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SKILLS REVOLUTION – 2021

36 % of Belgian companies are accelerating their digitization as a result of the pandemic

ManpowerGroup's new 'Skills Revolution' study highlights skills shortages for digital transformation, as a two-speed, K-shaped recovery begins

Brussels, May 18th 2021 – Across all industries, the Covid-19 pandemic has given an unprecedented boost to digital transformation. Remote work and collaboration, increased demand for online products and services, adoption of new technologies, are some aspects of this upheaval. While digitization is no longer an option, it is not without challenges. The new ManpowerGroup Skills Revolution survey was conducted with more than 26,000 employers in 40 countries, including Belgium. It analyzed the impact of the pandemic on digitization, automation and recruitment plans, by highlighting evidence of the skills required in this new era. There is one key observation: HR will play a crucial role as a two-speed, K-shaped recovery begins.

An unprecedented, but contrasting digital transformation

In the space of a few months, the health crisis will have propelled digital transformation forward by several years. According to a study by [McKinsey](#) (1), this equates to a leap of three years for European companies in terms of the digitalization of interactions with customers. The acceleration represents a leap of 7 years for the creation of digital products and services, compared to the growth rate of the pre-Covid 19 period. The study, conducted by Manpower Group, confirms this trend.

Belgian companies are accelerating their digitization and automation due to the pandemic – 36% are speeding up, while 15% have put plans on hold. 48% of employers continued their projects at the same pace. The good news is that this evolution is not having a negative impact on employment, quite the contrary. **The number of jobs created exceeds those destroyed.** According to the survey, more jobs are being created than eliminated – **in Belgium, 91% of employers that are automating, plan to increase or maintain their headcount**, compared to just 6% of employers who plan to reduce or pause plans to automate.

Companies that are digitizing the most are the ones increasing market shares and creating most jobs. Who are they? In Belgium, like in the 40 countries surveyed, the acceleration of digital transformation differs according to the size of companies: **medium-sized** companies (50-250 employees) and **large** companies (more than 250 employees) have been more proactive with 29% and 21% of them, respectively, who have stepped up their digital efforts. Conversely, the smallest structures, more severely affected by the crisis, have suspended more of their digital and recruitment projects: 16% of **small businesses** (10- 50 employees) and only 11% of **micro businesses** (less than 10 employees), were able to invest more in digital during the Covid crisis.

Among the **sectors of activity**, **Construction** has worked hard to go digital: the survey found three times more companies that have accelerated their **transformation projects** than companies that have put them on hold (23% against 7%). The trend is also positive, although to a lesser extent, in the **finance, insurance, real estate and business services** (14% vs. 7%), while in **manufacturing**, there are more businesses that have taken a wait-and-see attitude to their transformation (21% vs. 36%). Lastly, the results are balanced in the **Retail sector**, where the number of companies that have become automated is identical to those that have put their plans on hold. (24%).



All companies must find new models to accomplish their past activity, or else completely reinvent themselves, the study suggests. Faced with the closure of many points of sale, the clothing sector, for example, has been creative: online presentations and fashion shows, testing products in augmented reality, etc. All sectors combined, e-commerce is no longer marginal: [Belgians' online spending increased by a third during the pandemic](#).

Emergence of a K-shaped recovery and the 3 R's of the Skills Revolution

According to ManpowerGroup, we are seeing the emergence of a two-speed, K-shaped recovery. **Some industries and individuals are bouncing back faster and better than others**. These are growth sectors, particularly in technologies, digital communication, logistics, health and consultancy services. Many profiles are in demand there, whether they are project managers, engineers, data or risk analysts, digital communication specialists or IT professionals. **On the other side of K**, sectors and individuals risk falling further behind, lagging when confronted with these transformations in the economic world. These are companies that have not invested enough in digital technology and have mainly administrative or low-skilled profiles.

*"By stimulating digitization, the health crisis has increased the **polarisation** of the workforce between those who have the skills and those who do not, or not enough" explains Philippe Lacroix, Managing Director of ManpowerGroup . **"Today, the priority on the job market is to help individuals to train in new skills, to upgrade those they already have, or to reorient them towards positions in trades where there are shortages**. HR functions are becoming key stakeholders in this digital transformation. The same is true for our sector, and Manpower in particular, at the heart of the job market. **Our study highlighted the "3Rs" of the Skills Revolution: renewal, reorientation, and redeployment**. Our new global **MyPath®** program is focused on talent development and the **IT services** of our Experis brand, offer innovative solutions to the challenges of digital transformation. "*

Soft Skills + Hard Skills = Human Power: Develop technical and behavioral skills

As organizations transform and digitize at speed and scale, **skills needs are transforming** too. According to [the Davos Economic Forum](#), by 2025, humans and machines will split work-related tasks 50-50, while 97 million new jobs will emerge in AI, the Green economy and the Care economy. **While the importance of technical skills is undeniable, human skills enhance the employability and resilience of individuals**. However, the ManpowerGroup Skills Revolution study highlights a lack of training in this area: 39% of employers surveyed in Belgium said they had difficulty training their staff in the technical skills most in demand and 45% had even more difficulty teaching them the required soft skills. In a [recent report](#), the Davos Forum identifies precisely these **"behavioral" skills of the future - the much talked about soft skills -: critical and analytical thinking, complex problem solving, resilience, stress management and flexibility**.

Faced with the difficulties employers experience in sourcing and retaining profiles, ManpowerGroup has launched the **MyPath® program** to support talents confronted with **employability** issues by offering them training courses that promote the acquisition of these new skills, both technical and behavioral. The program is combined with **training courses** set up in academies at Manpower, in particular for logistics and technical profiles, at Experis for IT profiles and at Jefferson Wells for profiles in finance, engineering and life sciences.

Concurrently, through its **Experis** brand, a world leader in its segment, ManpowerGroup **supports organizations with their digital transformation by providing digital services with high added value**. With the development of automation, e-business or teleworking, the demand for services and expertise has increased, in particular in cybersecurity, the cloud, and infrastructure, application management and digital workspace. ManpowerGroup intends to respond by placing people at the heart of its approach.



(1) How Covid-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point – and transformed business forever - October 5, 2020 | Survey

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever>

(2) Créditexpo.be – 07 january

<https://www.creditexpo.be/fr/en-2020-les-ventes-de-produits-en-ligne-ont-augmente-aussi-rapidement-pendant-le-confinement-que-len-periode-de-reouverture-des-commerces/>



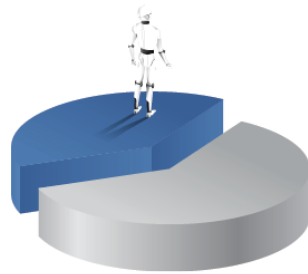
THE EMERGENCE OF K-SHAPED, TWO SPEED RECOVERY



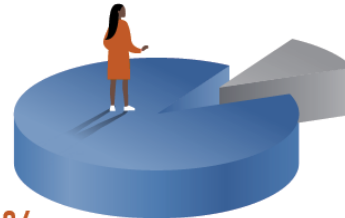
2021: SKILLS REVOLUTION



THOSE COMPANIES THAT ARE DIGITIZING MOST ARE CREATING MOST JOBS



36% of Belgian companies are accelerating their digitization and automation as a result of the pandemic

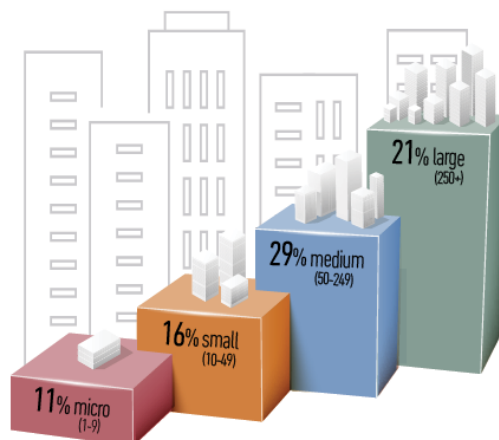


91% of employers in Belgium that are automating plan to increase or maintain their headcount

2021: SKILLS REVOLUTION

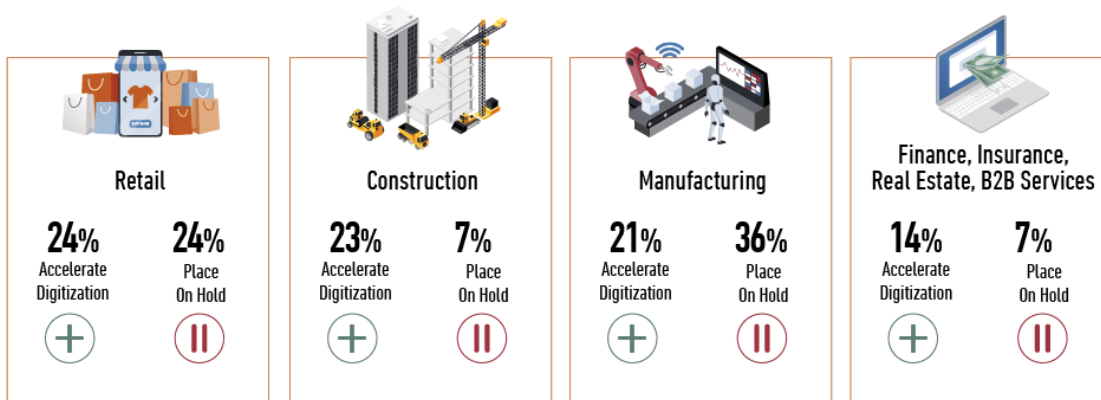


MEDIUM AND LARGE COMPANIES IN BELGIUM ARE MOST LIKELY TO ACCELERATE DIGITIZATION AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC





BELGIAN EMPLOYERS ARE SPLIT: AUTOMATE NOW? OR HOLD FOR LATER



About ManpowerGroup

ManpowerGroup® (NYSE: MAN), the leading global workforce solutions company, helps organizations transform in a fast-changing world of work by sourcing, assessing, developing and managing the talent that enables them to win. We develop innovative solutions for hundreds of thousands of organizations every year, providing them with skilled talent while finding meaningful, sustainable employment for millions of people across a wide range of industries and skills. Our expert family of brands – Manpower, Experis, Talent Solutions and Jefferson Wells – creates substantial value for candidates and clients across 80 countries and territories and has done so for over 70 years. We are recognized consistently for our diversity - as a best place to work for Women, Inclusion, Equality and Disability. In 2021, ManpowerGroup was named one of the World’s Most Ethical Companies for the twelfth consecutive year. We also earned globally and in Belgium a Platinum and a Gold CSR & sustainability rating on EcoVadis’s environmental, social and ethical supplier performance assessment. ManpowerGroup Belgium received the Diversity Label from the Brussels-Capital Region and was named ‘Best Staffing, Sourcing & Contingent Workforce Company’ at the HR Excellence Awards 2020. All these recognitions confirm our position as the brand of choice for in-demand talent.

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