



M **A** VENCE

2022 Survey

# Competing for Talent: Standing Out in the European Public Affairs Market

The job market in Brussels and beyond has been evolving at varying speeds in recent years. In this context, Mavence is keen to understand what the state of the conversation is within your organization concerning the future of work, talent management, recruitment needs, company values, and competitiveness.

# Foreword

The public affairs job market – in Brussels and beyond – has seen a rapid and significant evolution in recent years. Shaped by a plethora of factors, the traditional approach to attracting and managing talent in public affairs has in many cases become obsolete. From the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of policy files, to the growing number of highly emotional societal issues influencing the political agenda; from the new role of storytelling and communications in policymaking, to – more recently – the impact of the global pandemic and of the atrocities of a war in Europe, all these developments have shaken the public affairs job market.

While these may seem like a broad and disconnected range of issues, they have all had a role in shaping how professionals perceive and assess their career, what they value and prioritise when participating in recruitment processes, and finally what expectations they hold - as employees or candidates - towards organisations as corporate citizens.

At Mavence, we help clients identify, attract and retain talent. Being in touch with hundreds of professionals and organisations daily, we have observed shifts in these dynamics over the last few years from the front row. Even so, they seem to have reached a concerted peak over the past months, reinforced by recent events and culminating in what we now see as a highly candidate driven market, with many organisations struggling to adapt to new realities and attract the talent they need.

In this context, we have been keen to better understand what the state of the conversation is within organisations in Brussels when it comes to assessing their own competitiveness on the employers' market. With this study, we looked into not just whether organisations reflect on their own level of attractiveness as employers, but also the challenges around attracting talent more broadly. For those who did, we sought to shine a light on the role of underlying causes and accelerants of adaptation, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as where, why, and how change can emerge intrinsically as a well-established part of organisational management and governance practices. From here, we delved more deeply into understanding in detail which benefits and other specific tools and initiatives organisations have developed to keep their employees engaged.

This exercise is intended to provide an insight into the current situation, capture the state of play across organisations in Brussels, share examples of best practices and, hopefully, provide food for thought for further internal discussions as the market remains highly dynamic.

**Anna Koj**

Managing Director Mavence Brussels

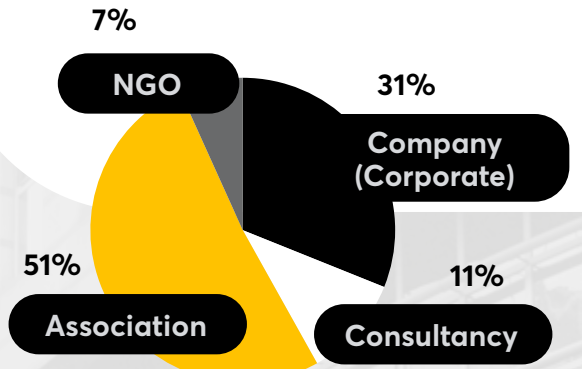
## Strategy & Reflection

Are you (or your organisation) actively following and considering changes in the talent market, working practices going forward, or your ability to stand out from other organisations?



We asked respondents from all organizational backgrounds and team structures to share the state of their reflections on the talent market, and the context in which this strategic approach first emerged.

What kind of organization do you represent?



Is this a recent development, or has it been a long term approach?

While nearly **92%** of respondents across all types of organisations affirmed they were actively following and considering changes in the talent market, working practices, and ability to stand out from others, there was a much starker divide in how this came to be – **46%** only began to seriously consider these questions in the last 5 years.

Recent Reflection 46%

Long-Term Concern 54%

For the **46%** who responded this was a recent reflection, a broad range of factors emerged as drivers of this change:

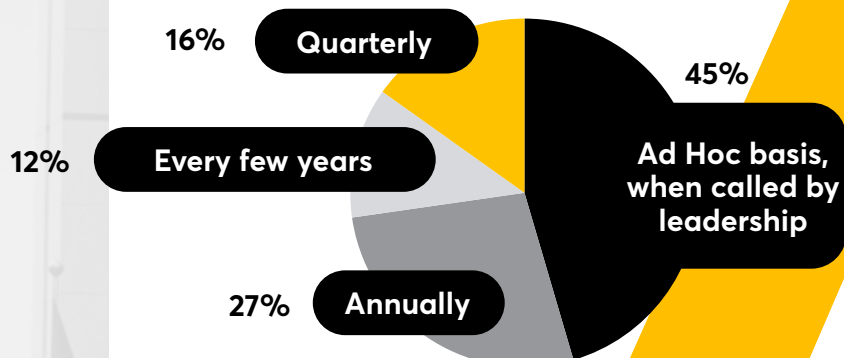
Business expansion and greater needs for public affairs

Tangible effects of an increasingly competitive marketplace

High turnover amidst the "Great Resignation"

Covid-19 pandemic and its broader consequences

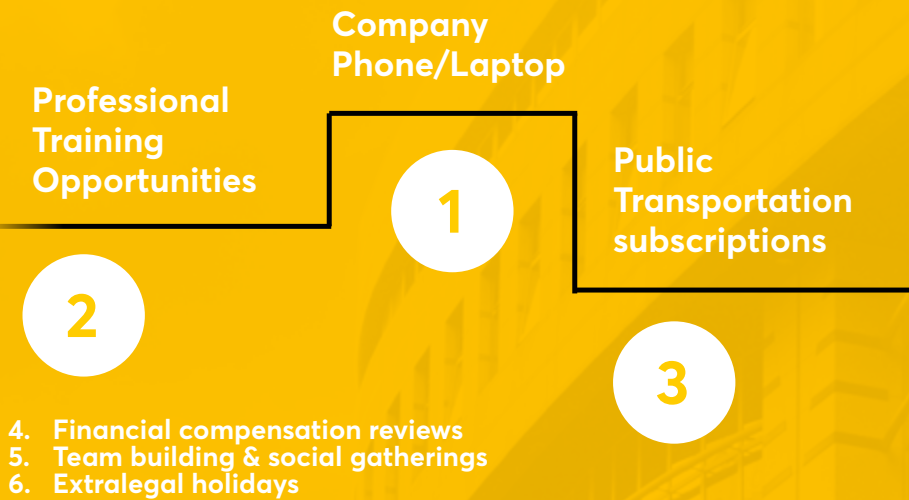
How often do such reflections take place?



## In Practice

# What were some of the ways you sought to stand out, be more competitive, or attract, retain, or accommodate talent?

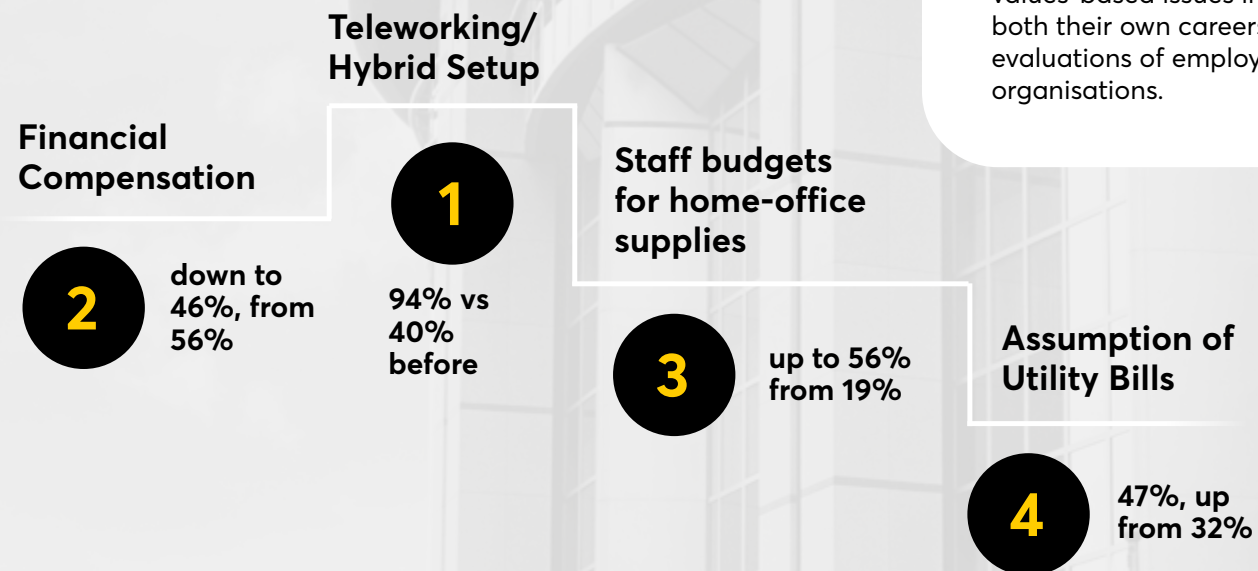
## Pre-Pandemic



Strong commitment to values or prominent ESG-linked initiatives

Senior public affairs leaders responded to our survey with notable consistency on the importance of prominent values and ESG initiatives in standing out for talent - **58.5%** of respondents highlighted this category as important, unique among nearly 20 other categories in that it showed no change across pre- and post-pandemic assessments. This consistency across PA leadership poses an interesting question when compared to our experiences engaging with a diverse array of talents, who have exhibited a growing sense of awareness and importance on values-based issues in assessing both their own careers and their evaluations of employers and organisations.

## Post-Pandemic



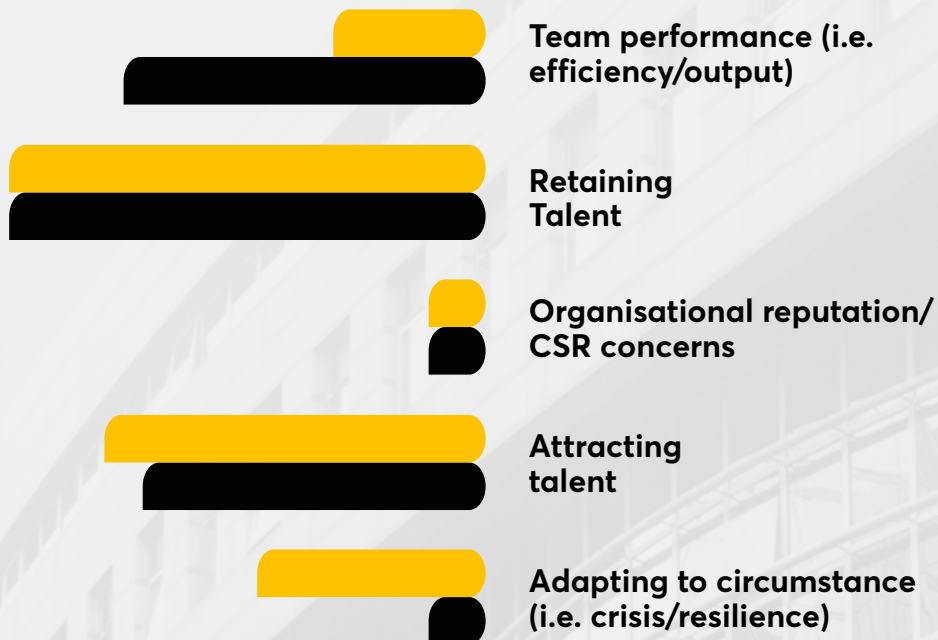
Interestingly, company phone/laptop, public transportation, and extra legal holidays, all of which were among the most popular before the pandemic, fell in popularity, while team building and socials grew slightly as an explicit part of the package.

While the impact of the Covid-19 can be clearly seen in the way particular priorities, initiatives, or incentives evolved around the pandemic - such as the emergence of teleworking or hybrid setups as the dominant post-pandemic priority, with an overwhelming **94%** of respondents highlighting it, up from **40%** before - it is no less striking that financial compensation, traditionally accepted as an integral part of the most attractive offers, dropped from the 2nd to 10th place in terms of importance relative to other options, even if it only fell by **10%** in absolute terms

From the perspective of competitiveness, what has been the greatest concern or area of focus in the current, dynamically evolving talent market?

Pre-Pandemic

Post-Pandemic



## Opinion highlights

To conclude, we asked respondents from across all organisational types and sector backgrounds to voluntarily share recent initiatives developed to attract or retain talent, and to ensure their organisations remain a competitive employer on the market; below are excerpts from a collection of some of these responses, reflecting a range of both popular and unique experiences.

*"A clear mid to long-term career development path discussed and agreed with employees, including promotions, compensation, increase assumption of ownership/responsibilities and a work environment that make them happily come to work."*

*"Development of CSR policies, Company bicycle policy, general external communication to stress our values and the social importance of our sector."*

*"The organisation is building reputation of itself, and of the sector we work for, which is likewise helping to attract and retain talent."*

*"9 day fortnight trial (i.e. staff receive the same pay but every other Friday is given to them as a «free day» in order to support professional development, learning a language, or simply to spend more time with friends and family."*

*"Global 'work from anywhere' policies."*

*"Home-working in job contracts, plus adoption of a company purpose."*

