

Country Profile – France

Job market

What are my chances of getting a job?

You are most likely to find work with multinational or major national employers. Other opportunities include working as a teaching assistant or language teacher.

- **Typical problems encountered:** Jobseekers from overseas will not have the same access to social networks available to French graduates through their family and friends.
- **How to improve your chances:** you may have to get work experience in your home country before working in France and also improve your spoken and written French.
- **Language requirements:** the ability to speak rudimentary French is essential in most organisations in France. It may be possible to get by with English, at least in the workplace, in some of the international companies, particularly if you have a strong technical background (e.g. computing and engineering). Learning French before you go to France is a good idea. Use the [Next Step course search](#) to find a course near where you live. Your university may also run modules in some foreign languages, including French. Self-study and distance learning courses are available through organisations such as [Euro Talk](#).

Where can I work?

- **Major industries:** aerospace, automotive, pharmaceuticals, industrial machinery, food and drink, tourism. The [Pôle Emploi](#) (French national employment agency) and [L'Etudiant](#) websites also have information on sectors currently recruiting.
- **Shortage occupations:** see [For the Promotion of Economic Migration](#) for details of shortage occupations.
- **Major companies:** include AXA Group, BNP Paribas, Carrefour Group, Crédit Agricole, EDF, France Telecom, GDF SUEZ, L'Oréal Group, PSA Peugeot Citroën, Renault Group, Saint-Gobain, Sanofi, Société Générale, Vivendi.
- **Search for more companies:** the [Franco British Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#), the [French Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain](#), [Kompass France](#), [Pages Jaunes](#) and [Wikipedia - List of Companies in France](#) can also provide information about companies operating in France as well as French companies operating in the UK.
- **Major cities:** Paris - the capital and largest city, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Nice, Toulouse.

What's it like working in France?

- **Average working hours:** 35 hours a week.
- **Holidays:** five weeks of annual leave per annum. France has ten public holidays. May Day is the only guaranteed paid holiday. See the [Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Santé](#) for more information.
- **Tax rates:** income tax rates range from 5.5% to 30%, depending on your level of income, and can rise to 41% for those on high incomes ([France Accountants](#)). Tax is not deducted at source (only social security contributions) and employees must

declare their income in their annual tax return. Income tax is calculated according to the total income of the household, rather than on an individual basis.

Applying for jobs

You can begin the application process from your home country but you will probably need to be in France for the interview stage unless a company offers you a telephone interview. Typical methods of application include online application forms and CVs with covering letters. Speculative applications are also used and your CV and all letters of application should be in French.

CVs in France are similar to those used in the UK. They should be no more than two pages long and generally include the following information:

- personal details - include full name, address, telephone number (including international code), email address;
- job title - state the title of the job sought;
- professional experience - give details of previous jobs held, using a paragraph for each;
- education and training - include the dates and levels of your qualifications, remembering to give the equivalent in the French education system;
- language and computer skills - include your mother tongue and also reading, writing and oral levels in French;
- other interests - mention if you have lived, worked or studied in France before.
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Covering letters (*lettres de motivation*) should be no more than one page in length and should demonstrate why you are interested in a particular company and how your skills and experiences match the job requirements.

The interview process is usually comparable to UK recruiters' procedures. Small companies may use a single interview, while larger multinational companies may employ a variety of methods from interviews to psychometric tests or assessment centres. See the [EURES - European Job Mobility Portal](#) (Living and Working in France) website for general information on applying for jobs.

The [Pôle Emploi](#) (French national employment agency) website has more information in French on job seeking, CVs, covering letters and interviews. [L'Etudiant](#) website, also in French, has in-depth information on applying for jobs, including example CVs and covering letters and advice on interview technique and interview questions.

Will my UK qualifications be recognised?

Employers should recognise qualifications equivalent to the post-16 Baccalauréat or university degrees. They may ask to see evidence of these qualifications and you may need to have your degree certificate and transcripts translated into French and certified. Visit the [ENIC-NARIC France](#) website for more information on how to obtain a comparability statement for your qualifications. This certificate helps make your course more transparent and can be shown to prospective employers.

The [UK National Europass Centre \(UK NEC\)](#) gives information on how to make your skills and qualifications easily understood in other European countries, including France. The European Commission has established the [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#), which aims to make it easier for individuals and employers to understand and compare qualifications attained in different countries. Countries are now able to relate their

qualifications system to the EQF and from 2012 all new qualifications can carry a reference to an EQF level.

Do I still need to pay UK tax and National Insurance?

If you are planning to live and work in France, check your UK tax and National Insurance position with [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#) to ensure that you are not losing any UK pension rights.

Vacancy sources

Job websites

- [Association pour l'Emploi des Cadres \(APEC\)](#) (Managerial Staff Employment Association) - vacancies and job seeking advice for executives and young graduates.
- [Cadremploi](#) - vacancies for executive posts and jobs with responsibility.
- [CadresOnline](#) - vacancies for professional and executive posts.
- [Careerbuilder France](#)
- [Cyber Emploi Centre](#) - links to a range of French job websites, including general vacancy and career-specific recruitment sites.
- [Embauche](#)
- [L'Etudiant](#) - includes job vacancies and placements for students and young graduates as well as job hunting advice and links to other vacancy websites.
- [EURES - European Job Mobility Portal](#) - includes job vacancies, living and working conditions and labour markets in France, as well as a CV-posting service for jobseekers.
- [Jobintree](#) - vacancies searchable by sector or region of France.
- [Keljob](#)
- [Monster \(France\)](#)
- [Moovement](#)
- [Pôle Emploi](#) (French national employment agency) - job vacancies and job seeking advice.
- [Simply Hired France](#)
- [StepStone France](#)

The [ABG-Intelli'agence](#) website includes resources and vacancies aimed at science PhD holders.

Recruitment agencies

- [PRISME \(Professionals de l'intérim, services et métiers de l'emploi\)](#), a professional body representing temporary employment agencies in France, has a list of member agencies, searchable by region.
- Search the [Pages Jaunes](#) for contact details of recruitment agencies (*cabinets de recrutement*) operating in France.
- Some UK-based employment agencies deal with international vacancies or have branches abroad, including in France. Check the [Recruitment and Employment Confederation \(REC\)](#) consultancy finder for lists of approved UK agencies and then contact the agency to see if they have jobs abroad.

Newspapers

- [L'Express](#) - news weekly.

- [Le Figaro](#) - national daily.
- [Le Monde](#) - national daily.
- [Le Point](#) - news weekly.
- [Liberation](#) - national daily.
- [Ouest France](#) - Rennes-based, daily.

The [Kidon Media-Link](#) website includes links to a range of French newspapers and news sources. [Guide Presse](#) links to national and regional newspapers, magazines and the specialist press in France, many of which have either general or career-specific vacancies. [L'Etudiant](#) provides a range of magazines aimed at students.

Other sources

Job fairs

Attending job fairs (*salons de recrutement*) is another way of meeting potential employers. Make sure you prepare beforehand by researching the companies that will be attending and take up-to-date copies of your CV with you (translated into French). Use the opportunity to speak to recruiters and develop contacts. [L'Etudiant](#) website has details of forthcoming fairs. See [Pôle Emploi - Événements](#) for details of job seeking events taking place around France.

Self-employment

If you want to set up as a self-employed person in France, you have to be registered in the professional register for your type of work and pay social security contributions. Contact the [Centre de Formalités des Entreprises](#) for more information on registering. Visit the [APCE \(Agence pour la Création d'Entreprises\)](#) website for more information on how to start up a company.

Hidden vacancies

Networking and speculative applications (*candidatures spontanées*) are important routes into employment. Search the [Pages Jaunes](#) for companies in your chosen career area. See [L'Etudiant](#) website for tips on speculative approaches and social and professional networking.

Work experience

Work placements and internships

Students wishing to take a year out from study in the UK may consider undertaking a period of work experience or *stage* in France. Websites advertising *stages* include:

- [L'Etudiant](#);
- [Infostages.com](#);
- [Kap'stages](#);
- [Capcampus](#);
- [IAESTE \(International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience\)](#) - summer placements for science and engineering students;
- [AIESEC \(Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales\)](#) - offers young people the opportunity to participate in international internships, in areas such as management, technology, education, and development;

- [iAGORA](#);
- [Le Rucher](#);
- UK based multinationals advertising European placements - check with your university careers services.

The ability to speak and understand French is essential. You will be in competition with French students, so take time with your application and be prepared to make some speculative applications. Use French business directories such as the [Pages Jaunes](#) and [Kompas France](#) to find companies for speculative applications.

The *stage* is governed by a formal agreement known as a *convention de stage*. This needs to be signed by the French employer, you (the employee) and a representative from your university. Contact your university for more information.

Exchange programmes

Your institution may be involved in the [Leonardo da Vinci Programme](#) through which vocational training exchanges and work placements are arranged with partner organisations in other countries, including France. Contact your institution's international office or your careers service for more information.

Teaching schemes

[British Council - Language Assistants](#) programme provides the opportunity for undergraduates and recent graduates of any discipline (as long as they have AS level French or equivalent) to work in France as an English language assistant.

If your university has a department for foreign languages or equivalent, you may be able to pick up useful advice, guides and contacts on teaching opportunities available in France.

The [Teaching English Abroad](#) publication has a country by country guide to English teaching opportunities, as well as a directory of language schools in a range of countries, including France.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a good way to gain experience and to learn more about French society and culture and will improve your language skills. The [Youth in Action](#) programme, for example, is funded by the European Commission and provides young people with a variety of opportunities to experience Europe. The [European Voluntary Service \(EVS\)](#) is part of this programme and offers young people (18-30) the opportunity to volunteer in a range of countries, including France, for a period of two to twelve months.

[France Bénévolat](#) is a French organisation specialising in voluntary work in France. Visit the website for a searchable database of volunteering opportunities.

It is also possible to find volunteering opportunities via a range of volunteering websites, for example [Go Abroad](#). Research any opportunities thoroughly to ensure you are happy with the project and terms and conditions on offer.

Casual work

There are many opportunities for seasonal work (*emploi saisonnier* or *job étudiant*). Roles are available in areas such as tourism, hotel and catering work, and office work. See, for example:

- [L'Etudiant](#);

- [Pôle Emploi](#) (French national employment agency);
- [iAGORA](#);
- [Aidemploi](#) - links to French websites offering seasonal work;
- Your university careers service - many services get summer jobs from organisations such as [Eurocamp](#).

Gap year opportunities

There are many organisations offering gap years in France (or France as part of a gap year). To choose a reputable organisation, you should seek advice from your university careers service or check whether the company is registered with [Air Travel Organisers' Licensing \(ATOL\)](#) or other similar organisations. Some companies will also offer services such as a 24-hour emergency helpline.

Postgraduate study

How does the higher education system work?

The French higher education system consists of:

- 83 universities;
- more than 200 engineering schools;
- 200 schools of business and management;
- 120 public art schools;
- 20 schools of architecture.

There are also more than 3,000 specialist schools and institutions providing vocational courses in areas such as social work, tourism, sports, fashion and design.

Degrees awarded reflect a common European framework:

- *Licence* - equivalent to a Bachelors degree, usually takes three years of study;
- *Master* - equivalent to a master's degree, usually takes two years of further study;
- *Doctorat* - a PhD, usually takes three further years of study.

Any student holding a European master's or equivalent may apply for admission to a doctoral programme in France.

See [Campus France](#) for more information on the higher education system in France.

What courses are available?

France's universities are publicly funded and they award national diplomas. They offer courses in all disciplines. The system of *Grandes Écoles*, set up in parallel to the university system, includes the:

- schools of engineering and business;
- *Écoles Normales Supérieures (ENS)*;
- national schools of veterinary science.

All *Grandes Écoles* offer five-year diplomas, recognised by the government as being equivalent to the European master's, as well as other courses such as the MBA.

France has 20 PRES (*pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur*), which are clusters of universities, specialised schools and research organisations. This structure enables members of a particular cluster to combine their activities and resources.

Where can I study?

[Campus France](#) has an online database of courses offered at licence, master's and doctoral level. You can search by various criteria, including courses taught in English. The [Top Universities](#) website provides a list of the top universities in France.

Applying for postgraduate study

France's universities and other public higher educational institutions do not distinguish between home and international students. You will be subject to the same entry and tuition requirements and receive the same degrees as French students.

EU and EEA nationals can apply directly to the institution(s) they are interested in. There is no officially recognised equivalence between French and foreign degrees and individual institutions are able to set their own admissions criteria. Contact individual institutions for details.

It is important to be able to speak French, even for courses taught in English.

Fees and scholarships

The French government provides much of the finance for public higher education. Therefore, international students pay the same tuition fees as French students at universities and public institutions. The annual tuition rates charged by public educational institutions in 2011-12 were:

- €177 for licence programmes;
- €245 for master's programmes;
- €372 for doctoral programmes;
- €584 for engineering programmes.

The true cost is much higher, but the difference is paid by the French government. Students may also have to pay additional fees for administrative services or special programmes.

Private institutions are more expensive. Business and management schools, for example, generally charge between €2,000 and €30,000.

[Campus France](#) estimates the monthly student budget is €1,000 in Paris and €800 in other parts of France. The cost of living may be twice as much in Paris as in other parts of France. For a breakdown of monthly costs see the Campus France and [CNOUS](#) websites.

Entente Cordiale scholarships are open to British and French nationals who plan to study at postgraduate or postdoctoral level in each other's country. British candidates should apply through the Cultural Department of the [French Embassy](#) in London. The closing date is usually March but you should check with the Embassy well in advance.

The [Campus France](#) website has a searchable database of grants available to fund undergraduate and postgraduate study. Also visit the websites of individual institutions to find out what scholarships are available.

Are there any exchange programmes?

UK students on undergraduate degree courses, master's programmes or some PhD programmes may be interested in spending time studying in France through the [Erasmus](#) scheme. This programme covers all subject areas, but check what links your university has with your university's Erasmus coordinator (usually based in the international office).

Will my qualification be recognised in the UK?

Qualifications you gain in France should be recognised in the UK, although you may need to have the certificate translated into English. Full details on comparing international qualifications are available from [UK NARIC \(National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom\)](#), which provides information about the equivalency of qualifications and skills from overseas to the UK's national qualifications frameworks.

Visa and travel information

Most EU nationals do not need a visa or work permit. However, nationals of Bulgaria and Romania should check with the [French Embassy](#) to find out whether any restrictions still apply.

If you are a non-EU national, contact the French embassy in the country where you are currently residing about how to obtain visas and work permits. If you are living in the UK, visit the French Embassy website.

Once you are legally employed in another EU country, you are entitled to equal treatment with nationals of the country where you are working. See the [France-Diplomatie \(French Foreign Ministry\)](#) website for more information on visas.

Permanent residency

Most EU citizens automatically have the right to permanent residency in France after living there for an uninterrupted period of five years. See the [Service Public - Étrangers en France](#) website for more information.

Help in an emergency

The single European emergency telephone number, available everywhere in the EU free of charge, is 112. You can use this number when you require an ambulance, the fire brigade or the police. See [112 - The European emergency number](#) for more information.

In France you can also use:

- 15 - medical emergencies/ambulance;
- 17 - police;
- 18 - fire brigade.

[SOS help](#) is an English language telephone listening service, which has trained operators who will listen sympathetically to those in distress or feeling depressed.

The [British Embassy France](#) can provide help and advice to UK citizens in difficulties. They have three British Consulates in Paris, Bordeaux and Marseille. See the website for details of the kinds of assistance available.

Travel advice

Check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) website before travelling for up-to-date travel advice.

Country overview

Geography

- **Full country name:** French Republic. Includes mainland France and the island of Corsica, as well as the overseas departments of French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Réunion.
- **Population:** 62.8 million (est 2011).
- **Border countries:** Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Switzerland.
- **Climate:** climate in the North and North West is similar to that of Britain; climate in the South is Mediterranean; Central and Eastern France has a more continental climate; mountainous regions are colder and wetter and have more snow in winter ([BBC Weather Country Guides: France](#)).
- **Terrain:** mainly flat plains and hills with mountainous zones in the east and south west.
- **Natural hazards:** flooding, storms, avalanches (particularly in the French Alpine regions), forest fires (can occur in any forested areas, but particularly along the Mediterranean coast).

Living in France

- **Cost of living:** depends on the region in which you live. Paris is a lot more expensive than other regions, particularly when it comes to expenditure relating to accommodation. However, even in the same town prices can vary greatly between districts. See the [EURES - European Job Mobility Portal](#) (Living and Working in France) for more information on the cost of living in France.
- **Internet domain:** .fr
- **Health:** high standard of health and wellbeing. Before going to France make sure you obtain a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to be eligible for emergency medical treatment. It is also important to take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling.
- **Laws and customs:** Since 1905, with the introduction of the concept of *laïcité* (secularism), no religion has any legal status in France or any role in public life. In April 2011 a ban on concealment of the face in public places came into effect. This includes full veils, balaclavas and any other item of clothing or mask that is used to conceal the face.

Economy and finance

- **Currency:** Euro (€)
- **Type of economy:** Western capitalist.
- **Health of economy:** France is the eurozone's second largest economy. In response to the eurozone crisis, France is implementing a range of austerity measures in order to bring down its budget deficit.
- **Unemployment rate:** 9.9% ([Eurostat](#), Jan 12).
- **Main exports:** machinery and transportation equipment, agricultural products, including wine.

Culture

- **People:** French or French with heritage of one of the following groups: Flemish, Catalan, German, Armenian, Roma, Russian, or Polish. Minority groups include Algerian, Portuguese, Moroccan, Italian, Spaniard, Tunisian and Turkish.
- **Major religion:** France is constitutionally a secular country, but the strongest religion has historically been Roman Catholicism. Other religions include Islam, Protestantism and Judaism.
- **History:** See [BBC Timeline: France](#).

Politics

- **Type of government:** France is a democratic republic with two legislative houses of Parliament - the Senate and the National Assembly.
- **Major political parties:** Union for a Popular Movement, New Centre, Socialist Party, Left Radical Party, Citizens' Republican Movement, French Communist Party, The Greens, Democratic Movement, Movement for France, National Front, New Anti-Capitalist Party, Workers' Struggle. See [France Politique](#) for more information.

More information

- [French Embassy](#)
- [BBC Country Profile - France](#)
- [The World Factbook](#)
- [XE Universal Currency Converter](#)

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