

The 2026 European Survey



International Network of Interim Manager Associations

Please note that all INIMA Surveys MUST NOT be located on any other websites, this is due in part to minor updates that we make and should only be referenced and linked to the appropriate URL on the INIMA website.

Executive Summary

In 2025, European interim managers operated in a complex and uncertain market environment. The economy across much of Europe remained sluggish, while geopolitical tensions and the introduction of new trade tariffs created additional uncertainty for companies. These factors combined to produce a cautious business climate, in which organizations were more selective in committing to new leadership assignments.

The interim management market responded accordingly. Overall, the survey results did not indicate a significant positive upturn during the year. Instead, the data suggested a gradual weakening across several key performance indicators for the profession.

The impact on interim managers was visible across the core market metrics. Respondents reported a **generalized deterioration in day rates, utilization levels, and assignment duration**. Importantly, this pattern appeared consistently across different European countries, suggesting that the slowdown reflected broader macroeconomic conditions rather than isolated national dynamics.

Utilization rates declined modestly to **approximately 65%**, representing a reduction of around three percentage points compared with the previous year. Average day rates also decreased by to **0.9%** compared with the prior survey.

A further indicator of market conditions was the proportion of interim managers who began the year already on assignment. Historically, this indicator has proven to be a reliable forward signal of market momentum. The indicator remained at **62%**, which suggested that a rapid recovery during 2026 was unlikely.

Respondents also reported that **closing new assignments had become more difficult**, reflecting longer sales cycles and more cautious client decision-making.

The survey also highlighted a shift in the profile of interim managers entering the market. The **average age of practitioners increased**, while the **average level of interim management experience declined**. This suggested that a growing number of managers were entering the interim profession later in their careers, often as a transition from corporate roles rather than after extensive prior interim experience

Finally, the survey confirmed the continued relevance of several structural themes already highlighted in previous editions. Interim managers identified **continuous professional learning**, the **growing importance of artificial intelligence**, and **geopolitical uncertainty** as key factors shaping the future environment in which they operate.

Introduction

The **sixth edition of the European Interim Management Survey** provided an evidence-based view of the interim management profession across Europe. The survey was conducted under the auspices of INIMA and was prepared by interim managers for the interim management community.

The report drew exclusively on responses from interim managers who were members of national interim management associations affiliated with INIMA. As such, it reflected the perspectives of practitioners who were directly engaged in interim assignments across European markets.

A defining principle of the survey was **analytical neutrality**. The study had no commercial sponsorship, promotional agenda, or institutional bias. Its purpose was not to market services, rank providers, or promote specific actors within the industry. Instead, it aimed to provide a clear and transparent view of the profession as experienced by those who practice it.

The integrity of the data was therefore central to the report. The findings presented were derived directly from the survey responses and were reported as observed. The results were not adjusted, weighted, or selectively interpreted to support a predetermined narrative. Where clear patterns emerged, they were highlighted. Where the data showed variation or ambiguity, this was reflected openly. This approach ensured that the report remained a **credible reference point for the interim management profession**.

The 2026 survey received **approximately 850 responses from interim managers across Europe**, making it one of the largest practitioner-based datasets in the field. Respondents represented a broad cross-section of sectors, functional expertise, and 10 national markets, providing insight into both shared trends and regional differences within the European interim management landscape.

Now in its sixth year, the survey had become an established instrument for understanding how interim management was evolving across Europe. By systematically gathering and sharing practitioner insights, it supported a

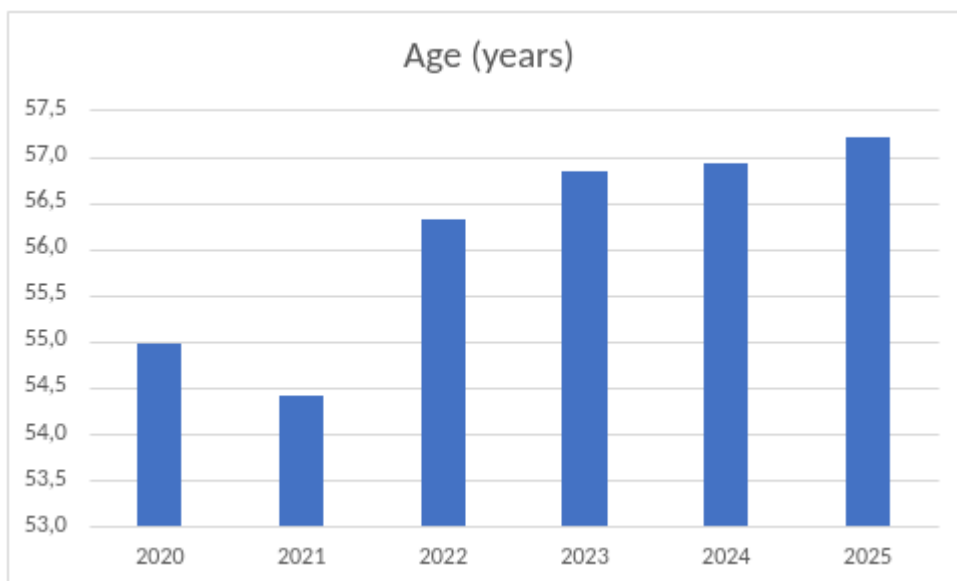
more informed discussion about the role, value, and development of interim management within European organizations.

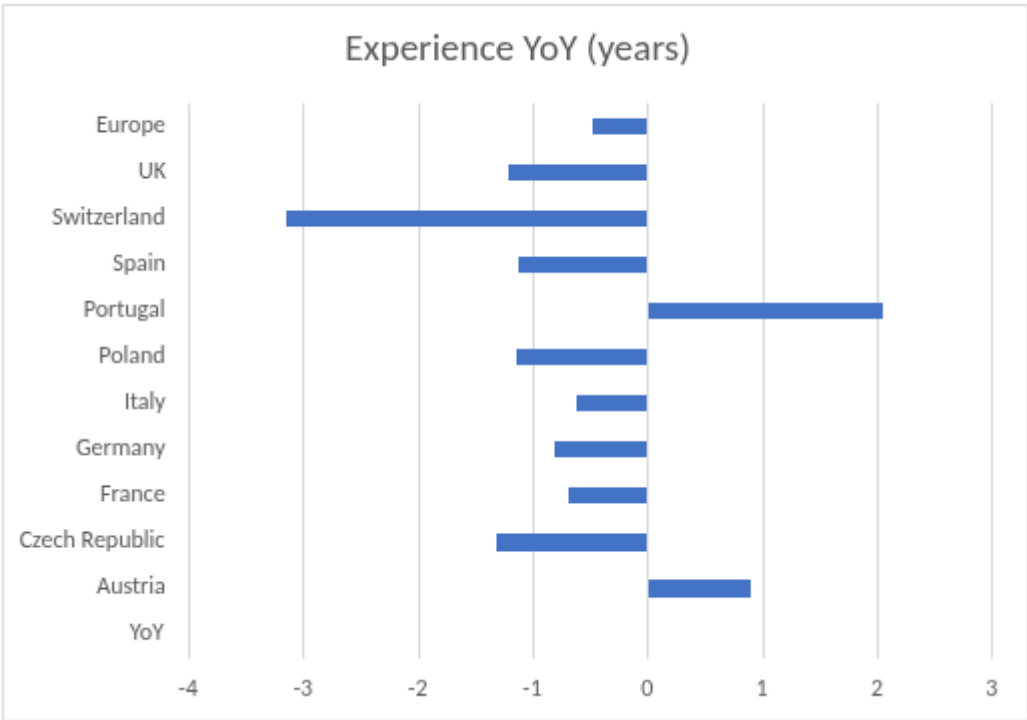
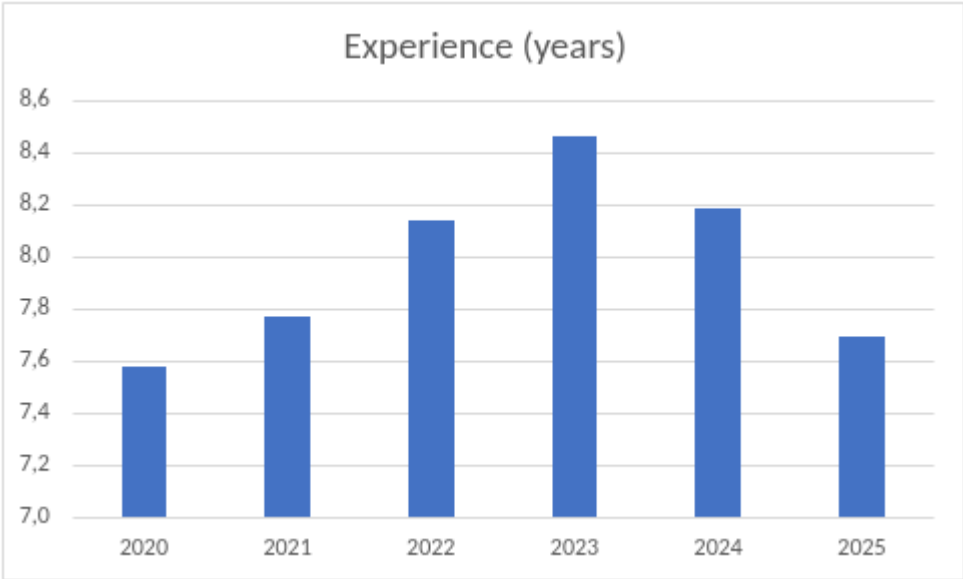
Some graphs in this report did not include the Czech Republic, Portugal, and Switzerland because the limited number of respondents did not assure reliable data segmentation.

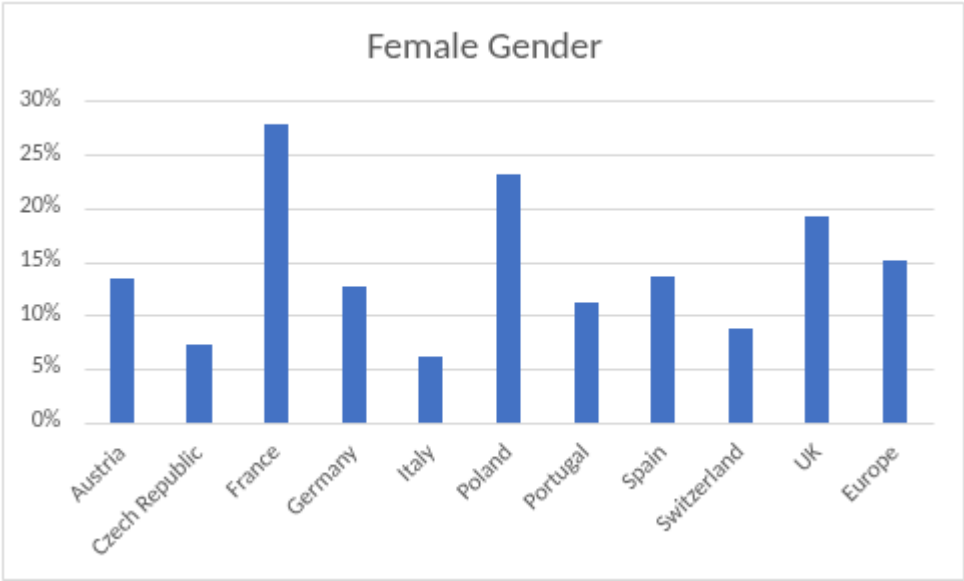
The Interim Manager

Demographics

Last year there was a reduction of IM experience in Europe (-0.5 years/7.7 years) across the majority of European countries. The average age of interim managers increased (+0.3 years/ 57.2 years). Analysis indicated that the average interim manager made the transition from permanent employment at the age of 49.5years, indicating a significant shift in career trajectory towards interim management at a relatively mature stage. On average, 15% of European interim managers were women. Poland (23%) and France (28%) had a higher-than-average female presence in the profession.



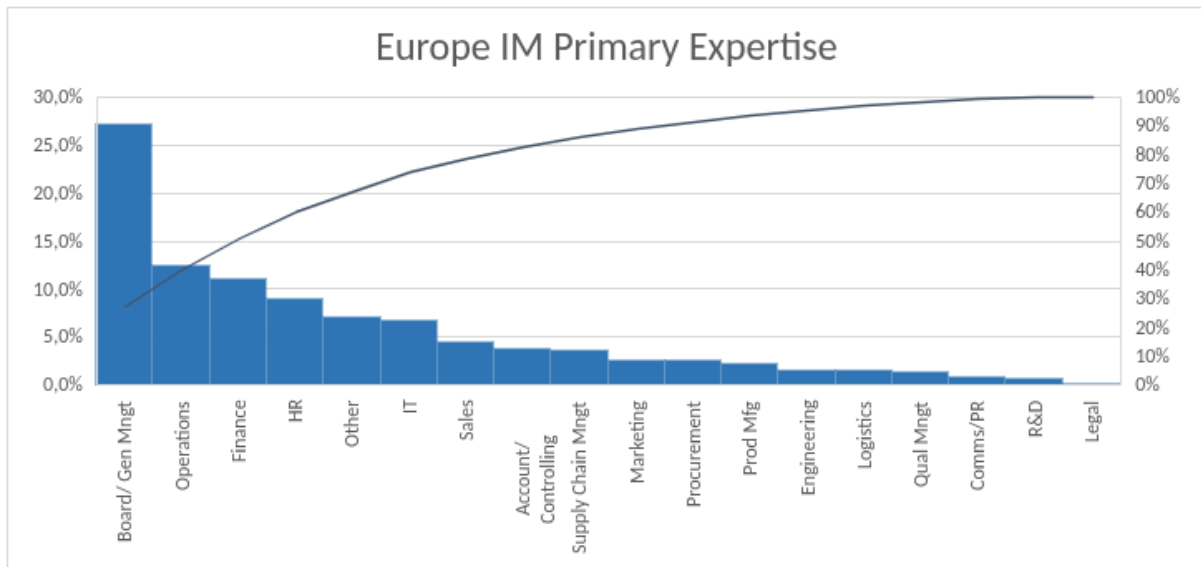




Functional Specialities

The top five primary functional specializations of European interim managers were general management at 27.2%, finance at 11.1%, operations at 12.5%, human resources at 9.1%, and IT at 6.8%.

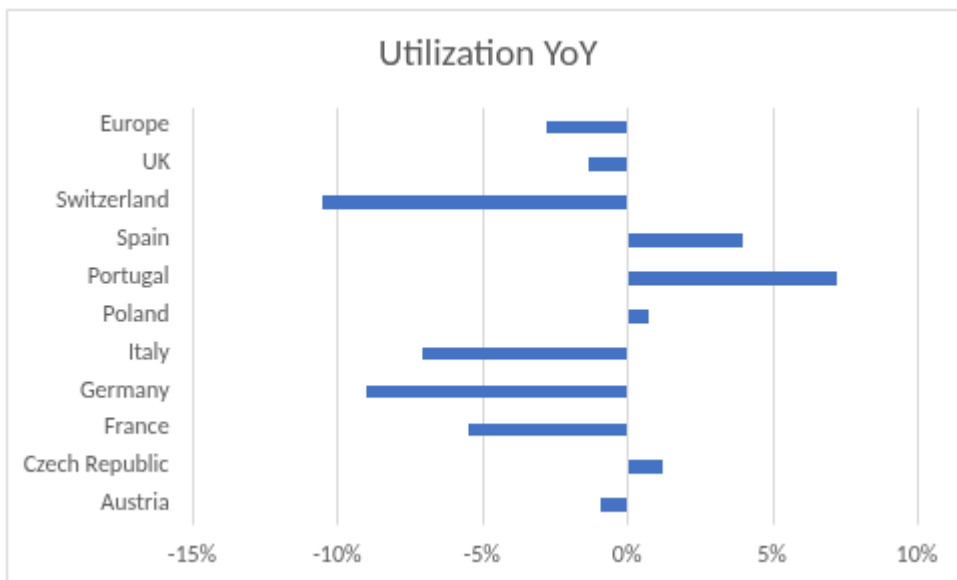
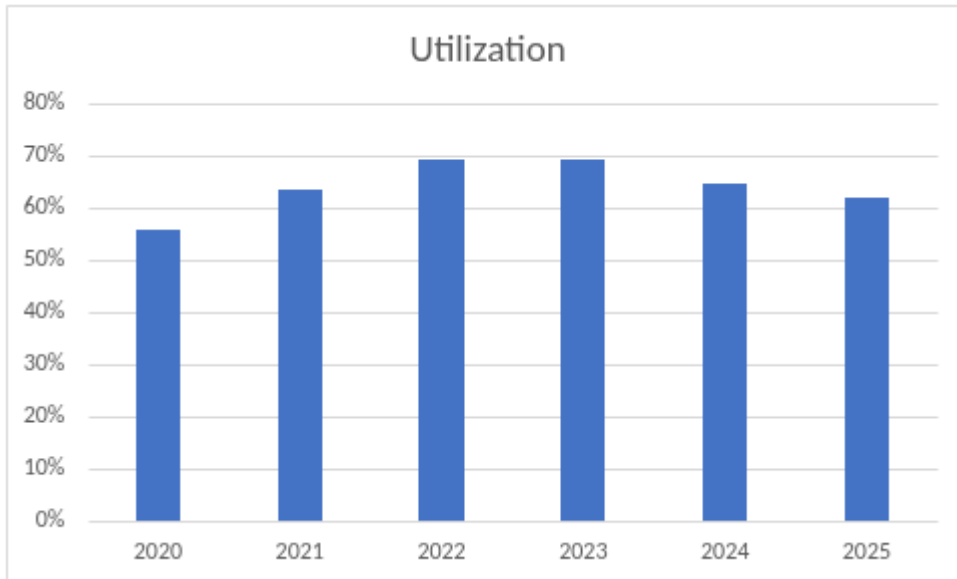
The distribution of functional expertise varies across interim management associations, with each nation exhibiting a distinct profile



Interim Manager Utilization

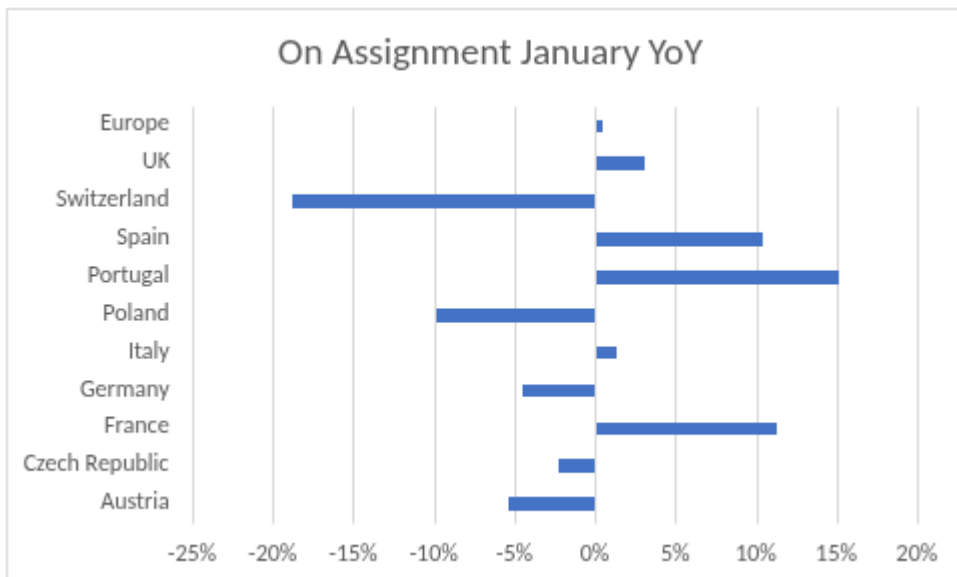
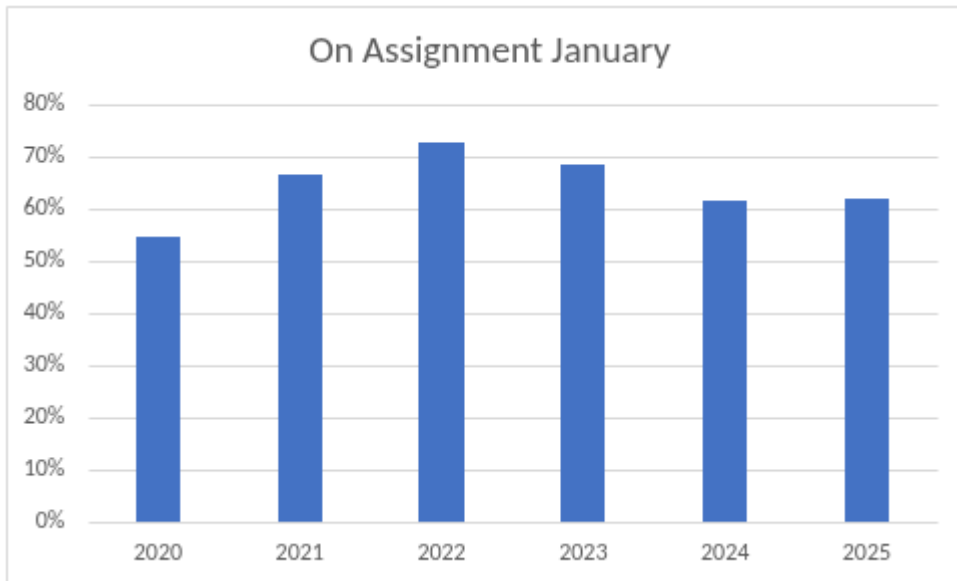
Members of the European Interim Manager Associations were asked to report the proportion of billed days to the total number of working days in 2025.

The average utilization of European Interim Managers was lower than the previous year (-3%/62%). It was also noted that the utilization decreased across many European countries in 2025.



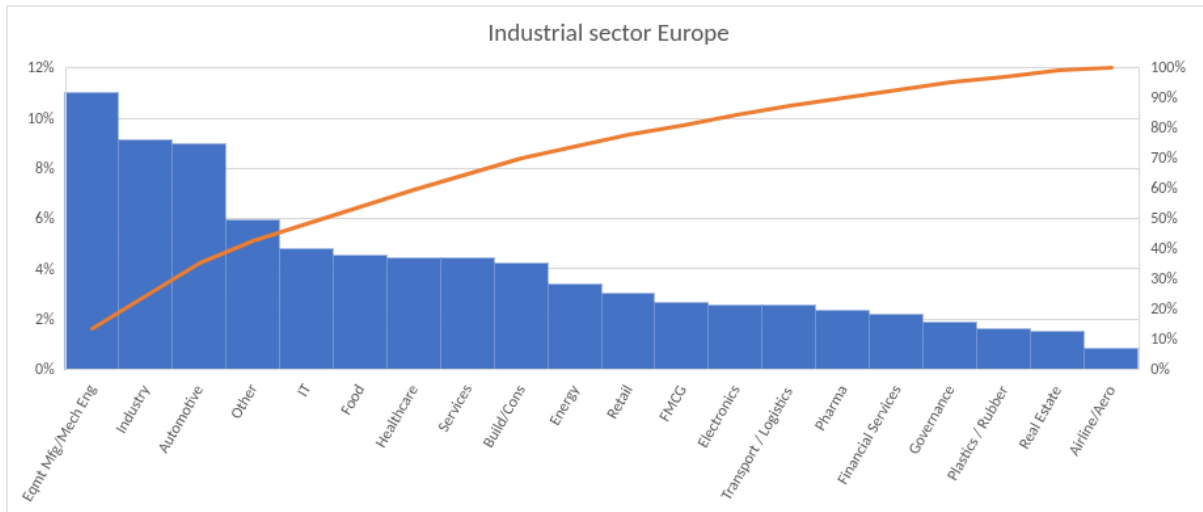
Current Status of Interim Managers

Interim managers were asked about their assignment status as of January 2026. The proportion of European interim managers who were **on assignment remained unchanged at 62%**, compared with the same period in the previous year.



The sector of the Last Assignment

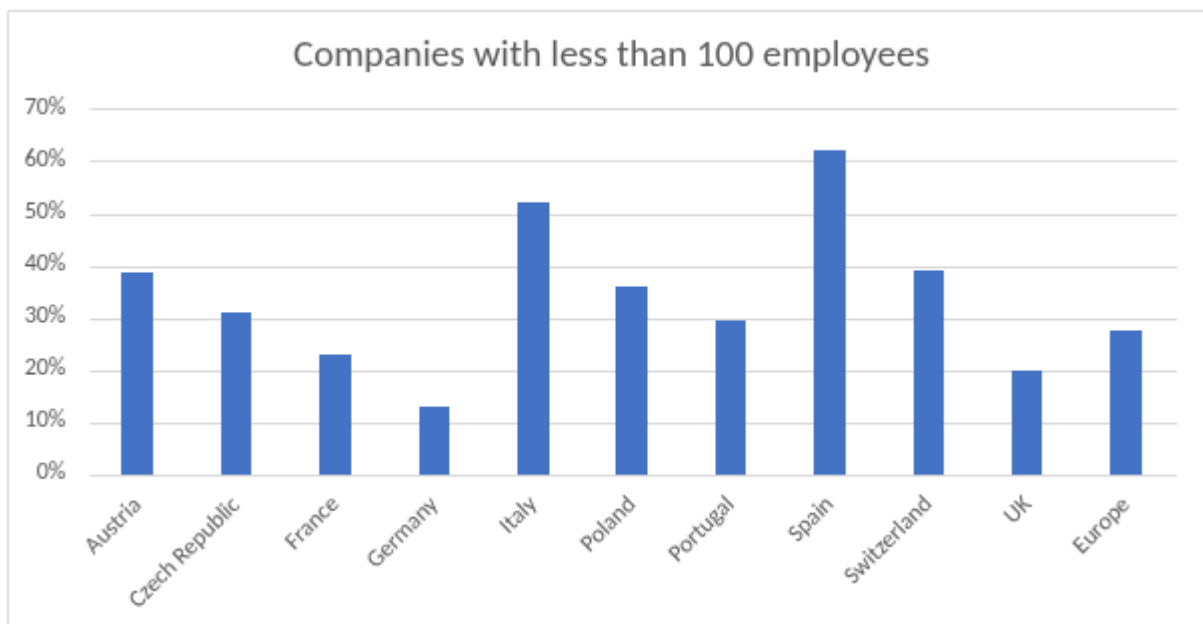
The top 5 sectors for European interim managers were equipment/mechanical manufacturing, industry, automotive, IT and food.



Size of Company Clients

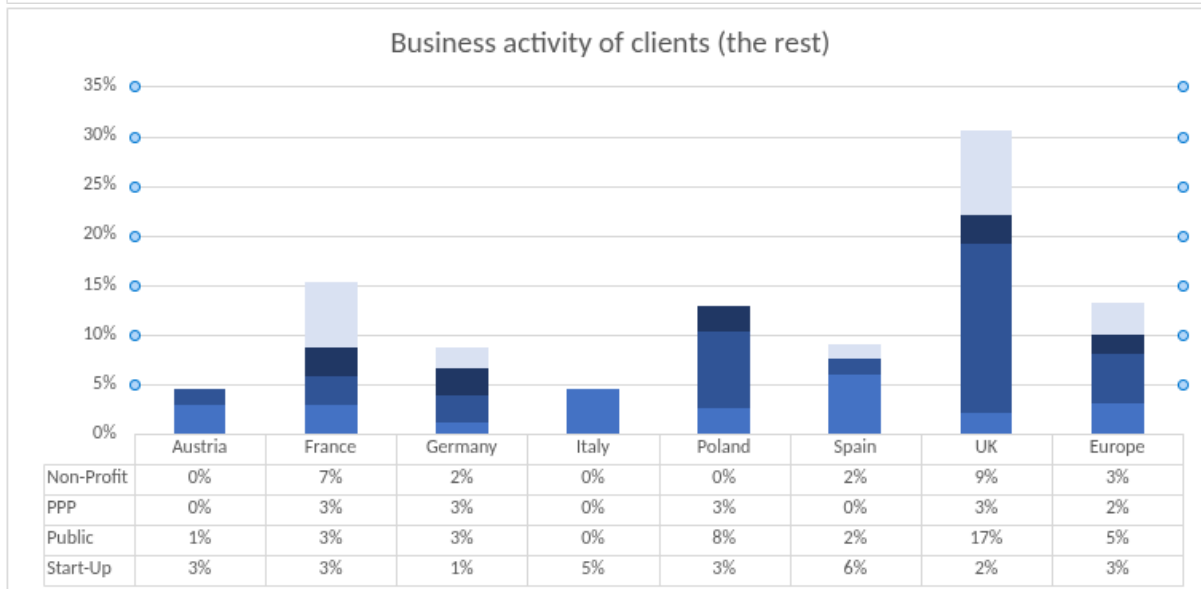
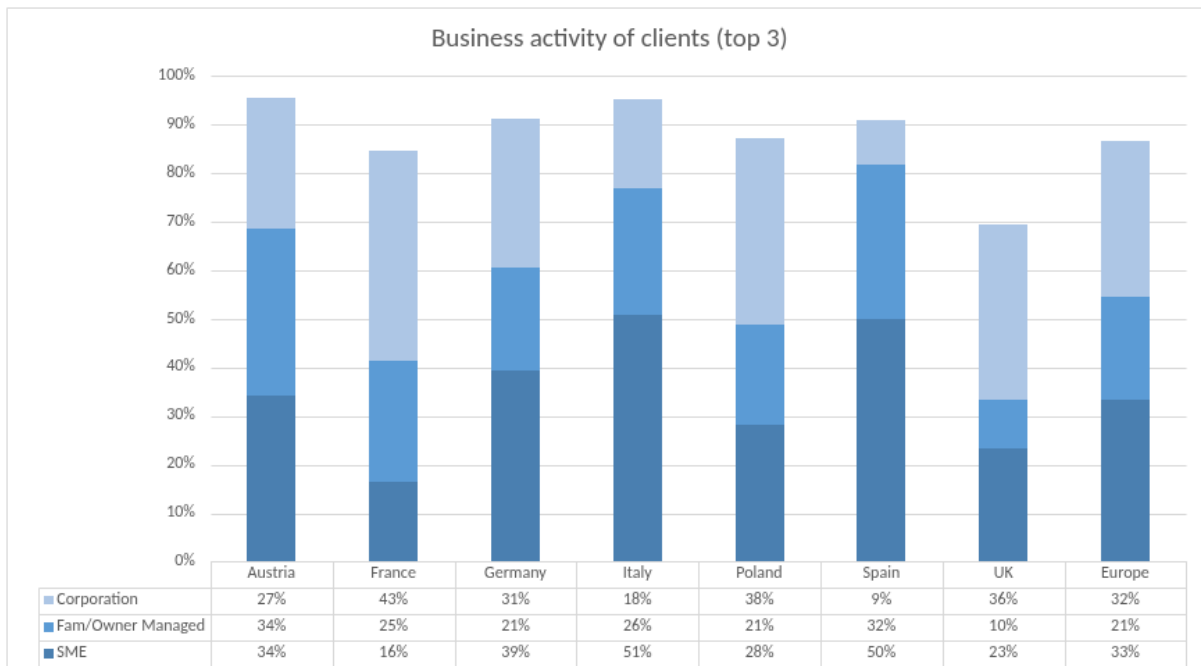
European Interim Managers had assignments in the full range of enterprises, from the start-up with a few employees, to large corporations. In Southern Europe, approximately half of the assignments took place in companies with fewer than 100 employees.

Company size had an important impact on the interim services provided and the sales channels that were used.



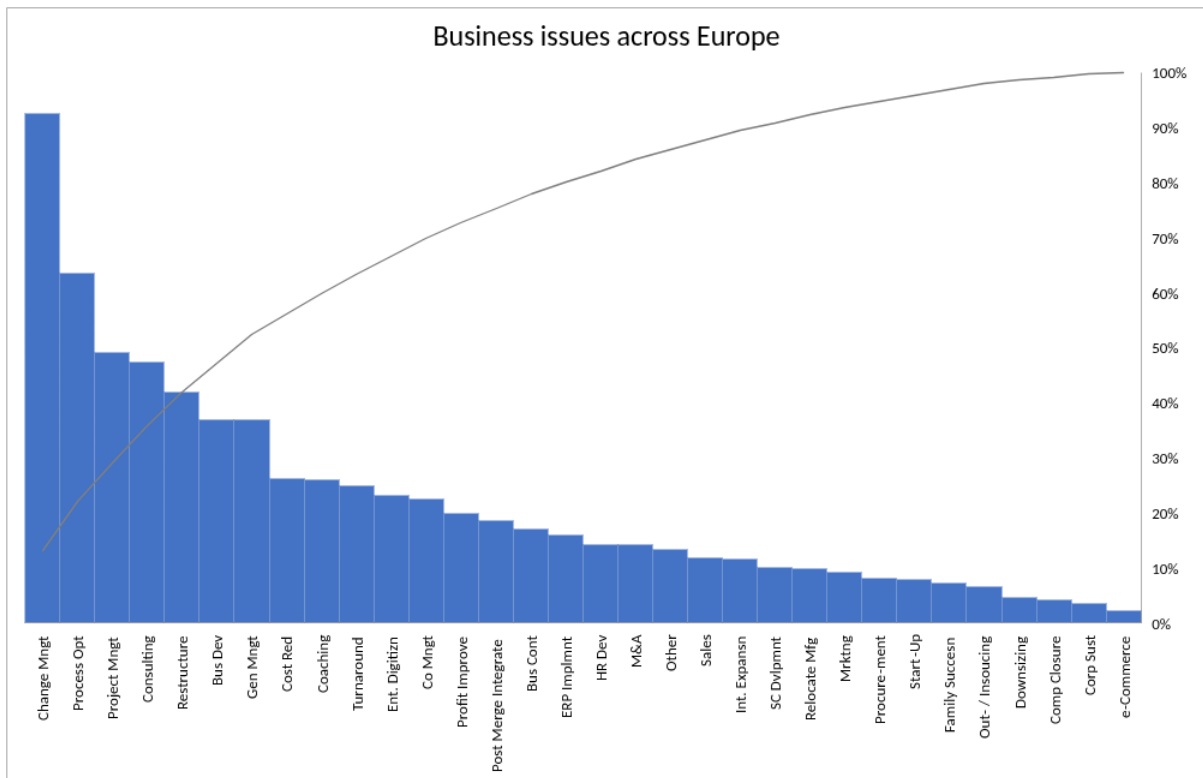
Business Activity of Clients

Most interim managers were active predominantly in the private sector (95%). Only the UK showed notable participation in public sector assignments (17%).



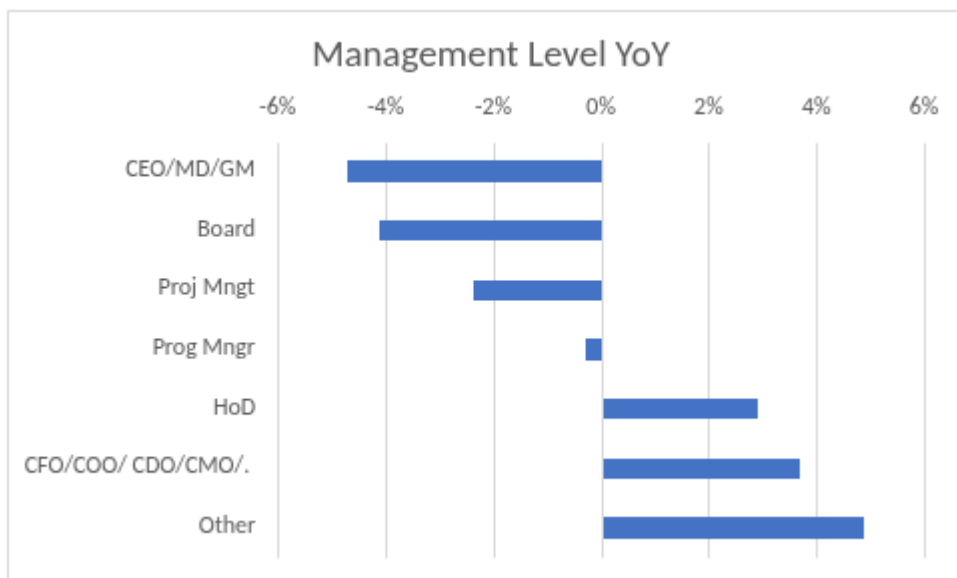
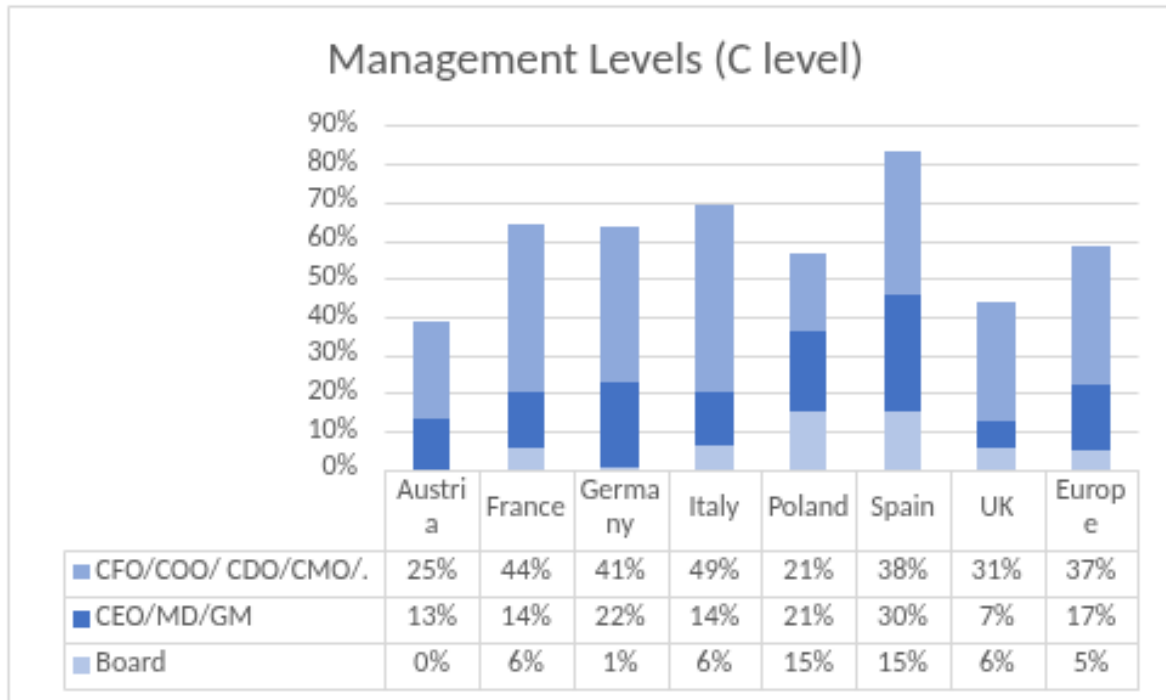
The Assignments

Respondents across Europe reported that change management and process optimizations were the most common issues in the last assignment. Other important issues addressed by interim managers were “business development” “project management” and “general management.”



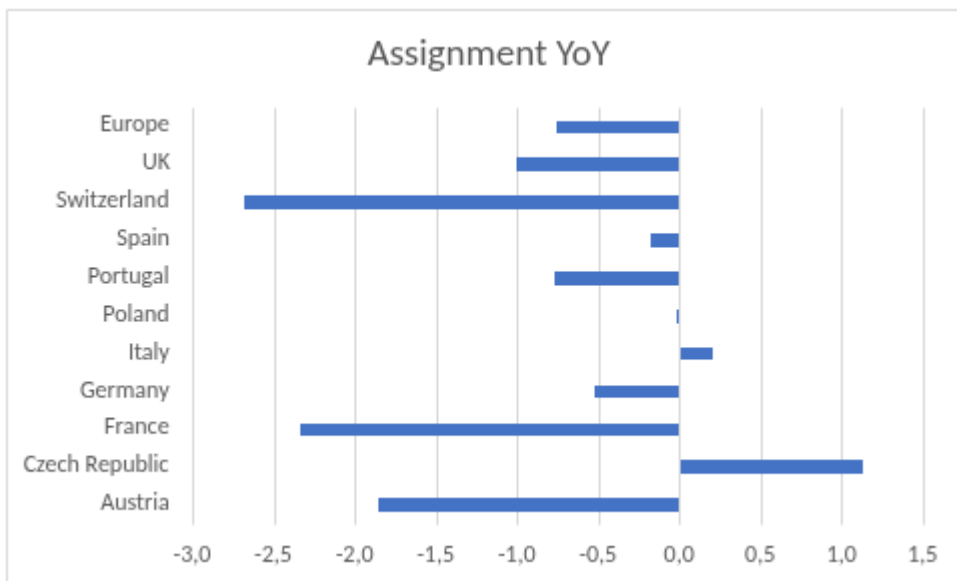
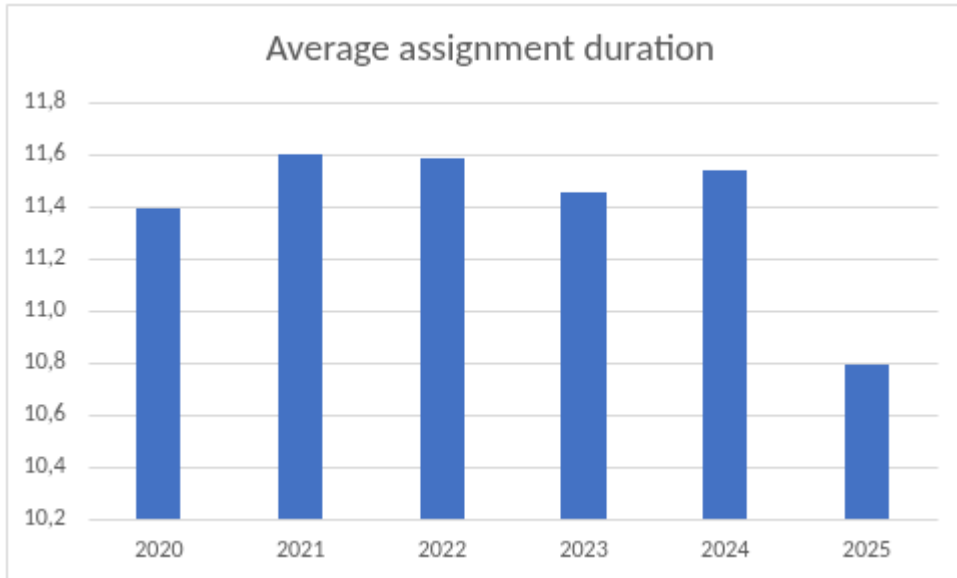
Management Level

Over 60% of European Interim managers had completed assignments in positions at C-level or above. There was a shift from Board/CEO/MD/GM to executive and operational roles



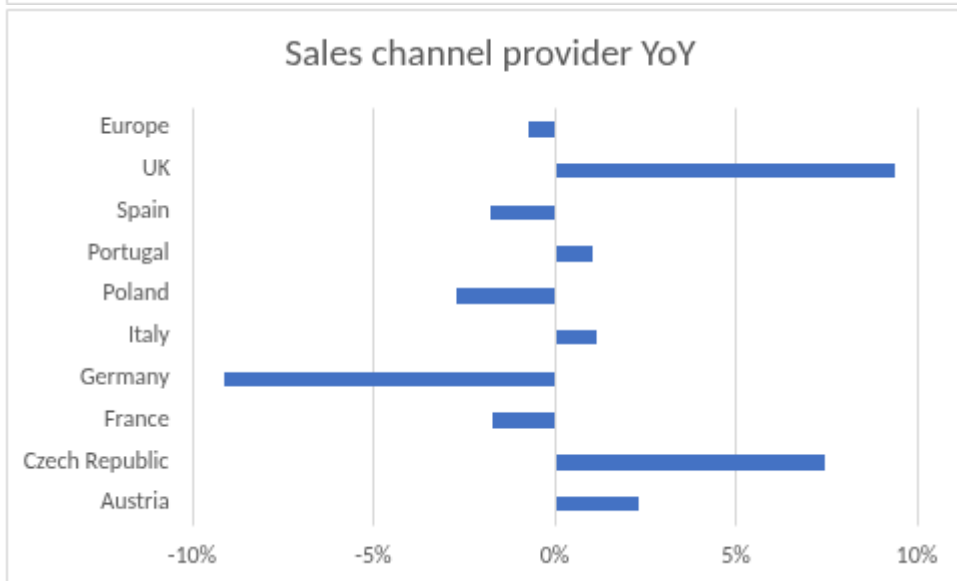
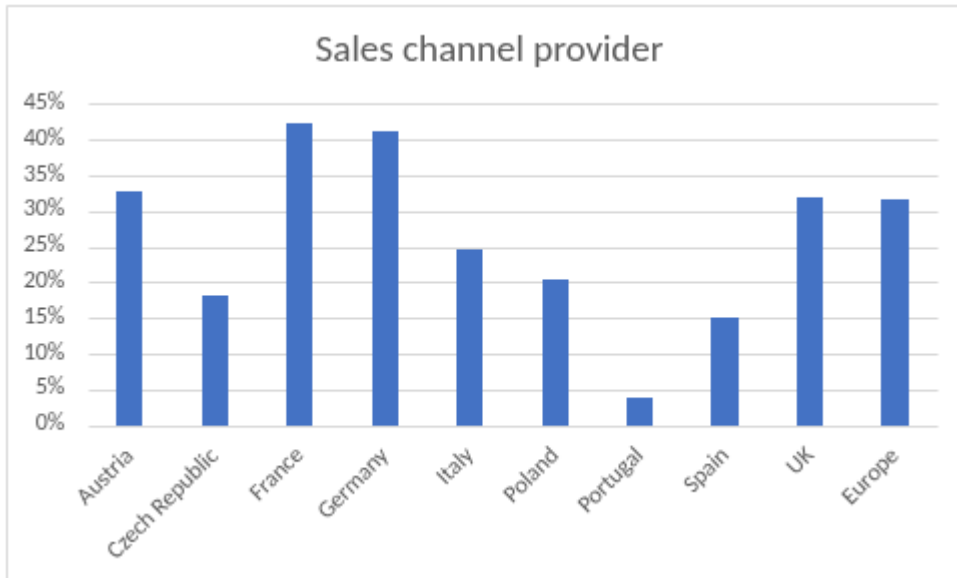
Duration

The average duration of an interim assignment in Europe was 10.8 months, a significant reduction last year by 0.7 months. Again, this indicator was confirmed across most European countries.



Sales channel

Throughout Europe, the main sales channels remained the personal network (48%) and the Interim Providers (32%).



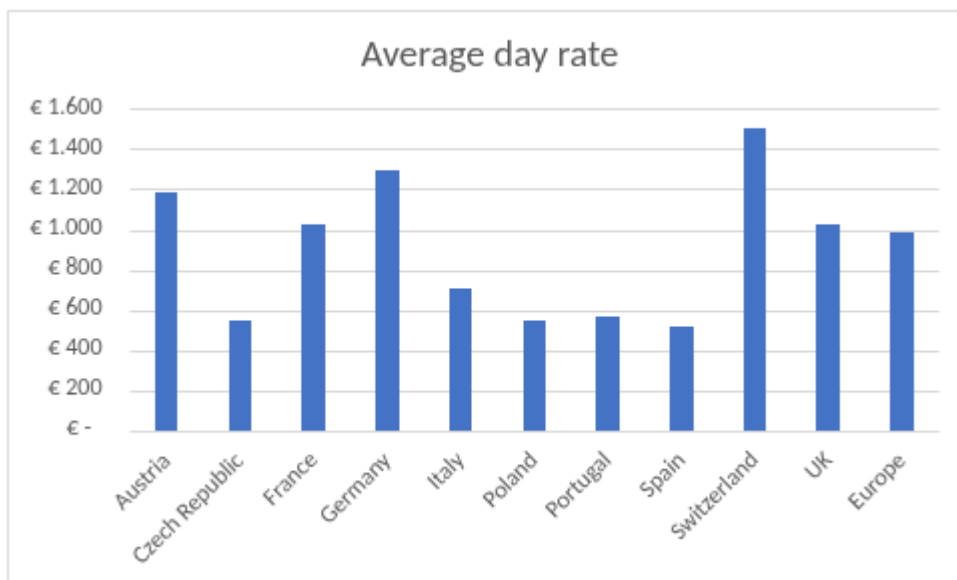
Day Rates

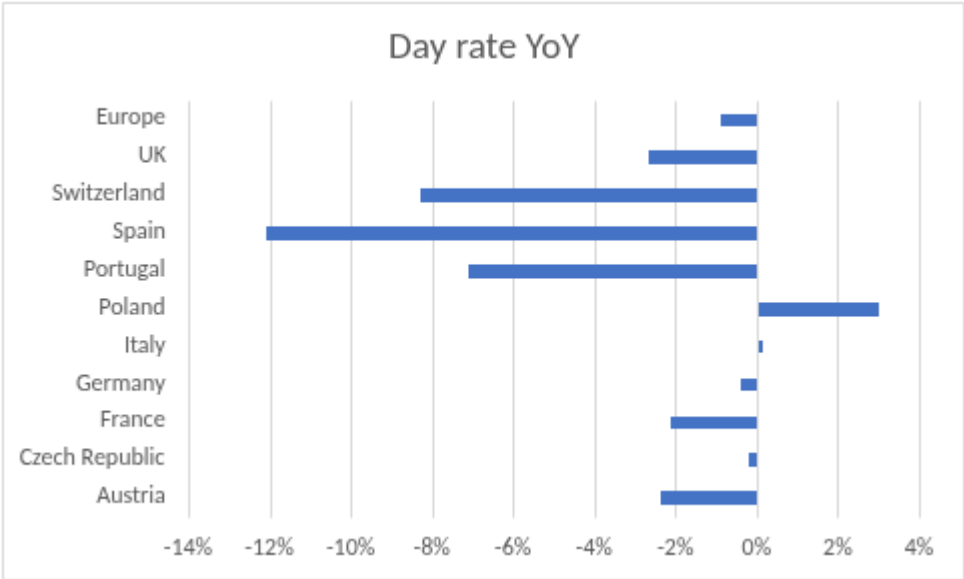
Managers were asked to provide the day rate that they billed on their last assignment (the net price, excluding expenses and VAT).

The average European day rate decreased slightly in 2025. (-9€/985€).

The large range of the day rates showed the diversity of national economies, national IM markets size of clients and sectors. As previously illustrated, the services and expertise provided by the Interim Managers were reasonably aligned between countries.

The estimated average daily rate had limited practical meaning because there was no “average interim,” and there was a large national variance

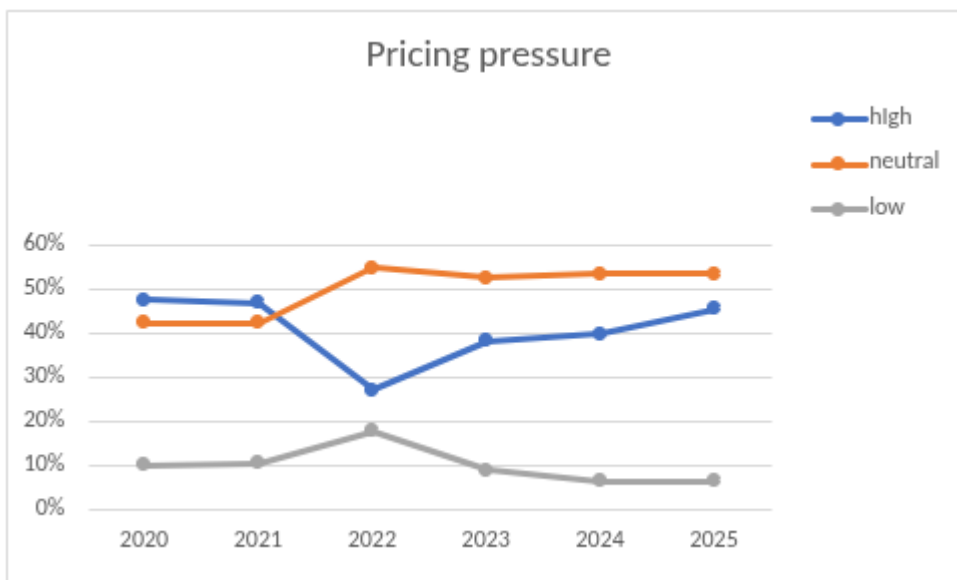
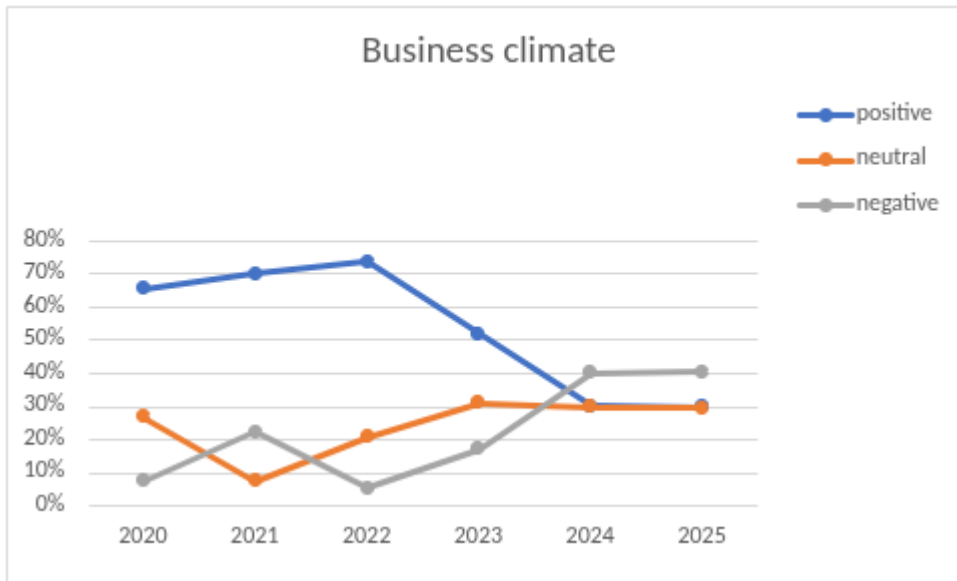




Trends

Market Development

At the time of the survey (January 2026) the business climate was considered to be stable even though “pessimists” increased on pricing pressure.



Written Responses in the Survey

The survey also collected qualitative data from Interim Managers, this was summarized below:

Awareness of the Profession

A recurring theme is the limited understanding and recognition of interim management among companies and owners. Many respondents report that clients still struggle to distinguish interim managers from consultants or managers between jobs. Increasing market awareness, credibility, and clear positioning of the profession remains a priority across markets. In some countries (e.g., Switzerland, Portugal), this lack of recognition is seen as a major barrier to market growth.

Sales and Utilization

The acquisition of new assignments and maintaining high utilization rates is one of the most dominant concerns. Interim managers highlight the importance of strong personal sales capability, networking, and direct client relationships. Competition is increasing, and many feel they must be more proactive in generating opportunities themselves rather than relying on providers. Some also mention interest in international assignments or part-time offers for SMEs to broaden opportunities.

Day Rates

Maintaining adequate day rates and profitability is widely seen as a challenge. Many respondents report increasing price pressure from clients while operational and personal costs continue to rise. Protecting daily rates while demonstrating value creation is therefore a major concern.

Marketing

Respondents frequently highlight the need to strengthen personal branding, visibility, and networking. This includes improving self-marketing,

digital presence, and positioning in the market. Building and maintaining a strong professional network is seen as essential to securing mandates.

Artificial Intelligence

AI is one of the most widely mentioned emerging topics. Interim managers want to develop practical knowledge of AI tools and understand how they can be applied in assignments. The focus is not only on awareness but on meaningful implementation and productivity gains, with tools like ChatGPT frequently mentioned.

Continuous Learning

Continuous professional development remains a key priority. Respondents highlight the need to strengthen leadership, change management, digital skills, cybersecurity knowledge, and sector expertise. Many also stress the importance of being able to lead complex transformations and deliver rapid value creation in challenging environments.

Client Relationship

Several comments highlight challenges in client governance, decision-making structures, and role clarity. Interim managers often need to manage uncertainty, slow decisions, or unclear mandates. Some respondents also mention interest in alternative pricing models, such as performance-based or profit-sharing arrangements.

External Factors

The broader economic and political environment is another major concern. Respondents cite economic uncertainty, regulatory changes, taxation issues (e.g., IR35 in the UK), and bureaucracy as factors affecting demand for interim management and assignment conditions.

The Interim Life

Managing the gaps between assignments and overall work-life balance is a recurring issue. Interim managers mention the need to balance availability, workload, and personal life, while also planning financially for periods without projects.

Fake Interims In a few markets, respondents express concern about “fake interim managers” or unqualified professionals entering the market, which can damage the reputation of the profession and increase competitive pressure.