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The future of recruitment: a mixed-methods scenario analysis in Germany

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Abstract: The shortage of skilled workers is becoming increasingly concerning for companies, as it poses a significant risk to their competitiveness. To counter this shortage, recruiting professionals need to be more effective than ever before. To obtain an evidence-based evaluation of the likely developments in recruiting in Germany, a scenario study was conducted. To comprehensively address our common research question, we employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey. This combination allows us to capture a broad range of data, providing a deeper understanding of the research problem. After an initial qualitative survey of experts from practice and academia, various scenarios for the future of recruiting were developed. These scenarios were then evaluated in a subsequent quantitative study by 208 practitioners in terms of their impact on the current and future situation as well as on the practical work of recruiters. Overall, the study reveals significant challenges that will be confronted in recruitment up to the year 2035. If these scenarios materialise, companies in general and recruiting departments in particular will encounter a substantial need for change in the forthcoming years.

Keywords: recruitment; scenario analysis; recruiting professional skill-set; recruitment methods; recruitment tools; future studies; Germany.

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1 Introduction

The shortage of personnel poses a considerable risk for industrialised countries such as Germany, and this phenomenon could have a significant negative impact on competitiveness for years to come (Vollmer, 2015). Indeed, the gap between supply and demand for skilled workers is widening (Peichl et al., 2022). Several research institutes have calculated that there will be a shortage of skilled workers in Germany (Burstedde, 2023; Peichl et al., 2022). For 2040, researchers calculated a shortage of 3.3 million (Prognos, 2015). The Cologne Institute for Economic Research reached a similar conclusion in a more recent study from 2021. In their projection of the development of the skilled labour base by 2040, the researchers anticipate a gap of 3.1 million skilled workers in the most likely scenario (Geis-Thöne, 2021). This lack of qualified workers is a core problem of the German economy that could significantly slow future economic growth (Horbach and Rammer, 2020).

Recruitment efforts in particular play a crucial role in counteracting this foreseeable shortage (Lievens and Chapman, 2019). The great importance of recruiting also becomes apparent when one considers the business and economic consequences of not filling vacant positions. Labour shortage can significantly hinder a firm's performance by reducing productivity, increasing operational costs, and limiting the ability to meet market demands (Brunello et al., 2019). A shortage of skilled labour and a skills' mismatch can significantly reduce a company's ability to innovate and thereby undermine its competitive advantage in the marketplace (Horbach and Rammer, 2022; Bilan et al., 2020). On a broader scale, prolonged labour shortages can stifle economic growth, reduce the competitiveness of a country's industries, and exacerbate inflationary pressures, ultimately weakening the overall economy (Andersén, 2021; Bilan et al., 2020). The business and macroeconomic consequences of this shortage highlight the importance of more intensive consideration of the significance of recruiting.

In addition, recruiting has become a strategic business priority, driven by the critical increasing importance of human capital for creating corporate value and competitive advantage (van Esch and Black, 2019). Despite the fact that recruitment will be of increasing relevance to counteract firms' skilled labour shortages, the recruiting industry itself is undergoing significant changes (Black and van Esch, 2021). Recruitment takes place in today's dynamic business environment, influenced by several future trends, such as demographic change in Germany, the rise of AI tools, and new work concepts (Black and van Esch, 2021). As these trends will shape the future of recruiting, it is vital to provide recruiters with insight into the specific job-related competencies that will need to be developed in the future, the emerging roles they will need to manage, and the precise tools required to address these needs effectively (Potočnik et al., 2021). It will therefore

be of interest not only to recruiters to predict what these changes might be. Although the realm of recruiting has a rich history within human resources research, recently, little attention has been given to the future development of recruiting activities (Gilch and Sieweke, 2021; Potočník et al., 2021).

In this context, it may be meaningful to examine how recruiting can be aligned with the challenges of the future. It should be noted that many of today's trends have direct implications for recruiting. For example, demographic change in Germany will in all likelihood mean that the shortage of skilled workers will continue to challenge companies for years to come. The recruitment of foreign labour will therefore gain importance (Geis-Thöne, 2021). The German Government has already made efforts to recruit labour from other countries (Liu-Farrer and Shire, 2023). For example, the number of non-EU labour migrants to Germany has risen steadily year on year since 2010, when it was 85,000. Despite small increases during the COVID-19 pandemic years (2020: +16,000 (+6%); 2021: +21,000 (+8%)), the number surged to 56,000 (+19%) in 2022 (Destatis, 2023). As a result, the German labour market has become more international and intercultural, which in turn should lead to greater consideration of diversity in recruiting (Ryan and Derous, 2024). At the same time, it is clear that integration and fair and sustainable working conditions play an important role in the successful recruitment of foreign skilled workers (Angenendt et al., 2023; Lauxen et al., 2019). In terms of human resource development, it is important to stress the need to develop forward-looking strategies to meet the long-term demand for skilled workers (Deissinger and Breuing, 2014). This includes personnel development measures such as, e.g., adapting training courses to technological advancements, promoting lifelong learning as well as fostering the integration of international skilled workers into the German labour market (Deissinger and Breuing, 2014). However, the potential dilemmas between national interests and labour needs make this a challenging area (Marchetti et al., 2022).

Against this background, this study aims to answer the question of how recruiting in Germany is likely to change in the future. In addition to future recruiting scenarios, our research shall provide recruiters with insights into the specific job-related competencies, tasks and tools that will be needed in the future. The objective is to apply a multistage methodology, combining both qualitative and quantitative research based on expert assessments to make predictions for recruiting in 2035. A period of at least ten years was chosen for the scenario analysis, in line with the approach described below (Kirchgeorg et al., 2017). In our review of the literature, therefore, this paper begins by defining and examining the methodology of future studies, providing a basis for understanding its application and relevance in the research context, followed by the definition of recruitment and recent findings on recruitment trends.

2 Literature review

2.1 Future studies

In management research, it is widely recognised that future studies are a fundamental element of strategy formulation (Burgelman, 2020; Purchase and Volery, 2020). Trends are a long-term influencing factor for organisations (Tanaka et al., 2020). In particular, forecasting economic trends, technological trends, legal trends, sociological trends, and ecological and political trends is of relevance to strategic management (Ansoff, 2007; Ansoff et al., 2018). This foresight to identify strategic relevant changes in the firm's

environment has always been essential for improving management decisions, as it provides the opportunity to integrate future changes into present considerations (Battistella and Toni, 2011).

Because of this relevance for strategic outcomes, there is growing attention in management research toward changes, as the speed and magnitude as well as the complexity of their effects have an enormous impact on social, cultural, economic and technological areas, which are also called trends (Ioannis and Belias, 2020). Therefore, detecting and analysing trends has become a crucial aspect of the foresight process (Voros, 2003). Here, analysing and identifying major trends that directly affect the world and manifest themselves in a multidimensional complexity are of research interest, as they will potentially influence society and the economy in the near future and therefore, will also influence a firm's strategic arena (Güernes-Castorena, 2009). In particular, megatrends are understood to be the major effects of human or technology development that significantly influence human activities on a horizon of approximately ten to 15 years (Naisbitt, 1982).

2.2 Recruiting

Recruiting contributes significantly to a company's success (Hamza et al., 2021). Although, there is no uniform definition of what is meant by the term 'recruiting', the majority of authors emphasise that the central task is the acquisition of employees for an organisation (Barber, 1998; Torrington et al., 2020; Noe et al., 2023). In addition, the acquisition, selection and retention of skilled employees is also reflected from an organisational research perspective (Torrington et al., 2020; Noe et al., 2023). Recruitment can therefore be considered one of the most critical functions of an organisation (Lievens and Chapman, 2019). Conversely, the marketing-related aspects of acquiring employees can be discussed in the context of employer branding (Wilden et al., 2010). In this context, the focus is on the employer brand and strategies for enhancing its appeal (Backhaus, 2016). As the business environment becomes increasingly competitive, having the right people with the right skills will be increasingly critical for an organisation's success (Chungyalpa and Karishma, 2016). That is, recruiting plays a decisive role in enhancing an organisation's competitive advantage by ensuring that it can successfully achieve its goals in a competitive environment (Collins and Han, 2004).

This definition highlights the strategic importance of recruiting. Without the necessary number of motivated and qualified employees, even the most appealing vision and the most well-thought-out strategy are unlikely to be fully realised (Dessain, 2016). Due to this strategic role of recruiting, it is widely recognised that exogenous changes in the organisation's environment are significant to the recruiting process and outcomes, underlining the importance of conducting trend research in the recruiting field (Kim and Ployhart, 2014; Ployhart and Kim, 2014). However, to date, there is little empirical evidence about recruiting trends in Germany and how they might influence recruiting strategy (Gilch and Sieweke, 2021).

2.3 Recruitment trends

Currently, the recruitment field is undergoing tremendous changes driven by technological innovations (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2019; Arseneault and Roulin,

2024). In recent years, there has been a notable transformation not only in the strategic importance of recruitment but also in the way it is conducted as a result of technological advances and social-behavioural changes (Chungyalpa and Karishma, 2016). Online job portals, for example, have largely replaced job advertisements in newspapers. Social media platforms, especially those connected to professionals (e.g., LinkedIn), enable recruiters to actively search for suitable candidates, review their profiles and contact them directly (Koch et al., 2018). Social media presence and employer branding on platforms such as Facebook or Instagram have enhanced ways to attract talent and position oneself as an attractive employer (Purvis, 2016). More recently, the widespread accessibility to artificial intelligence (AI) services, e.g., via ChatGPT, has led to a comprehensive discussion on the future viability of and changes in job profiles (Agrawal et al., 2022). As a result, some job profiles will become obsolete, others will change, and completely new types of profiles are likely to emerge (Jones, 2017). In the following, we examine some of the key trends impacting recruitment based on technological advances and social-behavioural changes.

As previously mentioned, digitisation has become an integral part of the recruiting process. It promises to make recruiting more efficient, for example, by automatically matching applications with job profiles of positions to be filled, so-called ‘CV parsing and matching’ (Bilal and Varallyai, 2019). As job candidates increasingly spend their time in digital spaces, companies attracting talent must recruit by using digital technologies as well (van Esch and Black, 2019). In doing so, chatbots and virtual assistants are increasingly used to answer applicants’ questions and support them during the application process (Weinert et al., 2020). Moreover, asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) constitute a more frequently used alternative to traditional face-to-face and videoconference selection interviews (Lukacik et al., 2022). This process is conducted entirely online, wherein applicants record brief video responses to predetermined interview questions. There is no synchronous interaction or real-time communication. Instead, applicants’ recorded responses are subsequently assessed, either by a human interviewer or via an automated algorithm (Arseneault and Roulin, 2024).

Finally, AI-enabled tools used in the recruiting process have improved to the point where they are highly effective (Konradt et al., 2013). They have the power to enhance both the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruiting process, namely, the candidate selection phase that takes place before direct contact with a recruiter (van Esch et al., 2019; van Esch and Black, 2019). Nevertheless, such tools will only become permanently established if the perceived quality is acceptable for applicants (Konradt et al., 2013). Some studies show that the acceptance of candidates and the perception of a company as a potential employer are significantly influenced by the quality of chatbots’ communication skills (Schuetzler et al., 2020).

Another aspect providing myriad opportunities is the sheer availability of data internally (e.g., organisational development and required personnel) and externally (e.g., about potential candidates) (Gravili et al., 2023). For this reason, ‘futurecasting’ is anticipated to be a crucial digital ability of the future for organisations (Sahay, 2015). This term describes the ability to use ‘big data’, generated primarily in social media, to optimise recruitment strategies and processes in practice (Sahay, 2015). This in turn presupposes that the recruiter can also evaluate and interpret the data correctly. If this is the case, data-led personnel planning and its conclusive acquisition and selection of suitable candidates will tremendously enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment (Shamaileh et al., 2023).

Additionally, an unprecedented change in the nature of work, and where and when it is performed can be observed. The novel coronavirus pandemic in particular acted as a catalyst, establishing forms of remote working on a scale that seemed completely unthinkable to most just a few years ago (Vogl and Carstensen, 2021). In addition, companies have had to switch to virtual application processes, video interviews, and remote onboarding in recent years (Vedernikov et al., 2022). Such remote recruiting processes have shown that it is possible to reach and hire talented candidates regardless of their location, expanding opportunities for companies (Vedernikov et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a trend toward offering short digital applications directly on the company website can be observed, especially among SMEs (Abraham et al., 2024). This is intended to provide a low-threshold and spontaneous entry into the recruiting process for potential applicants. Additionally, this is driven by the ‘passive’ majority of prospects, which are not actively seeking jobs but are open to new jobs (Chungyalpa and Karishma, 2016). With the widespread establishment of smartphones and mobile apps, recruiting has also increasingly shifted to mobile devices (Niklas and Böhm, 2011). Companies are using mobile apps to post job openings, accept applications, and even conduct interviews (Agrawal et al., 2022).

In summary, the presented recruitment trends have the potential to make recruiting faster, more efficient and more global. In many respects, these trends have the capabilities to make a significant contribution to the overall strategy of a company to ensure long-term success. On the other hand, these developments are also accompanied by changing and, in some cases, new professional requirements for recruiters (Bilal and Varallyai, 2019; Sahay, 2015). The previous comments suggest, among other things, that in the future, HR data analytics and AI will become more important in addition to sound expertise in the application of HR technology as well as social media skills and the ability to effectively use the insights gained to advise managers in the company (Kim and Ployhart, 2014).

It can be assumed that the trends described above will continue to develop dynamically and will therefore continue to have a significant influence on recruiting in the future. The question therefore arises as to what the future of recruiting might look like. Providing an approximate answer to this question is highly relevant for both the company management and the recruiters working there, and this knowledge will allow all parties to adequately prepare themselves to make strategic changes for the future (Mietzner and Reger, 2005). In addition to future recruiting scenarios and framework conditions, it is also important to provide recruiting personnel with knowledge about which specific job-related recruiting competencies will need to be developed in the future, which tasks will arise, and which specific instruments recruiters will need for this purpose (Potočník et al., 2021).

3 Research methodology

In the field of futurology, there are two different approaches to anticipating future developments: thinking in terms of alternatives (scenarios) and searching for the most likely development (forecasts) (Amer et al., 2013; Battistella and Toni, 2011). Unlike forecasts, which mostly focus on extrapolating statistical past values of a concrete issue,

scenarios map the interplay of different issues (e.g., relevant developments in recruitment) (Backhaus et al., 2016).

Scenario analyses can take different forms. One possibility is represented by so-called Delphi studies. Although these are certainly used in human resource management research (e.g., Wright et al., 2005; Strohmeier, 2020), their degree of diffusion is relatively low. This is particularly true for Delphi studies that focus explicitly on aspects of human resource management in Germany. Exceptions include the works of Schermuly et al. (2012) and Lohaus et al. (2018). One reason for the low prevalence of this study design may be the complex methodology, which, building on a qualitative preliminary study to identify scenarios, requires at least two subsequent quantitative surveys to validate them (Häder, 2014).

The present study is different. It is based on the procedure described by Kirchgeorg et al. (2017). In the first step, the so-called scenario preparation, the authors recommend that the relevant object of investigation has to be outlined and the time horizon for the scenarios be defined. Accordingly, the focus here was on key developments that will most likely affect recruiting in Germany up to 2035. Building on this, a comprehensive literature review was conducted focusing on contributions that address the evolution of recruiting and related developments. This was followed by a multistage expert interview and survey procedure (Kirchgeorg et al., 2017). In the first round, recruiting scenarios were derived in two workshops. In the subsequent second round, the scenarios were evaluated quantitatively by a large number of other recruiting experts using an online questionnaire. There are two main reasons for this procedure: First, collective assessments are generally more precise and accurate than individual assessments (Stehouwer et al., 2023), and second, the highly structured and anonymous online questionnaire eliminates any tendencies toward group dynamics that could distort judgements (van Selin and Jankowski, 2006).

3.1 Qualitative expert workshops

3.1.1 Qualitative research design

The aim of the qualitative method was to identify the most important topics and future expectations of recruiting from the perspective of relevant experts. Two workshops were conducted for this purpose. In qualitative social research, experts are all persons who possess a “source of specialised knowledge about the social issues being researched” [Gläser and Laudel, (2010), p.12]. In the present case, this prerequisite was fulfilled. All participants had to prove that they had at least five years of relevant professional experience in order to take part in the study and are thus a credible source of information.

All study participants were approached directly. They were all members of the ‘recruiting’ group, which is part of the German Federal Association of Personnel Management (BPM). The BPM is the largest association for human resources management in Germany. The expert group was heterogeneously composed in terms of company size and industry. Eight people took part in the first workshop, all of whom were practitioners. The second workshop, with a total of 11 participants, was composed of academics specialising in recruiting. They were addressed directly by the authors following a snowball sampling strategy (Robinson, 2014). This ensured that different perspectives were taken into account. It should be noted that such a relatively small sample size is not uncommon. In fact, such a sample size meets the requirements of

qualitative research, as it does not aim at positivistic validation but at grasping information and meaning (Boddy, 2016). None of the participants in the two workshops received financial compensation.

To make the most efficient use of the workshop participants' time, they were given the following guiding questions in advance to prepare:

- Imagine all the economic, social and technological changes that have taken place in Germany in 2035. Which of these will have a particular impact on recruiting?
- Which ideas, concepts, approaches, methods and developments do you consider to be particularly future-oriented to meet the aforementioned challenges to recruiting for the year 2035?
- Which of the aspects mentioned thus far apply to recruiting in general, and which are highly context specific, e.g., depending on the size of the company or the industry?
- What will have to change within the organisational recruiting function so that recruiting can meet the aforementioned challenges in the future?

These questions provided a certain guidance to all workshop participants. However, given the exploratory nature of our study, the respondents could freely share their thoughts and point out additional aspects. This procedure helped us to conduct our exploratory analysis without being influenced by our prior literature review and at the same time provide theoretical justification for the findings (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Rodon and Pastor, 2007).

Methodologically, it is essential that several possible scenarios are designed (scenario building) rather than just one that all participants must agree upon (Mietzner, 2009). The strength of scenario analysis is that it provides orientation knowledge for strategic decision-makers (Brauers and Weber, 1988). With very different scenarios or images of the future, possible futures or future paths can be illustrated and imagined. This is the advantage over any forecast characterised by probabilities, whose calculated, often linear extrapolation of the past can demonstrably seldom be relied upon (Backhaus et al., 2016). In contrast to forecasts, the scenario approach primarily takes into account the variability of alternative developments in the future (Brauers and Weber, 1988).

To form the scenarios, the results of the two workshops were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised. The transcripts were sent to the participants afterward for review and approval. The qualitative data thus obtained formed the input for the subsequent qualitative content analysis (QCA).

3.1.2 Qualitative data analysis and results

Gläser and Lauder (2010) recommend the use of QCA for the evaluation of expert interviews. QCA represents a method that processes texts that arise in the context of social science research projects. According to the bibliographic analysis of Titscher et al. (2000), QCA represents the most commonly used text analytic method compared to other well-known qualitative methods such as grounded theory, sociological hermeneutics, or ethnography.

Table 1 Overview of the scenarios

<i>Talent attraction</i>	
1	The shortage of skilled workers and the ‘war for talent’ has become even more acute.
2	Recruiting has become much more international.
3	In the recruiting process, applicants from underrepresented groups are actively sought, and thus, recruiting is largely responsible for inclusion.
4	The proportion of permanent positions has decreased noticeably in favor of project-oriented, temporary employment relationships.
<i>Employer branding</i>	
5	Companies are investing much more capacity in building a strong employer brand.
6	Companies that do not offer applicants an attractive candidate journey with timely feedback and transparency about the current progress of the application no longer find new employees.
7	Information about employers via social media is not considered trustworthy by applicants.
<i>Talent retention</i>	
8	Remote workplaces have become the practical norm.
9	Staff turnover has risen noticeably as a result of decreasing staff retention.
10	Employees choose completely individually from a wide range of fringe benefits.
<i>Recruiting analytics</i>	
11	Data analytics can clearly quantify the costs and benefits of recruiting and, as a result, the value contribution to the company’s success.
12	Artificial intelligence takes over large parts of recruiting, e.g., the autonomous execution of recruitment interviews or testing.
<i>Recruiting strategy and organisation</i>	
13	Recruiting is so important for the company’s success that it is anchored as an independent organisational unit.
14	Recruiting managers are an integral part of management committees that determine the strategic direction of the company.
15	SMEs pool their resources in recruiting alliances.

A word-for-word transcription of the workshops was conducted with the support of MAXQDA software. Slang or expressions such as ‘mhh, ahh’, etc., were ignored to ensure a sound and comprehensible transcription (Mayring, 2022). In doing so, a system of categories was developed with the help of the analytical techniques of summarising and structuring (Mayring, 2022). Categories of analysis can be obtained in this context through a deductive and/or an inductive approach. In the present study, however, the inductive approach dominated. Specifically, the procedure for inductive category formation according to Mayring (2010) was applied. It is a strongly rules-guided approach and thus is easily comprehensible intersubjectively. Accordingly, in the first step, the material was paraphrased, which reduced the text volume for later coding and category formation. Great care was taken to ensure that the meaning of the statements was retained despite the paraphrasing. In the second step, the text was coded and assigned to categories. In this context, Mayring (2010) recommends revising the categories formed after 10-50% of the analysis. In the present case, the coding was performed by two trained persons. Each of these persons was asked independently to critically check their

own coding after the first third of the analysis and to revise it if necessary (intracoder reliability). Subsequently, the codings of the two persons were compared. Discrepancies were discussed, and a uniform further procedure was agreed upon. In the third step, all the material was processed with the new, uniform coding scheme. The results obtained by the two persons were then compared again (intercoder reliability), resulting in a percentage agreement of 92%. In the fourth step, a joint summary of the contents of the main categories obtained in this way took place, which in this case represent 15 scenarios (see Table 1). This result was finally presented to the workshop participants for the purpose of communicative validation. The basic idea here is to establish agreement or consensus of the results between the researchers and the participants discursively.

3.2 Quantitative survey

3.2.1 Quantitative research design

Based on the qualitative preliminary study, the derived scenarios were subjected to a quantitative evaluation. An online questionnaire was designed for this purpose and extensively tested in March 2023. To obtain as detailed a picture as possible of the status quo and the future development of recruiting, the scenarios of the qualitative preliminary study were converted into the following:

- 15 professional competencies (e.g., media competence, intercultural competence, diagnostic competence)
- 12 recruiting tasks (e.g., online assessments, active sourcing, formulation and placement of job advertisements)
- 15 recruiting tools (e.g., recruiting blogs, applicant management systems, campus recruiting).

The questionnaire recorded the respondents' assessment of the importance of all these items in mirror images for the years 2023 and 2035. The survey consistently works with six-point Likert scales ranging from 'very unimportant' to 'very important' to ensure easy comparability of the results. The utilisation of six-point Likert scales is a prevalent methodology in applied market research, with analogous applications in numerous other studies respondents (Joshi et al., 2015). This approach is employed to obtain the explicit consent of respondents (Joshi et al., 2015). Likert scales are frequently employed due to the assumption of equal distance between the scale values, which in turn allows for their utilisation as quasi-metric variables in statistical analyses (Batterton and Hale, 2017).

Finally, the respondents were asked to rate the recruiting scenarios. They were asked to rate these on a six-point Likert scale in terms of:

- effect of change for recruiting in 2035
- probability of occurrence by 2035
- tangibility in 2023 recruiting.

The online questionnaire programmed with the help of the QUANTILOPE survey software can be viewed in Appendix.

The data were collected in close cooperation with the BPM, which has approximately 5,000 members and is therefore the most important network for knowledge exchange

among HR managers in Germany (BPM, 2024). Members were made aware of the survey and invited to participate via a newsletter and postings on the BPM website and social media channels. The survey period began on April 12, 2023 and ended on July 3, 2023 after two reminders were sent out. A total of 366 responses to the questionnaire were recorded, of which 208 respondents completed the questionnaire in full (see also Figure 1). Only fully completed questionnaires were used for the following data analysis.

Figure 1 Development of completed questionnaires over time

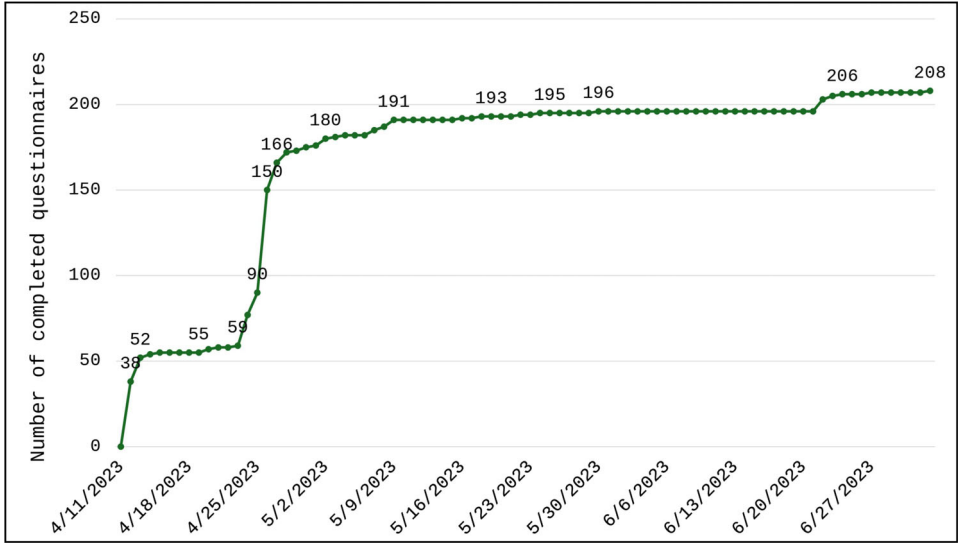
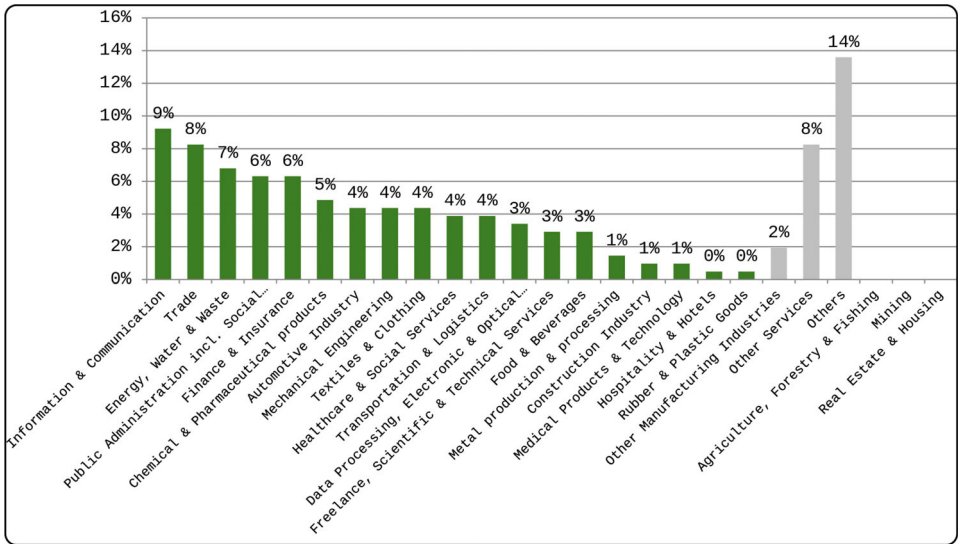


Figure 2 Represented sectors (see online version for colours)



The sample relevant to the evaluation represents a broad cross-section of all sectors of German industry. The most intensively represented sectors are ‘information and communication’ (19 respondents, 9%), ‘other services’ (17 respondents, 8%), ‘trade’ (17 respondents, 8%) and ‘energy, water and waste’ (14 respondents, 7%) (Figure 2).

The majority of respondents came from the functional areas of ‘HR’ (89 respondents, 43%) and ‘recruiting’ (72 respondents, 35%). The sample contains 61% female participants, 39% male participants and no diverse participants. Most of the participants were 41 years old or older at the time of data collection. More detailed information can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Percentage
Functional areas	
• HR	43%
• Recruiting	35%
• Manager	2%
• C-level	13%
• Others	7%
Gender	
• Female	61%
• Male	39%
• Diverse	0%
Age	
• 30 and below	18%
• 31–40	20%
• 41–50	31%
• 51–60	28%
• 61 and above	4%

3.2.2 Quantitative data analysis and results

First, the change in the meaning of the professional competencies, recruiting tasks and tools expected by the test persons will be presented (see Tables 3 to 5).

Table 3 shows the average importance of the 15 professional competencies derived from the qualitative preliminary study. Here, the analyses focused on the recruiter as an individual. The objective was to examine the competencies of those employees actively engaged in recruiting. On average, the most important professional skills from the perspective of the respondents are ‘communication skills’, ‘emotional intelligence’ and ‘self-management’, while ‘change management’, ‘conflict management’, ‘project management’ and ‘leadership skills’ are currently regarded as rather unimportant. Basically, the forecast up to 2035 shows a relatively stable skills profile of a recruiter: ‘communication skills’ and ‘emotional intelligence’ remain the most important skills of a good recruiter. The skills ‘self-management’ and ‘critical reflection’, which are particularly important today, will become slightly less important. ‘Media competence’ and ‘intercultural competence’ will move up into the top 5 most important professional competencies of a recruiter by 2035. Overall, however, it can be stated that the mean

values and the ranking in the comparison of professional skills in 2023 and 2035 do not show any major changes.

Table 3 Average relevance of professional competencies (ranked by mean value in 2035)

	2023			2035			Difference	
	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Rank
Communication skills	5.74	0.52	1	5.72	0.58	1	-0.02	+/-0
Emotional intelligence	5.36	0.76	2	5.52	0.72	2	+0.16	+/-0
Media competence	5.00	0.87	5	5.51	0.89	3	+0.51	+2
Intercultural competence	4.78	0.88	9	5.35	0.9	4	+0.57	+5
Self-management	5.24	1.02	3	5.24	0.82	5	+/-0	-2
Language skills	4.86	0.96	8	5.16	0.93	6	+0.30	+2
Entrepreneurial thinking	4.93	1.02	6	5.11	1.01	7	+0.18	-1
Critical reflection	5.00	0.97	4	5.10	0.98	8	+0.10	-4
Teamwork skills	4.90	1.13	7	4.91	0.90	9	+0.01	-2
Diagnostic competence	4.70	1.09	10	4.88	1.01	10	+0.18	+/-0
Dealing with uncertainty	4.69	0.99	11	4.87	1.07	11	+0.18	+/-0
Change management	4.32	1.23	12	4.79	1.11	12	+0.47	+/-0
Conflict management	4.30	1.05	13	4.58	1.07	13	+0.28	+/-0
Project management	4.16	1.05	14	4.51	1.09	14	+0.35	+/-0
Leadership skills	3.79	1.21	15	4.09	1.24	15	+0.30	+/-0

Significantly greater shifts can be seen in the importance of recruiting tasks highlighted in Table 4. In 2023, ‘job interviews’, ‘consulting for managers’ and ‘review of application documents’ will be among the most important tasks of a recruiter. By 2035, this will change noticeably from the perspective of the respondents: Only ‘consulting for managers’ is basically stable in importance, while ‘job interviews’ and ‘review of application documents’ are no longer even in the top 5. The latter even falls to 12th and thus last place in the ranking of recruiting tasks. ‘Formulation and placement of job advertisements’ shows an almost equally dramatic drop in importance. Its mean value drops by 1.00, resulting in being in 11th place (in 2035) instead of 5th place (in 2023). Where there are major losers, there are also major winners. ‘Active sourcing/direct contact’ (+1.20, +5 ranks) and ‘networking’ (+0.92, +4 ranks) will be among the most important recruiting tasks in 2035 alongside ‘employer branding/HR marketing’ (+0.84, +3 ranks).

Overall, the analyses show that the respondents expect a significant decline in the importance of more operational recruiting tasks (such as job advertisements or application documents), while more strategic tasks such as employer branding, active

sourcing and market and target group analyses are clearly on the rise. Perhaps this is due to an initial awareness of which currently time-consuming tasks can be automated in the future through the use of AI.

Table 4 Average relevance of recruiting tasks (ranked by mean value in 2035)

	2023			2035			Difference	
	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Rank
Employer branding/HR marketing	4.74	1.24	4	5.58	0.78	1	+0.84	+3
Networking	4.50	1.14	6	5.42	0.83	2	+0.92	+4
Active sourcing/direct contact	4.21	1.50	8	5.41	0.92	3	+1.20	+5
Consulting for managers	5.13	1.04	2	5.28	0.96	4	+0.15	−2
Market- and target group analyses	4.17	1.35	9	5.17	1.02	5	+1.00	+4
Job interviews	5.21	1.01	1	4.85	1.13	6	−0.36	−5
Profiling	3.98	1.32	10	4.77	1.05	7	+0.79	+3
Pre-screenings	4.39	1.34	7	4.13	1.34	8	−0.26	−1
Online-assessments	2.99	1.42	12	4.00	1.48	9	+1.01	+3
Organisation of and participation in job fairs	3.78	1.37	11	3.93	1.33	10	+0.15	+1
Formulation and placement of job advertisements	4.72	1.16	5	3.72	1.44	11	−1.00	−6
Review of application documents	4.80	1.12	3	3.60	1.39	12	−1.20	−9

A similar picture emerges when analysing the average relevance of recruiting tools (see Table 5). The currently most important recruiting tools in 2023 are ‘company/career websites’, ‘applicant management systems’ and ‘job markets’. However, none of these three tools will still be in the top 5 in 2035. In contrast to all other items surveyed, only ‘company/career website’ (−0.19) and ‘job markets’ (−0.76) are predicted to decline in relevance. This means that they are not only losing importance in relation to the other items surveyed but are also becoming less important in absolute numbers, which can be seen from the clearly lower rankings in 2035. Digital communication channels that support personal and individual recruiting tasks are likely to characterise everyday recruiting in 2035. While ‘AI (robot recruiting)’ will experience by far the most significant increase in importance, applicant- and employee-centric tools such as ‘social media recruiting’, ‘employee recruitment programs’, ‘mobile recruiting’ and ‘talent pools’ will dominate the top four places. This shows that the ongoing shortage of skilled workers is strengthening personal support, while current routine tasks are being automated.

Table 5 Average relevance of recruiting tools (ranked by mean value in 2035)

	2023			2035			Difference	
	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Rank
Social media recruiting	4.57	1.32	4	5.54	0.77	1	+0.97	+3
Employee-recruit-employee programs	4.48	1.44	5	5.33	0.88	2	+0.85	+3
Mobile recruiting	3.79	1.50	9	5.33	0.99	3	+1.54	+6
Talent pools	3.93	1.48	7	5.19	1.09	4	+1.26	+3
Artificial intelligence (robot recruiting)	2.60	1.39	13	5.16	1.06	5	+2.56	+8
Applicant management systems	5.00	1.15	2	5.15	1.01	6	+0.15	-4
Company/career websites	5.11	1.00	1	4.92	1.09	7	-0.19	-6
Applicant tracking systems	3.64	1.58	11	4.90	1.08	8	+1.26	+3
Employer review portals	4.23	1.27	6	4.84	1.10	9	+0.61	-3
Campus recruiting/university cooperations	3.78	1.41	10	4.82	1.11	10	+1.04	+/-0
Hackathons	2.45	1.35	14	4.04	1.31	11	+1.59	+3
Recruiting blogs	2.66	1.18	12	3.96	1.35	12	+1.30	+/-0
Job markets	4.70	1.18	3	3.94	1.32	13	-0.76	-10
Job fairs/career events	3.80	1.49	8	3.85	1.35	14	+0.05	-6
Barcamps	2.31	1.17	15	3.78	1.29	15	+1.47	+/-0

Table 6 Summary of statistical measures

	Professional competencies		Recruiting tasks		Recruiting tools	
	2023	2035	2023	2035	2023	2035
KMO criterion	0.700	0.793	0.782	0.699	0.864	0.771
Bartlett test	$\chi^2 = 499.29^{***}$	$\chi^2 = 676.89^{***}$	$\chi^2 = 613.82^{***}$	$\chi^2 = 383.00^{***}$	$\chi^2 = 1,124.98^{***}$	$\chi^2 = 644.16^{***}$
Variance explained	63.03%	53.19%	54.89%	48.71%	55.80%	60.24%
Number of iterations (VARIMAX)	9	11	6	5	11	6
Number of factors	6	4	3	3	3	5

Table 7 Final factor solution (after VARIMAX rotation) for professional competencies

	Factors in 2023						Factors in 2035			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4
	Change	International	Interpersonal	Leadership	Communication	Media	Leading teams	International	Media	Reflection
Critical reflection	0.765		0.213			0.190	0.357		0.401	0.554
Entrepreneurial thinking	0.528		-0.102	0.399	0.116	0.129	0.118		0.701	
Change management	0.506	0.156	0.240	0.432	-0.179		0.434		0.348	0.368
Dealing with uncertainty	0.485	0.204	0.308		0.344		0.394		0.623	
Language skills		0.851			0.146		0.140	0.768		0.206
Intercultural competence		0.736	0.145	0.220		0.243	0.129	0.737	0.171	
Diagnostic competence	0.444	0.534	-0.358	0.166			-0.159	0.174		0.841
Conflict management	0.192		0.726	0.138			0.596	0.187	0.245	0.237
Teamwork skills			0.724	0.131	0.100	0.175	0.688	0.242	0.105	
Project management				0.721	0.362		0.325	0.402		0.292
Leadership skills		0.153	0.312	0.680	-0.223	0.102	0.768			
Communication skills		0.112	-0.148	0.170	0.744	0.327			0.298	
Self-management	0.219		0.220		0.722		0.375	0.313		0.347
Media competence		0.146		0.155		0.775	-0.125	0.294	0.688	-0.134
Emotional intelligence	0.396		0.190	-0.128	0.108	0.677	0.276		0.461	0.264

Finally, the results of the analyses of professional competencies, recruiting tasks and tools will be subjected to a factor analysis to analyse how development up to 2035 will be reflected in any changes in the factors. The key statistical figures are shown in Table 6, while the results of the factor analysis (by rotation) can be found in Tables 7 to 9.

In the final factor solution (after VARIMAX rotation) for the professional competencies shown in Table 7, some expected changes in the competency profile of a recruiter can be identified. Factor 1 from 2023 (change) will not exist as a separate factor in 2035 but will readily merge into factors 1, 3 and 4. Factor 2, on the other hand, has been supplemented by ‘communication skills’, which fits very well with ‘language skills’ and ‘intercultural competence’ but remains an international-intercultural factor in terms of content. Factors 3 and 4 from 2023 form a joint factor in 2035, which includes all items from the areas of teamwork/leadership and transition. Factor 6 will still exist in 2035 but will be supplemented by ‘entrepreneurial thinking’ and ‘dealing with uncertainty’. This underlines the increasingly close link between media skills and the associated change, which must be shaped in an entrepreneurial manner.

Table 8 Final factor solution (after VARIMAX rotation) for the recruiting tasks

	<i>Factors in 2023</i>			<i>Factors in 2035</i>		
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
	<i>Connecting people</i>	<i>Selecting people</i>	<i>Finding people</i>	<i>Traditional tasks</i>	<i>Strategic tasks</i>	<i>Preparatory work</i>
Employer branding/HR marketing	0.709		0.225	0.222	0.671	−0.103
Networking	0.688		0.234	−0.127	0.580	
Market- and target group analyses	0.675		0.398		0.717	0.266
Organisation of and participation in job fairs	0.608	0.122	0.113	0.547	0.146	
Consulting for managers	0.529	0.348	−0.211	0.380	0.493	
Review of application documents		0.824		0.809		
Formulation and placement of job advertisements	0.377	0.671	−0.122	0.790	−0.159	0.151
Pre-screenings		0.634	0.332	0.283		0.680
Job interviews		0.608	0.311	0.716	0.106	
Online-assessments			0.742	−0.152		0.740
Profiling	0.291	0.222	0.719	0.150	0.237	0.540
Active sourcing/direct contact	0.285	0.108	0.682		0.374	0.442

Table 7 shows that the final factor solutions for 2023 and 2035 show only slight shifts between the factors but are very consistent overall. Factor 1 from 2023 will lose the ‘job fairs’ item by 2035 and thus bundle the more strategic recruiting tasks. As in 2023,

factor 1 bundles the more traditional, possibly outdated recruiting tasks. The third factor, on the other hand, bundles preparatory tasks that precede actual personnel selection. With the exception of prescreening, this factor corresponds to factor 3 from 2023.

Table 9 Final factor solution (after VARIMAX rotation) for the recruiting tools

	<i>Factors in 2023</i>			<i>Factors in 2035</i>				
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
	<i>Innovative</i>	<i>Internal and digital</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Innovative</i>	<i>Mobile first</i>	<i>Internal and insights</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Talent acquisition</i>
Barcamps	0.872	0.107		0.839	0.127			0.130
Hackathons	0.773	0.151	0.133	0.756	0.209		−0.227	
Recruiting blogs	0.738	0.262		0.745			0.190	
Artificial intelligence (robot recruiting)	0.591	0.473	−0.108	0.359	0.350		−0.448	0.120
Campus recruiting/university cooperations	0.558	0.225	0.533	0.355	0.180	0.269	0.182	0.392
Applicant management systems	−0.152	0.668	0.304		0.393	0.589	0.121	
Applicant tracking systems	0.348	0.653			0.426	0.504	−0.429	
Employee-recruit-employee programs	0.256	0.584	−0.174					0.813
Talent pools	0.340	0.574	0.180	0.257	0.127	0.131		0.642
Mobile recruiting	0.512	0.535	0.208	0.194	0.781			0.165
Social media recruiting	0.322	0.510	0.130	0.210	0.733		0.186	
Company/career websites	−0.235	0.497	0.485			0.673	0.330	
Employer review portals	0.193	0.430	0.245		−0.145	0.727		0.222
Job markets			0.784		0.144	0.242	0.750	
Job fairs/career events	0.429	0.118	0.692	0.179	0.160		0.708	0.337

We were also able to find useful factors for recruiting tools, which also describe development up to 2035 very well. Factor 1 in both years is represented by innovative recruiting tools such as bar camps, hackathons and blogs. AI, which was still assigned to this factor in 2023, forms part of Factor 4 in 2035 as an anti-physical component, which includes classic job markets, job fairs and career events (in 2023: factor 3). The extensive factor 2 from 2023 will be split into three factors by 2035: mobile and social media

recruiting form factor 2, factor 3 consists of internal systems and those tools that provide internal insights (employer review portals) and factor 5 comprises several tools that can be used to attract young talent in particular.

The evaluation of the 15 recruiting trends (see Table 10) shows interesting differences in the values of the three evaluation dimensions. Before we discuss the relations in more detail, the dimensions will first be presented separately:

- In order of likelihood of occurrence, the respondents consider the trends ‘skill shortage’, ‘internationality’, ‘employer brand’, ‘candidate journey’ and ‘remote work’ to be the most likely. In contrast, the trends ‘recruiting alliances’, ‘temporary contracts’ and ‘social media distrust’ are considered rather unlikely.
- In the case of occurrence, the trends that would bring about the most fundamental change in recruiting in 2035 are ‘strong employer brand’, ‘independent organisational unit’, ‘internationality’, ‘data analytics’ and ‘committee members’, while for ‘temporary contracts’, ‘skill shortage’, ‘social media distrust’ and ‘staff turnover’, there is only a below-average effect of change.
- There is a high correlation between the probability of occurrence by 2035 and the tangibility in today’s recruiting work: both the top and bottom ranks are almost identical in both evaluation dimensions.

A direct comparison of all evaluation dimensions reveals some fundamentally different evaluation patterns:

- The trends ‘skill shortage’ and ‘candidate journey’ show a high tangibility and probability of occurrence but only a low effect of change. It can be concluded from this that these trends are very likely no longer trends in the narrower sense but are already having a significant impact on everyday working life and will therefore not lead to any further change by 2035.
- The situation is different for the trends ‘internationality’ and ‘employer brand’, where all three evaluations, including the effect of change, are rated highly. This implies that although these trends are already noticeable today, they have not yet taken full effect and will bring about further fundamental changes in recruiting by 2035.
- Some of the trends to be evaluated show consistently average ratings, e.g., ‘fringe benefits’ or ‘inclusion’. This suggests that these are more likely to be trends that are gradually gaining ground but do not represent radical changes. These trends are already noticeable in some companies today, and will be present in other companies by 2035, but the respondents do not expect them to have a widespread impact.
- Some of the trends, e.g., ‘independent organisational unit’ and ‘committee member’, only show a high rating for change of effect, while they are rated as unlikely and not yet noticeable today. These trends can be categorised as unlikely hopes or daydreams of the respondents.
- The trends ‘temporary contracts’ and ‘social media distrust’ are insignificant in every respect. Here, the respondents do not expect any changes to the current status quo, and even if the trend is unlikely to materialise, they perceive the effect on recruiting to be almost non-existent.

Table 10 Evaluation of recruiting scenarios (ranked by probability of occurrence by 2035)

	Effect of change for recruiting in 2035			Probability of occurrence by 2035			Tangibility in 2023 recruiting		
	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. dev.	Rank
The shortage of skilled workers and the 'war for talent' has become even more acute.	3.12	1.76	13	5.32	0.92	1	4.81	0.87	1
Recruiting has become much more international.	4.75	0.87	3	5.19	0.98	2	4.00	1.44	5
Companies are investing much more capacity in building a strong employer brand.	5.16	0.82	1	5.18	0.90	3	4.33	1.13	2
Companies that do not offer applicants an attractive candidate journey with timely feedback and transparency about the current progress of the application no longer find new employees.	3.81	1.74	11	5.09	1.10	4	4.13	1.23	4
Remote workplaces have become the practical norm.	4.67	1.17	6	4.99	1.12	5	4.17	1.18	3
Data analytics can clearly quantify the costs and benefits of recruiting and, as a result, the value contribution to the company's success.	4.75	1.03	4	4.82	1.02	6	3.16	1.32	7
Staff turnover has risen noticeably as a result of decreasing staff retention.	3.06	1.55	15	4.61	1.16	7	3.74	1.22	6
Employees choose completely individually from a wide range of fringe benefits.	4.47	1.04	7	4.54	1.07	8	2.75	1.31	10
Recruiting is so important for the company's success that it is anchored as an independent organisational unit.	4.91	0.92	2	4.34	1.24	9	3.01	1.55	8
Artificial intelligence takes over large parts of recruiting, e.g. the autonomous execution of recruitment interviews or testing.	3.96	1.32	10	4.26	1.36	10	2.25	1.25	14
Recruiting actively looks for applicants from underrepresented groups and is largely responsible for inclusion.	4.43	1.00	8	4.19	1.14	11	2.80	1.23	9
Recruiting managers are an integral part of management committees that determine the strategic direction of the company.	4.73	0.97	5	4.10	1.26	12	2.70	1.34	11
SMEs pool their resources in recruiting alliances.	4.05	1.05	9	3.88	1.12	13	1.90	1.12	15
The proportion of permanent positions has decreased noticeably in favour of project-oriented, temporary employment relationships.	3.36	1.29	12	3.76	1.20	14	2.38	1.24	13
Information about employers via social media is not considered trustworthy by applicants.	3.10	1.03	14	3.63	1.23	15	2.43	1.17	12

4 Discussion

Our study examines the strategic direction that recruiting in Germany might take in the future to meet the challenge of attracting the right people in an increasingly tight talent market. We gathered insights from experts through two qualitative workshops and assessed the opinions of 208 participants through a quantitative online survey. The respondents consisted of experienced recruiting experts from both business and academia, making the results highly relevant.

As previously stated in the methodology and results sections, all analyses are divided into three parts:

- 15 professional competencies (e.g., media competence, intercultural competence, diagnostic competence)
- 12 recruiting tasks (e.g., online assessments, active sourcing, formulation and placement of job advertisements)
- 15 recruiting tools (e.g., recruiting blogs, applicant management systems, campus recruiting).

The discussion will again be structured on the basis of the already familiar tripartite division.

Based on the assessment of professional competencies for recruiters by study participants, ‘communication skills’ and ‘emotional intelligence’ are currently important and will continue to be so in the future. Additionally, ‘media competence’ and ‘intercultural competence’ are projected to become more important. Hence, the study supplies valuable data to adjust job requirement profiles for recruiters.

There are major changes noticed in the significance of recruiting tasks. Overall, the analyses indicate a significant decrease in the importance of operational recruitment tasks, including job advertisements and application documents, according to respondents. In contrast, strategic recruitment tasks such as employer branding, active sourcing, and market and target group analyses are on the rise.

Changes are also emerging in central recruiting tools. Currently, ‘company/career websites,’ ‘applicant management systems,’ and ‘job markets’ hold significant relevance. By 2035, however, these tools are predicted to decrease in importance. In contrast, digital communication channels that facilitate personalised and individualised recruiting tasks will become prevalent. AI in recruiting is expected to see the greatest increase in prominence. Meanwhile, applicant- and employee-focused tools such as social media recruitment, employee recruitment programs, mobile sourcing, and talent pools are set to occupy the top positions. This shift reflects the growing emphasis on individualised support to combat the ongoing shortage of skilled workers, as routine tasks become more automated.

The analysis of various recruiting trends shows varying degrees of impact and probabilities of change. Trends such as ‘skill shortage’ and ‘candidate journey’ are considered highly evident and likely to occur, but they have a minimal impact on change. These trends are already impacting daily work life significantly and are not expected to bring further changes by 2035. On the flip side, trends such as ‘internationality’ and ‘employer brand’ receive high ratings across all aspects, suggesting that while they are currently noticeable, their full effects are yet to be realised, and that they will bring about significant changes in recruiting by 2035.

Conversely, certain trends, including ‘fringe benefits’ and ‘inclusion,’ consistently receive average ratings, indicating that they are gradually gaining prominence without representing radical shifts. Regarding the strategic importance of recruiting as an organisational unit, a discouraging image emerges. While participants in the study desire more responsibility and input in strategic decisions, they also perceive the likelihood of necessary changes happening in the future to be low and not currently apparent.

Last, trends such as ‘temporary contracts’ and ‘social media distrust’ are considered insignificant. Respondents do not expect any changes from the current status quo, and the effect of these trends on recruiting is perceived to be negligible.

However, the study reveals significant challenges that will be confronted in recruitment up to 2035. If these scenarios materialise, companies in general and recruiting departments in particular will encounter a substantial need for change in the forthcoming years. The key to enhancing competitiveness will lie in reacting the most promptly and efficiently to the related organisational obstacles.

5 Limitations

While scenario studies are a valuable tool for exploring potential future scenarios, they are not without limitations. One significant limitation is the potential lack of generalisability, as scenarios are frequently context-specific and may not be applicable to disparate settings or circumstances (Mietzner, 2009). Furthermore, the assumptions that underpin the scenarios may introduce a degree of bias, given that they are based on subjective judgements and expert opinions. The use of small sample sizes, which is common in scenario studies, may limit the robustness and representativeness of the conclusions (Mayring, 2010). Additionally, scenario studies can oversimplify complex phenomena, neglecting key variables or interactions that could impact future outcomes (Mietzner and Reger, 2005). Finally, the speculative nature of scenarios can reduce the predictive accuracy of the study (Kosow and Gaßner, 2008).

Our study primarily aims to identify plausible ideas and expectations for the future from the viewpoint of recruiting experts. It is imperative to note that making a precise and accurate prediction of the future is unfeasible. Therefore, decision-makers must not interpret our study’s findings as an inevitable forecast but rather as an opportunity to critically reflect on key trends as a basis for strategic decision-making.

Additionally, our research concentrates only on the progression of recruitment in Germany. With a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of 4,1 trillion Euros in 2023, Germany is the third largest economy in the world after the USA and China, making it the largest economy in Europe (IMF, 2024; World Bank, 2024). The German economy is distinguished by a robust medium-sized business sector, comprising numerous economically stable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Berlemann et al., 2022). In light of the demographic developments that are affecting a number of other economies, in addition to Germany, the ability to recruit the right personnel is a crucial factor for success for German companies (Klinger and Fuchs, 2019; Lievens and Chapman, 2019). Although the study results currently only represent the opinion of German recruiters, given the significant global economic interdependencies of many companies based in Germany, it can be assumed that the results of this study can be transferred to, e.g., other Western industrialised nations in an analogous form for the time

being. However, further empirical validation is recommended, which is a future research goal of the authors of this study.

While our qualitative preliminary study gathered input from both practical and academic experts to identify future scenarios, including additional people could have changed the range of scenarios. Nonetheless, this study provides a comprehensive picture of the future expectations of practitioners and academics in the field of recruitment, which can provide guidance to organisations and stimulate further research in the field of human resource management.

Future research should aim to gather information from a variety of perspectives in the recruitment process. This should notably include input from hiring managers who significantly influence the recruitment process by selecting the appropriate candidate for the position (Kar and Mitra, 2015). Additionally, it is crucial to identify and emphasise the needs and desires of candidates in this context. It may be beneficial to evaluate the results of this study and the related strategic importance of the topic from the perspective of CEOs or other leading top managers in different functional areas. Such a contrast would be especially beneficial, as it is conceivable that the participants' assessments may have been influenced by a desire for self-expression. Finally, it will be important to investigate whether the presented scenarios have indeed occurred in the future. Therefore, additional research of this kind would be desirable.

Further research on the topic of acquisition in the context of recruitment programs at the state level, as well as the potential for cooperation with companies, could be included in the focus of future studies. This is particularly important given that promising approaches are already being implemented through cooperation between federal ministries, companies and civil society (Angenendt et al., 2023).

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Appendix

Questionnaire: the future of recruitment (translated from German language)

Welcome to the study 'future of recruiting'. We are pleased about your interest in this future study, which is unique in its form. With the help of the questionnaire available to you, we not only want to record the situation in recruiting in 2023, but also take a look at the developments in the coming years with you. Please answer all questions completely and truthfully if possible. For a few questions, it is necessary to give an answer due to the filter guidance and programming of the questionnaire. There are no objectively correct answers, but we would like to know your assessment (your 'gut feeling'). Answering the questions takes about 10 minutes. All submitted data is collected, anonymised and evaluated in accordance with the provisions of German data protection law, the international ICC/ESOMAR Code of Conduct and the industry guidelines of ADM, ASI, BVM and DGO. If you have any questions or uncertainties, please contact the person responsible, Prof. Dr. Silko Pfeil, by email to silko.pfeil@mission2impact.de. We hope you enjoy filling out the questionnaire and are looking forward to your answers... Federal Association of Personnel Managers (BPM)

Part A: Recruiting 2023

In the first part of this questionnaire, we would like to better understand how you currently work and which current developments and trends particularly influence your everyday work. All questions are focused on the recruiting activities in your company. First, we want to learn about how your company handles recruiting processes and makes hiring decisions.

Q2 Functional areas decision-making power (single select)

Who in your company has the primary decision-making power for hiring new employees?

- ☐ management
- ☐ HR
- ☐ recruiting
- ☐ C-level

Q7 Recruiting tasks (rating scale matrix, rotation)

How important are the following recruiting tasks in your day-to-day business?

	<i>Very unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Rather unimportant</i>	<i>Rather important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
Formulation and placement of job advertisements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Review of application documents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pre-screenings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job interviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organisation of and participation in job fairs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Networking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Active sourcing/direct contact	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employer branding/HR marketing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Profiling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consulting for managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Market- and target group analyses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online-assessments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q8 Recruiting tools (rating scale matrix, rotation)

How important are the following recruiting tools in your day-to-day business?

	<i>Very unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Rather unimportant</i>	<i>Rather important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
Job markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Company/career websites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social media recruiting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobile recruiting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job fairs/ career events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Applicant management systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Applicant tracking systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Talent pools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employee-recruit-employee-programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Barcamps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Campus recruiting/university cooperations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hackathons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recruiting blogs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employer review portals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Artificial intelligence (robot recruiting)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

With the following questions, we now want to take a look into the future. Please indicate how – from your point of view – the job description of a recruiter will look like in 2035!

Q12 Recruiting tools (rating scale matrix, rotation)

How important will the following recruiting tools be in your day-to-day business in 2035?

	<i>Very unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Rather unimportant</i>	<i>Rather important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
Job markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Company/career websites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social media recruiting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobile recruiting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job fairs/career events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Applicant management systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Applicant tracking systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Talent pools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employee-recruit-employee-programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Barcamps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Campus recruiting/ university cooperations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hackathons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recruiting blogs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employer review portals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Artificial intelligence (robot recruiting)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for answering the questions so far. Finally, we would like to introduce you to some trends that we have derived from a qualitative panel of experts. We are very interested in your assessment of these trends.

Q17 Zip code (number input)

What are the first two digits of your company's zip code? _____

Q18 Number of employees (single select)

How many people are employed in your company?

- ☐ 1–10
- ☐ 11–50
- ☐ 51–100
- ☐ 101–250
- ☐ 251–500
- ☐ More than 500
- ☐ I cannot/do not want to specify.

Q19 Industry sectors (single select, dropdown)

In which sector/industry does your company operate?

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ☐ Automotive industry
- ☐ Chemical and pharmaceutical products
- ☐ Construction industry
- ☐ Data processing, electronic and optical products
- ☐ Energy, water and waste
- ☐ Finance and insurance
- ☐ Food and beverages
- ☐ Freelance, scientific and technical services
- ☐ Healthcare and social services
- ☐ Hospitality and hotels
- ☐ Information and communication
- ☐ Mechanical engineering
- ☐ Medical products and technology
- ☐ Metal production and processing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Public administration incl. social insurance

- ☐ Real estate and housing
- ☐ Rubber and plastic goods
- ☐ Textiles and clothing
- ☐ Trade
- ☐ Transportation and logistics
- ☐ Other manufacturing industries
- ☐ Other services
- ☐ Others

Q20 Gender (single select)

What gender applies to you?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Diverse

Q21 Age (single select)

How old are you?

- ☐ 30 or younger
- ☐ 31–40
- ☐ 41–50
- ☐ 51–60
- ☐ 61 or older

Q22 Open feedback (open text)

If you have any comments or feedback on the survey, please note below.
