



France is the largest country in the European Union and [one of the world's top economic superpowers](#). If you're considering building a team there or even just hiring one or two French employees, we can help you through the process. Our guide to hiring employees in France outlines some important laws and other factors you should know before you start recruiting.

What to Know Before Hiring in France

Before hiring someone in France, you need to understand some important aspects of doing business in the country and its employment laws. Depending on the way you're used to things working in your home country, you may notice some subtle or even stark differences in the labor market and hiring practices in France.

1. The French labor market

There are some excellent reasons to consider hiring employees in France. However, you should also be aware of the potential challenges you'll face when entering the French labor market. France has had an ongoing struggle with high unemployment rates. From 2012 to

2018, France's [unemployment rate remained above 9 percent](#). Fortunately, in 2019, that percentage fell to 8.43 percent, and in 2020, it decreased just slightly to 8.34 percent for the year, demonstrating a gradual improvement in France's economy.

It's important to understand that France's unemployment rate is due partly to [a deficit of skilled workers](#). This is especially problematic in the industrial sector where there are relatively few young people entering the fields that need skilled workers.

What does all this mean for your company? In part, it emphasizes the importance of conducting research to ensure you can find local workers with the qualifications you're looking for. Since these workers may be in high demand, you may need to offer them long-term contracts or other perks to attract them to your company. You may also want to consider hiring employees with the work ethic and attitude you're looking for and training them for the job.

2. Collective bargaining agreements

In addition to France's employment laws, you also need to pay attention to collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). Because [France has a strong trade union culture](#), CBAs are common. These documents outline terms that labor unions and employers have agreed upon regarding employment provisions like working conditions and benefits. These terms add to French labor laws rather than replace them.

A CBA may apply to a single company, a group of companies, or — in some cases — a whole industry. In these instances, even if your company is not part of an employer's association, the CBA may still apply to you. Be sure to find out whether any CBAs will apply to your company so you can carefully incorporate these terms into your employment contracts in addition to complying with labor laws for all French employees.



3. Language difference

Any time you're hiring employees internationally, you may have to account for language differences. French is the official language of France — **88 percent of the population speaks French** as their first language. While French is by far the predominant language in France, some French workers may also speak a second language. According to The Local, a French news source, approximately **57 percent of people in France** are reasonably proficient in English. In Paris, that percentage is a bit higher at just over 60 percent.

You may be interested in looking for French workers who are fluent in your native language, but this could get you into trouble. **French law specifies that you cannot** discriminate against an employee based on their ability to express themselves in a language besides French.

As long as you have a translator or bilingual colleagues who can help, you should be able to bridge language divides. Keep in mind that, even if you don't speak French, learning some phrases and using them when you conduct interviews or meet your new hires can be an excellent way to show goodwill.

4. Working hours and minimum wage

A standard [workweek in France is 35 hours](#). Employees are not legally permitted to work more than 10 hours per day or 48 hours per week, and they cannot average more than 44 hours per week over a 12-week period. CBAs may place other stipulations on the number of hours employees can work and on overtime pay.

French workers are used to a work and personal life balance that sets some clear boundaries. France even [passed a law requiring businesses](#) with 50 or more employees to set hours when employees can fully disconnect from work email. All employees are entitled to a daily [rest period of 11 consecutive hours](#) and a weekly rest period of 35 consecutive hours.

France has a national minimum wage, [currently set at 1,554.58 euros](#) per month. This is based on the 35-hour workweek and applies to all employees with an indefinite or fixed-term contract. You may be used to paying your employees biweekly, but in France, you'll pay your employees' salaries once monthly at the end of each month. CBAs may also specify a minimum wage that exceeds the national minimum.

5. Paid leave and holidays

French employees are legally entitled to [at least five weeks of paid vacation](#) time each year. Employees who have earned seniority may be entitled to even more vacation time under the law or their CBA.

Since French employees get a generous amount of vacation leave, they may not have to request sick leave, but there is a provision for sick leave under French employment law — employees must provide a medical certificate, and the amount they are paid while absent will depend on the terms of their CBA.

In addition to annual leave, employees may also get holidays off. Under French law, employers are only required to give their employees [one public holiday off](#): Labor Day. However, employers generally give their employees all 10 of France's public holidays off. CBAs may dictate that employees get these days off.

6. Taxes and social welfare programs

France uses a progressive tax rate system for income tax. Employees used to pay their taxes directly, but as of 2019, France [uses a Pay As You Earn \(PAYE\)](#) system, meaning employers withhold taxes from employees' paychecks each month.

Both employees and employers must contribute to France's welfare system. This includes coverage for health care, family benefits, unemployment benefits, workplace accidents, and pensions. In a typical scenario, employees will contribute [about 22 percent of their gross salary](#) in social charges, and employers will contribute a sum equal to about 43 percent of an employee's gross salary.

The health care system in France focuses on government funding. The French government will cover the majority of a citizen's health care costs. Despite this nationalized coverage, employers are also required to offer their employees a private health insurance policy to supplement France's social welfare system.

Cost of Hiring in France

When hiring employees, you may focus on how much each employee will cost you in terms of the total cost of labor. This price is relatively high in France, so it's smart to pay attention to it. However, you also need to budget for the expenses of the recruitment process itself.

Recruitment costs can include the following:

- Legal assistance to help with compliance
- Hiring committee's time
- Hiring agency
- Traveling to and from France
- Posting job ads on sites that require a fee
- Translator to assist with communication
- Legally-permitted background checks



The most popular subsidiary option for international businesses is a private limited liability company, known as a **société à responsabilité limitée (SARL)**.

What Does a Company Need to Hire Employees in France?

Before you can start hiring new employees in France, you need to establish yourself as an employer in France. This means establishing a branch or subsidiary of your business there. The most popular subsidiary option for international businesses is a private limited liability company, known as a société à responsabilité limitée (SARL). To set up your SARL, you'll need:

- A commercial French bank account
- An office address in France
- An appointed auditor
- Registrations with the office for social security, taxes, and insurances
- Notice of your subsidiary's incorporation published in the official journal
- Your company books stamped at Commercial Court

Setting up a subsidiary in France can take weeks or even months. In addition to establishing your business entity, you also need to research employment laws and seek legal counsel to ensure you're a legally compliant employer. Fortunately, there is an alternative option if you want to hire French employees without having to set up an entity.

This alternative is known as an Employer of Record (EOR) service. An EOR — also called a professional employment organization (PEO) or, in France, a Portage Salarial — will already

have an entity established in France. When you partner with an EOR, it takes over many of the burdens associated with the expansion process, including putting your French employees on your payroll, handling taxes and benefits, and ensuring these employees receive all their entitlements under French law and their CBA. All the while, your employees will be working for your company. Essentially, you get the benefits of employing international workers without taking on the complexities.

This is an especially valuable option if you want to start hiring quickly. It's also helpful if you're considering establishing a branch or subsidiary but want to take some time to test your entrance into the French market. An EOR can help you do just that without having to make a large commitment.

Steps to Hiring in France

We've provided a basic how-to below, along with some of our tips for hiring in France.

1. Advertise job positions
2. Screen applications
3. Conduct interviews
4. Make job offers and review the employee's contract
5. Submit a DPAE
6. Onboard your new employees



Steps to Hiring in France

Once you understand the job market and the legalities of employing people in France, you can turn your attention to how to hire within the country. We've provided a basic how-to below, along with some of our tips for hiring in France.

1. Advertise job positions

One option for recruiting in France is to look for students studying to work in your field and offering them a *contrat d'alternance* (a study contract). This model involves employing the student part-time until they are done with their studies and then offering them a full-time position.

You can also post job ads on online job boards. France uses international job portals like Indeed and Monster, as well as many French job boards. You can also find a job portal specific to your industry. For example, [Stratégies Emploi](#) is a job website geared toward jobs in marketing, communications, and public relations.

2. Screen applications

As applications come in, you can use a software program to weed out unqualified applicants quickly. You can also evaluate applications manually. This step is focused on narrowing down your applicant pool and determining which candidates merit an interview.

As you look at applications, keep in mind that a French curriculum vitae (CV) may be a bit different than resumes or CVs you're used to in your home country. European CVs are typically longer than North American resumes. French CVs also tend to be [more personal than CVs British employers](#) are used to. French applicants will include multiple modes of contact, their date and place of birth, nationality, and marital status. It's also common to include a photograph.

3. Conduct interviews

If you're hiring remote employees in France, video interviews are a perfectly acceptable option. Of course, you can also travel to France if you choose to conduct interviews in person. If you're interviewing candidates remotely, don't forget to factor in the potential time difference between Central European Time and your native time zone.

4. Make job offers and review the employee's contract

Though written employment contracts are not required in France, it is always smart to have a strong written contract in place to protect both your company and the candidate. Make sure you specify which type of contract you are offering the employee. Contract types include:

- Contract for full-time work
- Contract for part-time work
- Contract for seasonal work
- Limited duration contract
- Intermittent work contract

Your contract should clearly outline the terms of employment and should be written in French.

5. Submit a DPAE

In France, you [must submit a nominative declaration](#) known as a déclaration préalable à l'embauche (DPAE), which translates to "a declaration before hiring." As the name suggests, you must submit this declaration prior to onboarding your employees. You send the DPAE to the Unions de Recouvrement des Cotisations de Sécurité Sociale et d'Allocations Familiales (URSSAF), which is the government organization that collects social security and family benefit contributions.

The DPAE is necessary for registering your employees with social welfare offices and enrolling them in the social security scheme. This declaration also requests approval for conducting a

medical examination for your new employees.

6. Onboard your new employees

If you're used to conducting background checks at this stage or earlier in the process, bear in mind that French law only allows for background checks that [relate directly to the job position](#). In other words, you can only conduct a criminal background check if the job involves sensitive activities like handling money.

The same principle applies to conducting medical examinations as a means of pre-employment screening. However, after hiring, medical examinations are a standard part of the onboarding process. Onboarding will also involve paperwork and any training employees must go through before beginning their job duties.