

Coronavirus crisis reflected in the need for skilled labour: Skills Shortage Index falls by 17% across Switzerland

Zurich, 26 November 2020 – Since the coronavirus pandemic began, demand for skilled workers has fallen across Switzerland. However, there is still a skills shortage in some professions such as engineering, technology, medicine, pharmaceuticals or IT. For professions with a surplus of skills, on the other hand, the situation has become even more difficult for job seekers. The sales and trade, hospitality, commercial and administrative sectors are particularly suffering from a surplus of skilled workers. This has been highlighted by the Adecco Group Switzerland's Skills Shortage Index and the University of Zurich's Swiss Job Market Monitor. The Zurich and eastern Switzerland regions experienced the biggest slump. In French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland, there has been little change in the demand for skilled workers, although this is lower than the Swiss average.

The Swiss Skills Shortage showed an annual increase in the skills shortage from when measurements first began in 2016 through to 2019. The index fell for the first time in 2020, by 17%. COVID-19 changed the situation on the Swiss labour market extremely quickly. In most fields, the number of vacancies has fallen and the number of job seekers has risen. However, a few fields still have a skills shortage. "The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic left companies unsettled. They were reluctant, and in some cases completely unwilling, to take on any new staff. However, during the second wave they are able to build on their past experience. They are now once again recruiting staff despite the restrictive measures", notes Monica Dell'Anna, CEO of Adecco Group Switzerland. Luca Semeraro, Head of Professional Recruitment adds: "The coronavirus crisis has had little impact on the skills shortage in many professions, including engineering, IT, technology and medicine. We are seeing on a daily basis how companies are intensively seeking specialists in these fields. Sometimes, it is very difficult to recruit suitable staff. For example, the regional mobility of skilled workers has fallen as a result of the uncertainties caused by travel restrictions. However, even professions that do not normally experience a skills shortage are finding a significant lack of skilled workers in some areas." Corinne Scheiber, who is responsible for Adecco Medical, explains: "Well-trained healthcare professionals, particularly those specialising in intensive care, are currently in high demand."

Fields that already had a particularly high surplus of skills in 2019 have seen a further deterioration of the situation for job seekers as a result of the coronavirus crisis. An increasing number of job seekers are competing for a declining number of vacancies. "Unemployment rates are currently rising again. In customer-oriented service professions such as hospitality or sales, the situation is particularly acute compared with last year. As it stands, it is difficult for job seekers to find employment again in these sectors. This is because the number of vacancies has fallen and competition is high due to the increasing number of other job seekers", in the view of Helen Buchs from the University of Zurich's Swiss Job Market Monitor.

Skills shortage despite coronavirus

The top five professions in the 2020 skills shortage ranking for Switzerland are still showing a significant shortage of suitable skilled workers, despite the coronavirus crisis. For engineering, technical professions, trust business, medicine, pharmaceuticals and IT, the number of vacancies in 2020 remains higher than the number of job seekers. In addition, the number of employees in all of these professions has risen, suggesting high staffing requirements. The skills shortage has been reduced somewhat compared with last year.

The fields of medicine and pharmaceuticals are exceptions to this, with skills shortages remaining just as high in 2020. These professions saw a large increase in vacancies before the lockdown in March 2020, the number of which then remained high. There are more job seekers in these fields in 2020 than there were in 2019, but also more vacancies. As Corinne Scheiber explains: "Doctors remain in high demand. Among other factors, the population is consistently ageing so there is a need for sufficient medical staff, regardless of economic crises. For example, we at Adecco Medical have seen an increase in requests for geriatrics, geriatric psychiatry and emergency medicine."

Digitalisation has meant that the labour market is using increasing amounts of IT, so IT skills are required. This is reflected in the still high levels of demand for skilled workers in IT professions, where there is a skills shortage despite the coronavirus pandemic. Semeraro notes: “The results of the 2020 Swiss Skills Shortage Index support the assessment made by Switzerland’s ICT Professional Training association: the number of ICT jobs is significantly higher than the corresponding number of people without employment. The IT sector is evolving rapidly, and time and again, companies are intensively seeking new qualifications. Job seekers are often lagging slightly behind.”

Skills surplus showing considerable further increase in some professions

It should be noted that there is a huge surplus of skilled professionals in various service-sector professions with fairly low qualification requirements. The number of vacancies has fallen even further compared with 2019 and unemployment has continued to rise. The coronavirus crisis has hit these professions particularly hard. As expected, the number of job seekers in hospitality professions is also rising, whilst fewer new staff are being sought.

The largest surplus of skilled workers in 2020 was in the commercial sector. These professions have been particularly badly affected by the coronavirus crisis, and the number of vacancies has fallen significantly. Semeraro notes: “The coronavirus crisis has further boosted automation and digitalisation processes in commercial and administrative professions. In addition, new recruitment is in dire straits, because commercial jobs do not generally immediately produce income. However, outsourcing and the general powering down of business relationships have also played a role in the surplus.”

The fields of cleaning, hygiene and personal care also have an extremely high skills surplus. However, unlike other professions at the bottom end of the rankings, this surplus has not been significantly affected by the coronavirus crisis.

German-speaking Switzerland: Skills Shortage Index falls by 21%

The Skills Shortage Index fell more significantly in German-speaking Switzerland than in French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland. However, the German-speaking region’s Skills Shortage Index is nevertheless higher than the Swiss average. In the engineering sector in particular, companies in German-speaking Switzerland are looking for skilled workers, as the number of vacancies has only fallen very slightly. Engineering professions take first place in the rankings.

For 2020, commercial and administrative professions are offering both fewer vacancies and more job seekers than in the previous year. As they now have the largest skills surplus when measured based on the profession’s numerical value, they have taken last place in the rankings.

French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland: lack of technicians

In French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland, technicians once again take first place in the skills shortage rankings for 2020. The number of vacancies significantly exceeds the number of job seekers in this professional category. Unlike the Swiss average, the skills shortage has not decreased compared with last year, as the number of vacancies has in fact even increased. Trust business also displayed a significant skills shortage in French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland. Semeraro notes: “Particularly sought-after professional profiles include accountants who can speak both French and German.”

Like Switzerland as a whole, the bottom position in the rankings for French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland is occupied by commercial and administrative professions. The skills surplus has increased even further compared with last year as a result of the coronavirus crisis. In the cleaning, hygiene and personal care professions, many job seekers are still competing for a particularly small number of vacancies. However, compared with last year this professional group was able to reduce its surplus somewhat in French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland, as the number of vacancies increased.

Kontakt

Medienstelle The Adecco Group Switzerland

Lorena Brunner, Tel. +41 79 728 49 37, press.office@adecgroup.ch

Stellenmarkt-Monitor Schweiz, Universität Zürich

Helen Buchs, Tel. +41 44 635 23 32, buchs@soziologie.uzh.ch

Über den Fachkräftemangel-Index Schweiz

In Zusammenarbeit mit dem Stellenmarkt-Monitor Schweiz (SMM) am Soziologischen Institut der Universität Zürich veröffentlicht die Adecco Gruppe Schweiz jährlich je eine umfassende Studie zum Fachkräftemangel in der Schweiz. Diese wissenschaftlich fundierten Fachkräftemangel-Studien zeigen auf, in welchen Berufen gesamtschweizerisch und regional die Zahl der Vakanzen im Vergleich zu den Stellensuchenden besonders gross und in welchen besonders klein ist. Zudem ermöglichen langjährige Zeitvergleiche das Erkennen von Verschärfungen und Abschwächungen im Fachkräftemangel.