davidson	France	Professional Services / Consulting Engineering	1,035
2	Torfs	Belgium	Retail	601
3	Accent Jobs	Belgium	Professional Services / Staffing & Recruitment	694
4	Capital One (Europe) Plc	United Kingdom	Financial Services & Insurance / Banking/ Credit Services	1,288
5	3	Sweden	Telecommunications	1,705
6	Beierholm	Denmark	Professional Services / Accounting, Bookkeeping and Auditing	651
7	ROFF	Portugal	Information Technology / IT Consulting	727

Rank	Company name	Countries	Industry	# Employees Represented by Companies Listed on National Best Workplaces Lists
8	Softcat Ltd	United Kingdom	Information Technology	710
9	EnergiMidt	Denmark	Manufacturing & Production / Energy Distribution	720
10	Vector Informatik GmbH	Germany	Information Technology / Software	1,028
11	Reitangruppen	Norway	Retail / Food/Grocery	612
12	REL Field Marketing	United Kingdom	Professional Services / Advertising and Marketing	616
13	Rackspace	United Kingdom	Information Technology / Storage/ Data Management	1,025
14	Bright Horizons Family Solutions	United Kingdom	Education & Training	4,575
15	VSA-Unternehmensgruppe	Germany	Information Technology / Software	965
16	Diamantis Masoutis S.A. Supermarkets	Greece	Retail / Food/Grocery	6,183
17	Axis Communications	Sweden	Information Technology	1,146
18	DEAS	Denmark	Construction, Infrastructure & Real Estate / Property Management	606
19	Sparda-Bank München	Germany	Financial Services & Insurance / Banking/ Credit Services	732
20	Grupo DKV Seguros	Spain	Financial Services & Insurance / Health Insurance	741
21	Topaz Energy Limited	Ireland	Retail / Specialty	1,530
22	elobau GmbH & Co. KG	Germany	Manufacturing & Production / Electronics	648
23	Pets At Home	United Kingdom	Retail / Specialty	6,827
24	SBK Siemens-Betriebskrankenkasse	Germany	Financial Services & Insurance / Health Insurance	1,883
25	Kronenbourg	France	Manufacturing & Production / Food products/Beverages	1,236

Methodology

In order to be a candidate for the Best Workplaces in Europe list, a company must have appeared on a national Best Workplaces list at least one country in Europe. During the current 2014-2015 cycle, more than 820 companies earned a spot on Best Workplaces lists in 19 countries in the region. This group of companies was eligible for consideration for the regional list.

The companies on the Best Workplaces in Europe list appear in three categories:

Best Multinational
Workplaces

Best Large Workplaces
(more than 500
employees)

Best Small & Medium
Workplaces (between
50 and 500 employees)





Companies must meet the following criteria in order to be defined as multinational:

- The company has at least 1.000 employees worldwide
- At least 40% of the company's employees work outside the country where it is headquartered
- The company must operate in at least 3 countries

Companies that do not meet these three criteria automatically compete on either of the two size category lists. To qualify to appear on the Multinational category list, a company must have also been recognised on a minimum of three national Best Workplaces lists in Europe.

To create regional lists, workplaces are evaluated and win a spot using the same criteria that earns them the right to appear on a national list.

However, companies competing within the Multinational category receive extra points based on the number of countries they involve in national list processes in the region, as well as the total number of employees who were represented in the Trust Index® survey process. Consequently, multinational companies receive credit for their efforts to become a great workplace if they survey employees in several countries.

When multinationals become part of a regional list because they qualified in several countries, they can only occupy one position on the list. The scores of these companies are averaged and weighted by the number of employees in each of those countries. Multinational scores are only averaged for companies that share a common culture between countries.



The Basics and Beyond



