REVIEW OF PAY EXPECTATIONS OF TOP TALENTS

EXPECTATIONS, TRENDS, OBSERVATIONS TRIPOD RECRUITMENT PROJECTS IN ESTONIAN MARKET

Supplement to the 2025 review:
data and observations for the
first half of 2026

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What do the numbers actually show? Cautious optimism is justified

Maria Veltmann
CEO

How do you track multiple moving objects at once, calculate the distances between them, or predict their trajectories? That is roughly the kind of situation we are facing today when it comes to the labour market for top performers.

Depending on which data points we choose, we can highlight one nuance or another. Using artificial intelligence makes analysis more precise and more extensive; yet it is useful to remember that in a small market even minor factors can have a significant impact on the data. There are fields where the competitive landscape in the domestic market has shifted, the market has consolidated, and for some time now there has been little to report.

At the same time, however, we also see significant internal developments in individual sectors and companies. The efforts made over the past years are starting to pay off, things are moving in the right direction, **giving us reason for cautious optimism.**

By understanding the context and recognising the lessons of historical experience – not simply relying on AI–generated conclusions or the data points that are indeed increasingly accessible – we can see the bigger picture and, on that basis, make better decisions also when hiring top talent.

Top performers, in turn, must adapt to sharper competition. New skills, experiences and criteria come into play. In the short term, this creates significant imbalance in the system, forcing choices and trade–offs. If you prioritise fresh thinking and new tools, you may have to give up some risk awareness and experience. If you prioritise experience, you may not clear five metres with a pole on your first attempt. Choices have to be made. In the longer term, however, the system will reach a new equilibrium.

A little piece of advice to lift the spirits, even if a modest growth is already being felt but the outlook for the year ahead does not inspire much optimism: based on the past 12 months, we can, much like Statistics Estonia's recent mood–lifting revisions, happily and confidently keep moving forward.

It is time to save the memories of summer with a smile and step boldly and optimistically into the new business season. For now, our potential to grow the business is still outrunning top performers' pay expectations.

The time is right to embark on the next stage of growth – the whites make the first move and win!

Maria Veltmann | CEO
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The market has stabilized and the compensation figures have been confirmed in the big picture — so what else determines whether we'll succeed in finding the right person?
The quality of the process determines the outcome.

TRIPOD

What you're looking at is Tripod's H1 2026 update to the pay–expectations overview. This overview continues and complements the 2025 summary. Compared with the 2025 summary, **the reflections are very similar** – the market has not changed much, and the same themes keep coming up around expectations. That in itself is an important message: the market has settled into a more stable phase, where pay figures have broadly been confirmed, **but it is the content and quality of the process that determine whether the key hire is actually found.**

A clear trend that continues is **confidential searches** – a sizeable share of searches start from the realisation that the person in the role today no longer meets the organisation's needs, and a different profile is expected. This calls for greater openness from the client at the start of the process, and for the recruitment partner's skill in helping articulate what "different" actually means. It is important to draw a clear distinction here: a confidential search should be driven by a genuine strategic realignment, rather than used as a disguised solution to poor onboarding or a mismatch between the current person and the role. These are fundamentally different issues and require fundamentally different solutions.

A first impression stays a first impression – in 2026 too, we see that initial meetings give an important but not a complete final picture. **Likability and general trustworthiness** that form in the first minutes of a meeting must not be the sole basis for a hiring decision – it is a feeling that needs to be tested through practical tasks and more substantive discussion. We recommend clients commit to a thorough but optimally fast process – a long process without real depth loses good candidates, while a process that's too superficial loses the right choice. A practical threshold repeats itself across the Baltics: strong candidates, even passive ones, mostly withdraw once an interview cycle drags past 3–4 weeks without substantive progress.

The tension in the **experience, skills, and cultural–fit triangle remains topical** – especially in smaller organisations, where ideal candidates are scarce. It is worth remembering here: you are looking for a person for the role, not a personal companion. You need to see eye to eye on what matters at work, but that does not mean the candidate has to fit every other nuance too.

A new and highly practical topic is **open conversations about pay.** The EU Pay Transparency Directive, which came into effect in summer 2026, requires candidates to have access to information about the pay range before the first interview. Our experience confirms that this is a step in the right direction. A clear and transparent compensation package is attractive to candidates and saves time on both sides: candidates whose overall expectations are significantly above the available range should not reach the final stage, particularly when there is little or no room for negotiation.

At the same time, we see the opposite dynamic as well. Candidates are sometimes reluctant to state their salary expectations clearly, fearing that doing so will turn the figure into the organisation's main decision criterion – even when they have explicitly indicated that they are open to negotiation.

More and more candidates **are open to change – and to proving themselves in a new field.** In most cases, a candidate's strongest assets come from the experience they have already built. But this also raises a broader question worth considering together: are organisations equally open to candidates who may seem "overqualified", or whose experience does not fit the expected profile perfectly? Sometimes, the best match may not be the most obvious one on paper. We're happy to help think this through.

When an organisation is facing change, wants to grow, and has developed a clear vision of the people it needs to make that growth happen, the next step is having the **confidence to follow that vision through.** At the final stage of a recruitment process, it can be tempting to reconsider the agreed profile and choose someone who feels more familiar or reassuring – perhaps a person already known to the organisation or recommended through a trusted contact. After a long search, a reaction like this is entirely understandable. But this is also the moment to return to the original question: what does the role – and the organisation – genuinely need? If considerable time and thought have already been invested in defining the right profile, it is worth trusting that work. Strong candidates can sometimes feel like the less comfortable choice precisely because they bring something new, challenge existing ways of thinking, or represent a bigger step forward.

Three themes recur throughout this overview, across sectors. First, **pay is not always the first topic on the table** – neither for top executives nor for experienced IT specialists. Those who speak less about compensation, or leave it until later in the conversation, are often people whose current salary level is already high. For them, competitive pay is a given rather than the main motivator. What they want to understand first is what the role actually involves, what they would be responsible for, and whether the opportunity is genuinely compelling.

Second, a company's stage of growth shapes not only the size of the pay package, but also **its structure.** In growth companies, candidates are more likely to see options or equity as a natural part of compensation, which can create greater flexibility around base salary. In larger, more established organisations, they expect clear agreements and autonomy in the role. We see the same pattern in searches for both top executives and IT leaders: the compensation package needs to reflect the stage the company is actually in – not simply the market average.

Third, **language requirements and location** can significantly narrow the candidate pool, regardless of sector. In manufacturing and technology, we often see this in the form of a Russian–language requirement. In IT, manufacturing and support functions, the same dynamic appears through requirements for other foreign languages or regular on–site presence. In both cases, it is worth asking whether the requirement is truly essential to the role itself, or whether it limits the candidate pool more than the organisation ultimately gains from it.

We do not see an easy or comfortable season ahead. The key will be to stay committed to a well thought–through strategic plan, even when the expected positive impact does not appear immediately. The quality of both analysis and decision–making will matter more than ever, and there will be little room for missteps. At the same time, there are opportunities. Together with our clients, we are looking for entrepreneurial spirit, decisiveness and courage – whether driven by a positive vision of the future or by a clear sense that the current situation is no longer good enough.

TRIPOD LATVIA MARKET OVERVIEW H1 2026

Kristaps Balodis
Tripod Latvia
Country Manager

Tripod's Latvian team partners with domestic and international businesses across the country to recruit senior management and key specialist talent. Combining local market intelligence with Tripod's structured assessment methodology and norm groups, our team supports organisations in building resilient leadership teams suited to current macroeconomic conditions.

Latvian Labor Market & Compensation Trends

The Latvian labour market in the first half of 2026 reflects broader Baltic stabilisation. Following several years of sharp salary inflation – with national gross wage growth reaching 11.9% in 2023, 9.7% in 2024, and 7.7% in 2025 – growth has normalized to a moderate pace (+4.2% YoY in Q1 2026, according to Central Statistical Bureau data). Average gross monthly compensation stands at €1,831 nationally and €2,011 in the Rīga region.

While wage growth has leveled off, **candidate selectiveness remains high.** Top talent prioritises clear organisational strategy, leadership transparency, and manageable workload structures over minor pay increases. Three distinct local dynamics currently characterise the Latvian market:

1. **Regional Salary Catch–Up:** While corporate and IT leadership remain concentrated in Rīga, industrial hubs in Kurzeme, Zemgale, and Vidzeme face severe local talent shortages. Consequently, compensation for senior engineers, plant managers, and operational specialists in regional hubs is catching up to Rīga benchmarks to overcome relocation barriers.

2. **Nuanced Shift in Language Requirements:** The decline in Russian language requirements is taking place at a somewhat less steep pace in Latvia than in Estonia, primarily because Rīga maintains a sizable Russian–speaking population. Nevertheless, the downward trend is clear: English has established itself as the operational language in IT and multinational professional services, while Russian language requirements are increasingly isolated to local logistics and retail operations.

3. **Focus on Internal Efficiency:** Small and medium–sized enterprises (SMEs) are prioritising operational efficiency and internal restructuring over aggressive headcount expansion. Active recruitment is focused on replacing underperforming positions with analytical, technology–literate professionals who can drive productivity gains.

Base Salary Ranges (gross) & Industry Dynamics (H1 2026):

- **Senior Executives: €4,500 – €9,000+ / month**
  - Local Dynamics: Expansion of board roles toward hands–on functional leads; growing interest in equity and performance incentives.
- **IT, Tech & Fintech: €3,240 – €5,500+ / month**
  - Local Dynamics: Strong demand for senior system architects, AI implementation leads, and cybersecurity specialists; mid–level hiring remains moderate.
- **Finance & Professional Services: €3,400 – €5,000+ / month**
  - Local Dynamics: Rapid automation of standard accounting; high demand for strategic financial controllers and commercial analysts.
- **Manufacturing, Logistics & Engineering: €2,200 – €4,000+ / month**
  - Local Dynamics: Regional pay closing the gap with Rīga; focus on operational planners, automation experience, and English proficiency.

Key Takeaways for Employers in Latvia:

- **Adopt Early Salary Disclosure:** Publishing realistic compensation ranges prior to initial interviews improves candidate conversion rates and builds immediate trust.
- **Maintain Recruitment Velocity:** Strong candidates in Latvia are regularly evaluating competing offers; multi–stage interview cycles exceeding 3–4 weeks result in candidate drop–outs.
- **Budget for Regional Parity:** When recruiting senior technical or operational roles outside the capital, compensation must match Rīga benchmarks to secure top–tier talent.

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OVERVIEW OF SECTORS AND SALARY EXPECTATIONS 2026

The tables are based on data from 2025, supplemented by recruitment projects from the first half of 2026; the text reflects observations from the first half of 2026

TOP EXECUTIVES

Maria Veltmann
CEO

One notable trend in top–executive searches is the **expansion of executive boards** – dividing areas of responsibility at the senior leadership level to bring more strength into the circle of decision–makers and those accountable. Since Estonian organisations are usually not very large, senior leadership often remains a hands–on expert in their own field as well, not just a strategic figurehead – and this directly shapes the profile being sought. Expert knowledge and skills carry increasing weight, and purely managerial roles are becoming less common.

Handling the pay topic at the executive level is different from other levels: **salary expectations are rarely the most important issue in the first meeting.** A potential candidate would rather get a clearer picture of the mandate and expectations first, before talking about their own – this matters especially when the company is in a phase of change (ownership change, merger). Rather than stating their own pay expectation, executives would rather hear about the company's offer as a whole – with the expectation that good results also bring the chance to earn a solid performance bonus, which is standard for executives and other key positions. More and more experienced executives aim to extend their careers into entrepreneurship – to acquire equity where possible.

Decision–making is shaped by the **longer–term plan.** Ambitious people want to achieve something significant, and that can make them open to opportunities they might otherwise never consider. When choosing a new employer, they look closely at the owner's vision, ethical business practice, and the opportunity for continued personal growth. For top performers, a strategically exciting challenge can be far more compelling than pay alone.

Last year, we already saw owners becoming more willing to end working relationships with leaders whose contribution no longer matched changing circumstances. At the same time, compensation systems were moving toward greater transparency and a stronger link to results. That trend continues. **Expanding boards and redistributing responsibilities** is a natural extension of the same logic: when someone's contribution no longer matches what the organisation needs, the solution is not automatically to create a new role around that person. Instead, the role and the required profile are reconsidered.

On the other hand, there is also a certain caution among executives in the market. Potential offers are weighed very carefully before deciding to join a hiring process, and in certain sectors one can sense fatigue – starting something new, after a long stretch of effort, requires additional resources to take on more ambitious goals alongside what has already been achieved. We expect the trend of acquisitions, divestitures, and consolidation among small and medium–sized companies to continue, which reduces the number of companies and the level of competition in low–margin sectors, while at the same time increasing the complexity of the management task for acquirers and strengthening the influence of major market players. In such organisations, wage growth at lower levels – which had until then been rising faster than company performance – sometimes slows down after an acquisition.

*The salary ranges for top executives are not presented here in a separate table — they are included in the salary table for the respective business line.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, SALES, AND MARKETING

Business development, sales and marketing searches are handled by Senior Recruitment Consultant Anni Paves

Anni Paves
Senior Recruitment Consultant and Business Line Manager

The clearest observation in sales and marketing for H1 2026 is **process volume:** finding the right person often requires an unusually large number of interviews, since a candidate's profile alone does not reveal the true depth and level of their experience. This makes searches in this field inherently time–consuming – not because of a flaw in the process, but because of the nature of the role.

That is exactly why the **speed of the process** is critical. A slow process with many meetings that overlap in substance leaves the final shortlist thin – strong candidates move on and accept other offers. When the hiring organisation is not in a hurry, a good candidate usually is. And this applies not only to active jobseekers. Even candidates who were not originally looking to move can lose momentum or choose another opportunity if the process stretches out too long.

We consistently see in our recruitment projects that **well-executed social media advertising** continues to work well in this field – the quality and message of a hiring campaign directly affects both the number and quality of candidates.

We quite often see clients assume that the strongest candidate should come from the same sector – either because industry–specific experience is expected to add immediate value, or because there is a belief that competitors cannot be doing things much better than we are. In practice, searches have repeatedly challenged that assumption. Candidates from within the same sector can still bring unexpected strengths, fresh approaches and valuable experience, because from the outside, we rarely know everything that competitors are doing internally. **We therefore recommend staying open to different combinations of experience.** To calibrate the profile properly and make the final hiring decision on a broader and better–informed basis, organisations increasingly need to have substantive conversations with a wider range of candidates. **Quick elimination based on CV-level assumptions – or placing too much weight on recommendations built on limited information – should be left behind.**

Building on what we saw in 2025, one point remains clear: **strategic sales and business–development roles, together with highly skilled specialists, continue to be key drivers of company growth.** Candidates with longer careers also tend not to put pay first. What they are looking for, above all, is **meaningful and inspiring work.** That is why a higher offer alone is often not enough to attract a strong candidate – **the challenge itself and the company's reputation matter just as much**

The near–term outlook is increasingly tilted toward growth. After a long period of moderate development, the marketing sector is likely to pick up as companies position themselves to capture their share of a gradually strengthening economy. Those that invest in marketing now will be better placed to take advantage of that growth. As a result, we expect to see more roles opening up in marketing as well.

Broad–based demand and growth could also come from successful **mid–sized exporting companies** (wood, metal and food production) where there is clear potential to expand into new markets. Sales as a function is also waiting for its next generation of top performers: business leaders with the experience, capability and ambition to open new markets, drive new product development, and influence how markets and customer behaviour evolve. What companies are looking for is not simply people who can maintain what already exists, but people who can change and build – through their experience, vision and courage. We also see growing interest in top performers who have built their careers outside Estonia. Companies are increasingly looking for fresh perspectives and new ways to create growth, particularly in an environment where 1–2% growth may no longer be enough even to cover the cost of capital.

Taking on a role or growth step that differs meaningfully from what came before often requires **considerable resolve** – the courage to make a decision based on potential that, if realised, could move the organisation significantly forward. Companies tend to place too much weight on the part of the competency profile that contributed strongly to the success of the current strategy, but may be less important for what comes next. After a long and demanding process, this is where the safer decision can easily win out. Yet that choice may ultimately fall short of delivering the change the organisation originally set out to achieve.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, SALES AND MARKETING

TRIPOD

Candidates' salary expectation eur/month (base gross)

Length of experience in this position	Junior (0-2 years)		Mid (2-5 years)		Senior (5+ years)	
Position	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Sales and Business Development						
Group CEO	NA	NA	13000	18000	14000	25000
Sales and Marketing Manager / Member of the Board	6000	12000	8000	8500	10000	15000
Regional Sales Director / Member of the Board	7500	13000	NA	NA	10000	13000
CEO / Member of the Board	4500	6700	NA	NA	4500	12000
Commercial Director	4000	7000	NA	NA	5500	7000
Sales Director	3000	7000	5000	8000	5300	8500
Sales Manager	2200	2800	3400	4500	4000	6000
Export Manager (Western Estonia)	NA	NA	3200	4500	4500	5000
Retail Manager	NA	NA	3200	5000	4200	5600
Sales Team Manager	3000	5000	NA	NA	3300	5000
Key Account Manager	2600	3800	2700	3700	2900	5600
Branch Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA	2500	3400
Marketing						
Marketing Director / Member of the Board	5000	9000	NA	NA	NA	NA
Marketing Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA	3200	4800
Field / Business Line Marketing Manager	NA	NA	4500	5100	NA	NA
Marketing Project Manager	NA	NA	3000	5000	3500	4200
Product Manager	3100	3500	NA	NA	4000	5000
Category Manager	NA	NA	2500	3000	2700	4000

FINANCE AND SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

The recruitment projects in finance and support functions are conducted by Senior Consultants Anni Paves and Merle Nurmoja.

Anni Paves
Senior Recruitment Consultant and Business Line Manager

Merle Nurmoja
Senior Recruitment Consultant

The field remained largely stable in the first half of the year: there were no major shifts in either pay expectations or search volumes. At the same time, a quieter but steady change is taking place in the skills companies are actually looking for. Two trends are developing in parallel. On the one hand, automation and the adoption of artificial intelligence are reshaping expectations for finance roles. On the other, the overall quality and preparation of candidates remain high, which in turn raises the bar for how thorough and well–structured the hiring process itself needs to be. **Alongside professional competence and technical skills**, **companies are increasingly looking for strong collaboration skills.** Few roles operate in isolation, and even excellent professional expertise has limited value if a person cannot apply it effectively within a team or across functions.

Underlying this, there is also a structural shift under way in finance that directly shapes who is being sought. **Automation and AI** applications are increasingly taking over purely technical and repetitive tasks – entering raw data, standard reporting, account reconciliation – which means that, for example, an accountant or controller role no longer gets by on simply delivering correct, timely numbers. What's expected is the ability to critically assess system output, interpret numbers, and use them to support business decisions. This shifts the emphasis from technical execution to analytical and interpretive capability, and confirms once again the need for analytical positions specifically (financial analyst, business analyst). A finance person needs to understand the business. We see a similar shift in skill profile in parallel in the supply–chain field, where the pressure toward automation is also growing.

In finance searches, particularly for leadership roles, **the level of candidate preparation stands out.** Candidates typically come to meetings very well prepared. In finance and executive searches especially, it is common for them to have reviewed the company's annual report and website, and often the hiring manager's background as well. This makes the visibility of the hiring manager increasingly important. Including the manager more visibly in a recruitment campaign tends to resonate positively with candidates, giving them a clearer sense of the person they would actually be working with.

First meetings rarely reveal the full picture. A strong professional – including a finance candidate – can speak fluently for 45 minutes about their work and field. That may create a very positive impression, but it does not yet show the full depth of their capability. Tests, practical exercises with limited preparation time and a follow–up presentation, together with more detailed discussion of the substance of the role, are what help reveal how hands–on a candidate really is and how closely their actual experience matches what the position requires.

Two observations that were already evident last year are still worth highlighting. First, top performers in this field are looking for a **strong company and a clear long–term perspective,** not simply a good offer. Given the broader economic environment, attractive mid–level management opportunities have been relatively scarce in recent years, which means strong candidates tend to weigh their options carefully. Second, expectations around formal education and continuous learning continue to rise. Candidates without an academic background often find it difficult to reach top–level positions. Together, these trends point to a field where candidates are well informed, demanding and selective. That is why hiring organisations need to invest not only in the substance of the offer, but also in the quality and credibility of the recruitment process itself.

In many fields, agreements on work organisation and ways of working are not keeping pace with how quickly the substance of work itself is changing. Employees are increasingly expected to think one step ahead, yet organisations still see gaps in initiative, proactivity and willingness to learn. Going forward, one of the clearest distinctions between average and strong performers will be the ability to actively improve the way their own work is done – making it more efficient, effective and fit for changing needs. We expect this to contribute to turnover among specialists and middle managers as well. When people are unable or unwilling to develop along with their roles, it can ultimately slow the development of the organisation as a whole.

FINANCE AND SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

TRIPOD

Candidates' salary expectation eur/month (base gross)

Length of experience in this position	Junior (0-2 years)		Mid (2-5 years)		Senior (5+ years)	
Position	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Finance						
Chairman of the Board / banking	6000	11000	10000	14000	10000	20000
CFO / Member of the Board	7500	8000	NA	NA	8000	12000
Head of Management Accounting	NA	NA	NA	NA	5700	9000
Group Chief Accountant	5500	6000	6000	6500	5500	7500
Finance Manager / Chief Accountant	NA	NA	4500	6500	5000	7000
Chief Accountant	NA	NA	3500	5000	3500	5500
Real Estate Investments Manager	NA	NA	4500	5100	NA	NA
Business Controller	2700	5000	3700	6000	4200	5500
Financial Controller	NA	NA	NA	NA	3000	3800
Accountant	NA	NA	2600	4000	NA	NA
Administration						
Office Manager	NA	NA	2400	3000	2500	3000
Human Resources						
HR Director (Group Member of the Management Board)	NA	NA	NA	NA	8000	10000
HR Manager (Region)	NA	NA	NA	NA	6000	8000
HR Manager (1 country)	3600	5000	NA	NA	3700	6300
IT Recruitment Specialist	NA	NA	3000	3800	NA	NA
Quality, Health & Safety, Environment						
Safety Manager (Business Unit)	5000	6000	5000	6000	5000	6000
HSE Manager (Field Manager)	3000	5000	NA	NA	4000	5500
Health and Safety Specialist	2200	2500	3000	3100	3000	3700
Risk Management and Internal Audit						
Head of Internal Auditing	NA	NA	4500	5500	4500	7500
Internal Auditor	NA	NA	NA	NA	4500	7000
Risk Management Manager	5000	6000	5000	6000	5000	7500
Insurance						
Claim Manager	4000	5500	5000	6000	4000	7000

MANUFACTURING, TECHNOLOGY, AND SUPPLY CHAIN

The business line is handled by Senior Recruitment Consultants Anni Paves and Madis Bachmann

Anni Paves
Senior Recruitment Consultant and Business Line Manager

Madis Bachmann
Senior Recruitment and Assessment Consultant, Trainer

In the bigger picture, the main challenge in manufacturing and technology remains **improving efficiency through better work organisation and smarter investment** – a theme that also dominated last year. In specialised niches, top performers are still difficult to find and even harder to persuade to move. Pay levels are already high and broadly comparable across companies, which means a higher offer alone is rarely enough to trigger a change. Engineers who combine strong technical expertise with fast learning ability and leadership potential are particularly sought after. We see that even strong manufacturing companies can struggle to attract and engage these candidates. At the same time, the underlying need is remarkably similar across clients: skilled planners and more modern tools. **Many companies are still effectively operating in survival or growth–preparation mode, which means every additional investment has to be weighed very carefully against its expected impact.**

The role of **Russian–language skills** in searches deserves its own mention. There are regions and sectors in Estonia where this skill is still needed, but the overall trend is declining – we repeatedly see strong candidates fall out of contention, or withdraw from the process, purely because of this requirement. When a search profile is already specific and the role's responsibilities are atypical, adding a Russian–language requirement on top shrinks the final candidate list considerably and significantly lengthens the search.

On the language front, it is also worth noting that the competitiveness of the **older generation in manufacturing is declining** due to limited English and insufficient digital skills – a dilemma in its own right, since this generation is often precisely the one with the strongest Russian–language skills. This is something for every client to weigh: is the requirement genuinely essential, or would it make more sense to support language development on the job – building the bridge from both sides, developing both the candidate's Russian and the organisation's Estonian?

Construction sector – confidence in growth and access to financing have recovered close to pre–crisis levels, but pressure on profitability and the need to control costs are still limiting the movement of talent between organisations. At the same time, **the share of infrastructure projects is increasing.** In the near term, we expect demand to grow for highly capable project managers and estimators, both in energy infrastructure and in building construction. Several strategically important infrastructure companies have also reached a point of executive turnover and strategy review. In the next strategic period, the emphasis is likely to shift less toward new investment and more toward improving efficiency and refining business models.

We are seeing a similar shift in the required skill profile in **supply chain** as we have already seen in finance. There is still an acute need for people with experience in digitalisation and automation, while the skills available in the existing candidate pool often reflect yesterday's needs rather than tomorrow's. As a result, companies are increasingly looking beyond traditional supply–chain backgrounds and bringing in talent from other functions, particularly people with finance experience.

MANUFACTURING, TECHNOLOGY, AND SUPPLY CHAIN

TRIPOD

Candidates' salary expectation eur/month (base gross)

Length of experience in this position	Junior (0-2 years)		Mid (2-5 years)		Senior (5+ years)	
Position	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Production						
Chairman of the Board / CEO	8000	9000	10000	10000	10000	14000
COO / Manager of Factories	4000	6000	7500	10000	8000	15000
Factory Manager	5000	6000	NA	NA	5000	10000
Production Director	4500	6000	NA	NA	NA	NA
Production Manager	2800	5000	3500	5000	3500	6000
Technical Director	NA	NA	4000	6000	5000	8500
Technical Manager	NA	NA	4400	4500	4800	6000
Welding Shope Foreman	NA	NA	NA	NA	3100	5000
Quality Manager (Production)	NA	NA	2500	4000	3500	4500
Product Safety Specialist	2300	2800	2500	3500	NA	NA
Laboratory Manager / Chemist	NA	NA	NA	NA	2100	4500
Supply Chain						
Purchase Director	NA	NA	NA	NA	6000	10000
Supply Chain Manager	3000	5200	4500	5000	4500	7500
Purchase Manager	NA	NA	4000	4500	4000	5000
Category Group Manager	3300	4500	4000	5000	4000	6000
Warehouse Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA	3000	3700
Supply Chain Analyst	NA	NA	2700	4200	2500	3500
Engineering (Production)						
Development Manager	4000	4500	4200	6000	NA	NA
Project Manager	NA	NA	3500	5500	4300	5500
Process Engineer	2600	4000	3200	4500	3700	4500
Product Development Engineer	2500	4000	3800	4000	4000	4300
Mechatronics Engineer	1600	2700	NA	NA	2500	3000

MANUFACTURING, TECHNOLOGY, AND SUPPLY CHAIN

Candidates' salary expectation eur/month (base gross)

Length of experience in this position	Junior (0-2 years)		Mid (2-5 years)		Senior (5+ years)	
Position	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Energy						
Head of Asset Management / Member of the Board	NA	NA	10000	14000	10000	14000
Business Development Manager / Member of the Board	10000	15000	10000	15000	NA	NA
Business Digitalization Manager	NA	NA	3200	5100	5000	7900
Head of Lines and Network Unit	4500	5000	5000	7000	6000	7000
Group Product Manager	NA	NA	5000	7300	7000	8000
Project Manager	NA	NA	4000	5000	NA	NA
Wind Energy Project Manager	2400	5000	4000	6700	4000	9000
Electrical Works Project Manager	NA	NA	3700	3800	NA	NA
Management (Constructions / RE)						
Department Manager	4000	6000	5000	8000	7000	8000
Key Account Manager (Real Estate)	2500	3400	NA	NA	3600	4000
Project Management (Construction / RE)						
Project Manager	2500	4000	2800	7000	3800	7000
Site Manager	2700	3900	3000	4000	3200	4500
Construction Cost Estimator	2800	3000	NA	NA	NA	NA

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology review is commented by Senior Recruitment and Assessment Consultant, Trainer Madis Bachmann.

Madis Bachmann
Senior Recruitment and Assessment Consultant, Trainer

IT remains the sector with the highest average pay in Estonia, which continues to be reflected in candidates' pay expectations. The dynamic described in the 2025 report – a market driven simultaneously by both employers and candidates, an overall decline in job postings, yet still–rising pay offers when hiring business leaders who bring clear development – appears to be continuing into 2026 as well, as investment in the technology sector generally recovers.

The market is clearly split in two. **Roles of medium complexity attract plenty of candidates, but when the challenge becomes more demanding, the pool narrows quickly** – and that is exactly where employers are prepared to pay more. This leads to a practical recommendation for clients: today's market does not mean that finding a top performer has suddenly become easier or cheaper. An average performer will not solve a genuinely difficult problem. If the role requires complex problem–solving, the organisation needs to be prepared to hire and compensate a top performer accordingly.

Top performers continue to look for challenging tasks, strong teams, and a clear vision backed by resources – pay alone is not a sufficient reason to move. The rapid development of AI keeps putting pressure on roles and responsibilities, which often makes replacing key people in organisations harder than before, since onboarding a new person takes longer in such a dynamic environment.

Specialist hiring shows a recurring trend: flexibility and work organisation carry weight comparable to pay itself for candidates – a deciding factor rather than a nice–to–have extra. Pay expectations here are often shaped more by the candidate's own career path and current stage of development than by the market situation alone.

For leadership roles, the job title alone only gives part of the picture – actual pay expectations are shaped more by the scope of responsibility and the decision–making authority that comes with the role.

It's also interesting how the **company's growth stage** shapes what leaders expect from a pay package. In a growth company, options or equity are seen as a natural part of pay, which allows flexibility on base salary; in a larger, more stable organisation, candidates instead expect clear agreements and autonomy.

Candidates who do not bring up pay in the first meeting are mostly those whose current level is already high – for them, pay is a secured starting point they do not need to raise separately. In regional or niche fields, the candidate pool is further narrowed by language requirements and the expectation of on–site presence – another factor for clients to weigh.

TRIPOD

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Candidates' salary expectation
eur/month (base gross)

Length of experience in this position	Junior (0-2 years)		Mid (2-5 years)		Senior (5+ years)	
Position	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Information Technology						
IT Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA	6000	13300
Head of Business Data and Insight	5500	7500	NA	NA	6500	13000
Head of Product Management	NA	NA	5000	6000	6500	8000
Software Development Manager	NA	NA	NA	NA	5500	8000
Solution Archtect	NA	NA	NA	NA	5700	8100
Quality and Process Manager	NA	NA	3900	4900	4000	5000
Service Manager	NA	NA	2600	3000	3800	5300
Project Manager	NA	NA	3000	4500	4000	5300
ABAP Developer	NA	NA	NA	NA	4000	7500
Infrastructure Engineer	NA	NA	4500	5800	NA	NA
Data Engineer	NA	NA	3000	5000	3000	6500
DevOps Engineer	NA	NA	3800	5500	4600	5500
IT partner	NA	NA	NA	NA	3300	5300
IT Coordinator	NA	NA	NA	NA	3300	5500
ERP Specialist	NA	NA	2500	5000	3000	5000
BI Specialist	NA	NA	2700	4500	4000	6000

MEDICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL,OTHER POSITIONS

Candidates' salary expectation
eur/month (base gross)

Length of experience in this position	Junior (0-2 years)		Mid (2-5 years)		Senior (5+ years)	
Position	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Pharmaceutical						
Territory Manager	2700	3700	NA	NA	2700	4700
Product Manager	NA	NA	2500	4500	3500	4500
Regulatory Affairs Associate	2300	3900	2500	3600	3500	6000
Science and Education						
Institute´s Head of Administration	NA	NA	3400	3700	3500	4700
Head of Research Administration	3500	3700	3500	4000	3500	4400
Public Service						
Adviser	NA	NA	2900	3900	3500	5300
Civil Service						
Lawyer in the Field of Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer	NA	NA	NA	NA	4000	5000

TRIPOD

Teamwork starts with people.

Through the right people, in the right roles, and with the right support, we help build better organisations. On this journey, we aim to be your first and best partner.

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We help create better organisations. We wish to be your first and best partner on that road.

Teamwork starts with **people**.

Tripod is an Estonian consultancy agency with over 30 years of experience in recruitment, organisational development and psychological testing.

RECRUITMENT

We do up to 200 searches per year

Tripod's strong advantage is that we **specialise in recruiting in specific areas**, and through this, we are able to go much deeper. The expertise of consultants specialised in various areas ensures in-depth knowledge of their field and a wide network of contacts.

We provide a **full recruitment and selection service** – from the initial brief to the selection of the right candidate.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS

40,000+ tests taken per year

Tripod tests help you make smarter people decisions. They give clear insight into how a person thinks, works, and what motivates them – supporting confident hiring and meaningful employee development.

All tests are scientifically validated and built on internationally recognised methods. They are developed in Estonia and carefully adapted for the Baltic context, ensuring relevance and reliability.

The psychological tests by Tripod measure personality and mental abilities and are widely used in organisations, education, and research to better understand people's strengths, working styles, and potential.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We have conducted more than 200 surveys, interviewed more than 100 000 respondents

Our surveys help organisations **gather structured feedback** to support development, leadership, and better cooperation.

We offer **a full service** – from designing the survey to analysing results and giving clear, practical recommendations.

The organisational development team also includes **training and coaching activities.**

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We help find practical and effective solutions that support the development of leaders and teams and enable organisations to reach the next level.

Together, we create clarity, set goals, and find the best ways to implement meaningful change and achieve sustainable results.