



# 2026 GUIDE TO HIRING IN FORENSICS, INVESTIGATIONS & DISPUTES: EMEA

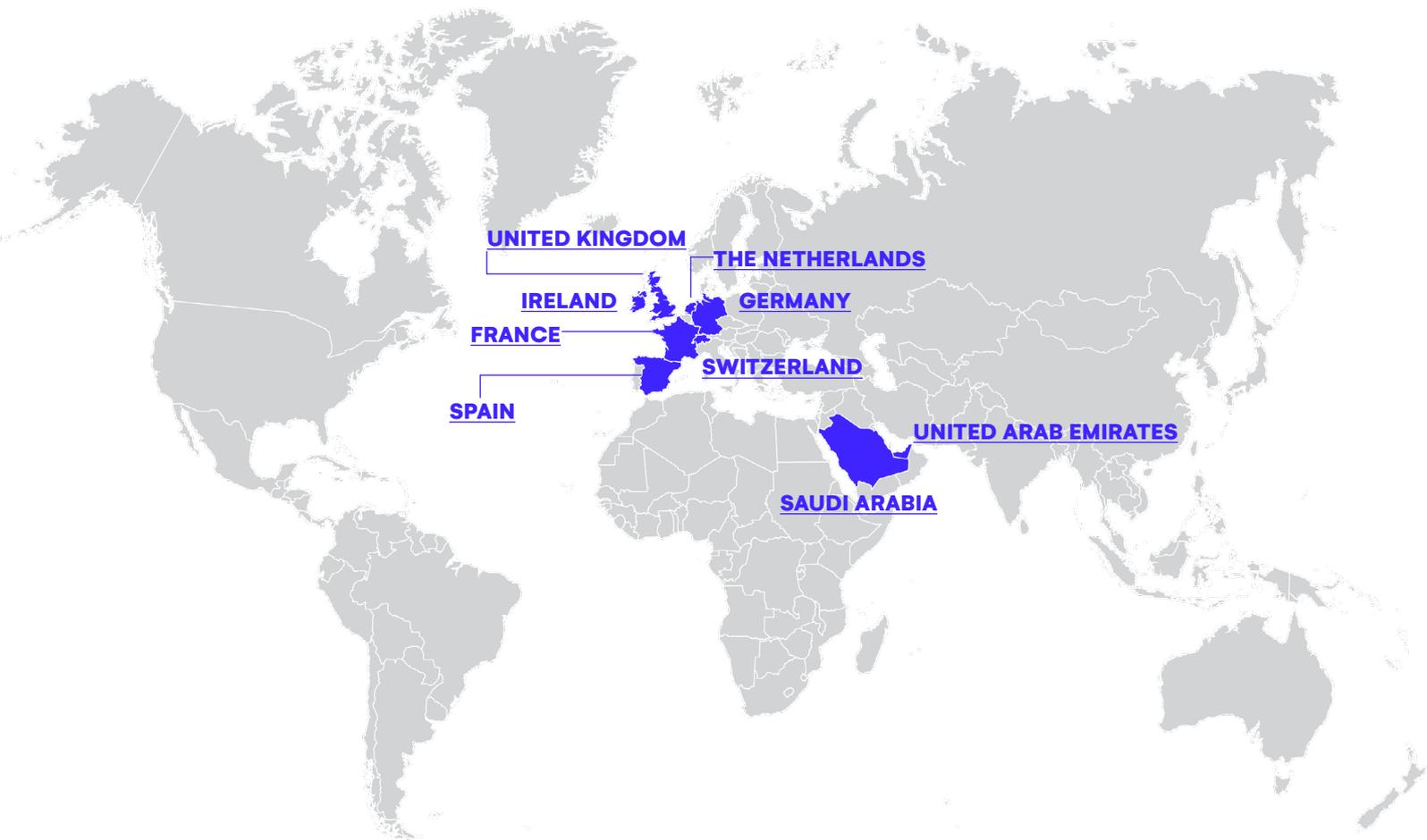
2026





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# 01.

## INTRODUCTION

**The forensics, investigations and disputes hiring market across EMEA was a tale of two halves in 2025. After a quieter start to the year, hiring eventually picked up to its highest level for 3 years.**

In the last year, we've seen firms increasingly invest in new specialisms, as the forensic industry becomes increasingly driven by niche knowledge. Intellectual property, post-deal disputes, cryptocurrency and digital asset investigations, business intelligence, and matrimonial disputes have been the busiest areas. The era of the 'generalist' forensic accountant appears to be over.

Private Equity investment in professional services is driving expansion into new markets and geographies. Firms of all shapes and sizes, from global players to local boutiques, are building teams led by world-class experts. We've continued to see interest from US firms that want to expand into the UK, France, and Germany, and many firms have invested significant capital into their Saudi Arabian offices, making it their regional headquarters (RHQ) to be eligible for government contracts.

Hiring managers are prioritising candidates with a strong foundation in accounting or valuations – typically 2–4 years of audit or advisory experience plus ACCA, CFA or equivalent credentials – while also seeking professionals who can navigate large datasets, apply digital forensics techniques and demonstrate fluency in sanctions, AML, and cross-border transactions.

As firms invest in these new areas, they are facing increased competition to hire new staff and a renewed battle to retain their existing employees. Staff retention rates for the last 12–18 months have averaged 13% across the industry, but this has, in part, been kept artificially low by a lack of competitors hiring.

As the market heats up in 2026, we expect to see attrition rates rise. Firms should get ahead of this by carrying out specific benchmarking exercises to ensure they remain competitive with pay, benefits and culture. Our Talent Intelligence Plus service is here if you need help carrying out this benchmarking.

Together, these dynamics point to a market where demand will remain strong and where skill sets will continue to evolve rapidly.

In this guide, we will examine some of the issues and trends currently impacting the forensics accounting market in 2026, and provide salary guides for key counties across EMEA: UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.



### Adam Nelson

Head of Forensics,  
Investigations & Disputes  
Leonid Group





## 02.

# WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

The ideal FID candidate in 2026 is a **hybrid professional**. Employers prioritise a strong foundational core, typically consisting of 2–4 years in audit or transaction advisory services, complemented by a qualification such as the ACA, ACCA, or CFA. However, this foundation is now merely the entry ticket.

**The critical differentiators are specialised skills in high-demand areas like intellectual property disputes, post-M&A conflicts, cryptocurrency tracing, and complex matrimonial asset divisions.**

Fluency in the regulatory landscapes of sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) is virtually mandatory. Crucially, technical accounting knowledge must be paired with advanced data analytics capabilities: the ability to navigate, interrogate, and derive insights from large datasets using digital forensics techniques is no longer a “nice-to-have”, but a core requirement.

At the Partner/MD level, a transferable book of business remains the top priority. Many firms are expecting Partners to deliver revenue at a faster pace than in previous years. Particularly at PE backed firms, the expectations are that Partners are delivering consistent revenue by the 12–18-month mark. Current economic conditions mean that a 2–3-year runway has all but disappeared.



## 03.

# WHAT CANDIDATES ARE LOOKING FOR

In a market where talent is scarce, professionals are becoming increasingly selective. Competitive remuneration remains paramount, but the “war for talent” is being fought on multiple fronts.

### Candidates are seeking:

- **Purposeful Work:** Engagement on high-profile, complex cases that challenge their skills.
- **Career Progression:** Clear pathways to partnership or senior leadership roles, accelerated by the market’s growth.
- **Expert Opportunities:** Experienced candidates are looking for firms that will support their ambitions of becoming an expert in their own right.
- **Specialisation Opportunities:** The chance to deepen their expertise in a niche, future-proof practice area.
- **Flexibility and Culture:** A hybrid working model is now an expectation, not a benefit. A positive, supportive, and inclusive firm culture is a key retention tool.
- **Global Mobility:** Especially within the larger firms, opportunities for secondments or transfers to key international hubs like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, or the US are highly attractive.



## 04.

# CURRENT TRENDS & TALKING POINTS

**The Rise of the Specialist:** The era of the generalist forensic accountant is over at many firms. Most are building dedicated teams around world-class experts in specific domains.

**Private Equity Influence:** PE investment in professional services is fuelling expansion, enabling mid-size firms to challenge global players and driving geographic expansion into new markets.

**Geographic Shifts:** There is significant capital flowing into the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, as firms establish Regional Headquarters (RHQ) to qualify for government contracts. Simultaneously, US firms continue their aggressive expansion into major European markets.

**The Retention Challenge:** With hiring at a three-year high, attrition rates are expected to climb significantly from the artificially low levels of 2024–2025. Firms that fail to benchmark their compensation and benefits packages risk a debilitating exodus of key staff.



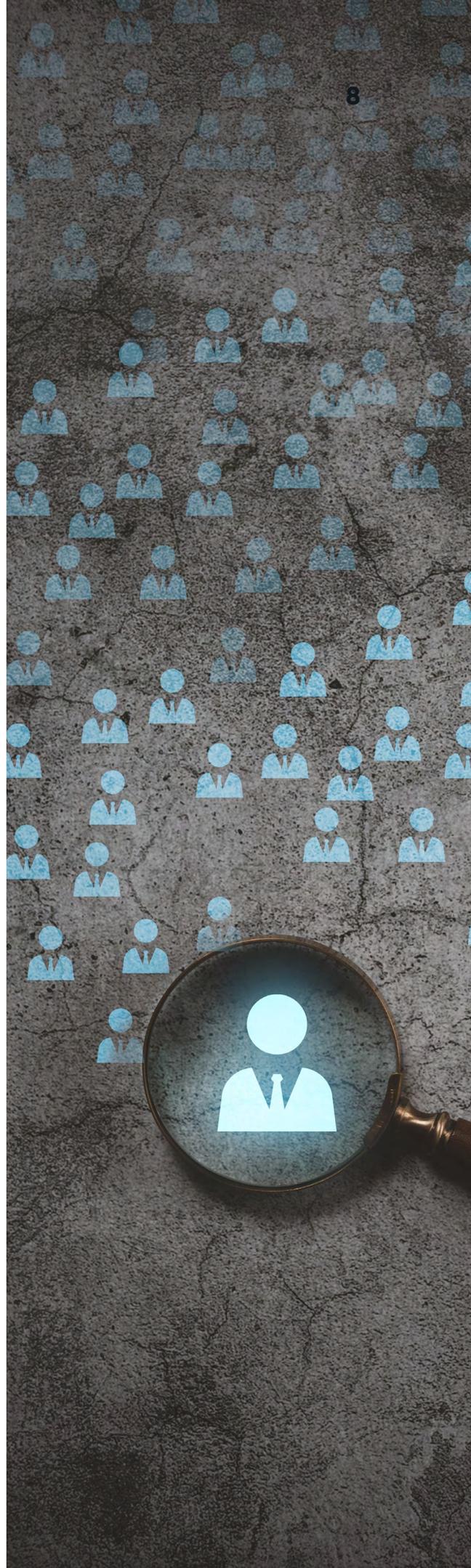


## 05. CHALLENGES IN HIRING

The primary challenge is the sheer scarcity of professionals who possess the required blend of deep accounting knowledge, niche specialism, and digital/analytical prowess.

This skills gap is leading to elongated hiring processes and significant salary inflation, particularly in financial centres like London, Dubai and Frankfurt

Furthermore, the competitive intensity means firms are not just competing with each other, but also with in-house legal and compliance teams from the banking and technology sectors for the same talent pool.





## 06.

# SALARY GUIDES

### UNITED KINGDOM

*The UK market remains the deepest and most mature in EMEA, but it is also the most competitive. London is a global hub for high-stakes litigation and complex regulatory investigations, particularly relating to financial services. We're seeing enormous demand for professionals with expertise in financial crime, sanctions, and asset tracing. The challenge here is pure cost; salary expectations are soaring, and firms must offer a top-tier package, including a clear route to partnership, to secure the best candidates from the Big Four and leading boutiques.*

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (POUND)
ASSOCIATE	£30,000 – £45,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	£42,000 – £70,000
MANAGER	£55,000 – £90,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	£68,000 – £115,000
DIRECTOR	£85,000 – £140,000
PARTNER	£150,000 – £300,000+





## IRELAND

**“** Dublin’s significance continues to grow, fuelled by its status as a European HQ for numerous technology and pharmaceutical giants. This drives a very specific demand for forensic professionals skilled in IP-related disputes, post-acquisition disagreements and data analytics. The talent pool – while high-quality – is limited, leading to intense competition between domestic firms and the international players with a strong local presence.

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.* **”**

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
ASSOCIATE	€35,000 – €60,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	€55,000 – €80,000
MANAGER	€75,000 – €100,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	€90,000 – €130,000
DIRECTOR	€120,000 – €170,000
PARTNER	€140,000 – €300,000+

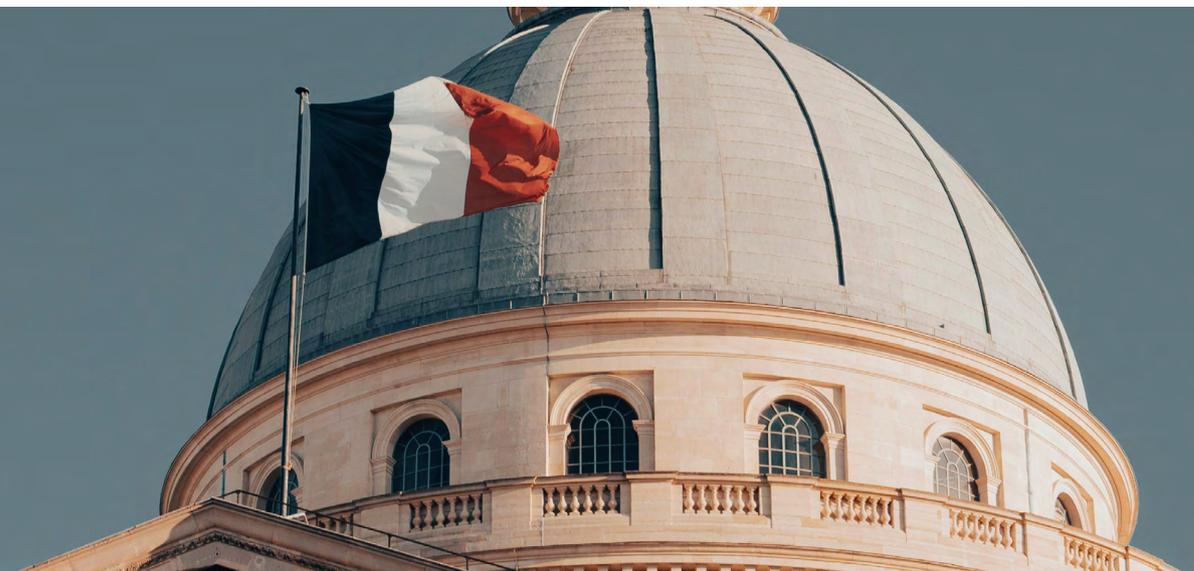


## FRANCE

Paris is a centre for large-scale corporate investigations and arbitration work. There is a strong focus on cross-border mandates, often with a link to Francophone Africa, requiring language skills and cultural understanding. French firms highly value a rigorous educational background from grandes écoles, combined with international experience. The market is busy with ESG-related investigations and compliance reviews, a trend we see accelerating.

Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
ASSOCIATE	€33,000 – €48,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	€48,000 – €65,000
MANAGER	€60,000 – €85,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	€80,000 – €115,000
DIRECTOR	€110,000 – €180,000
PARTNER	€150,000 – €300,000+





## GERMANY

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*Frankfurt, Munich, and Düsseldorf are the key drivers of the German FID market. The engine here is the Mittelstand and the country’s industrial base, leading to significant work on post-transaction dispute resolution and warranty claims. There is also a growing pipeline of complex white-collar crime investigations. German employers are pragmatic; they seek technically excellent accountants with strong language skills and a meticulous approach to process.*  
”

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
ASSOCIATE	€40,000 – €58,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	€55,000 – €90,000
MANAGER	€75,000 – €115,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	€90,000 – €140,000
DIRECTOR	€110,000 – €190,000
PARTNER	€160,000 – €300,000+





## THE NETHERLANDS

**“** Amsterdam’s international and business-friendly environment makes it a hotspot for investigations linked to international trade, sanctions breaches, and corporate fraud. The Dutch market is sophisticated and candidates often have exceptional language abilities and a commercial mindset. Competition for talent is fierce, with firms often needing to look abroad to fill specialised roles, particularly in the digital forensics space.

**”**

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
ASSOCIATE	€38,000 — €58,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	€58,000 — €78,000
MANAGER	€74,000 — €95,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	€90,000 — €120,000
DIRECTOR	€105,000 — €150,000
PARTNER	€140,000 — €300,000+





## SPAIN

“*Madrid and Barcelona are seeing a steady increase in activity, particularly in the realms of commercial litigation and fraud investigations. The market is developing a more specialised approach, moving beyond traditional generalist accounting. While the local talent pool is strong, the very top candidates often have international experience, which they bring back to Spanish firms or the local offices of global networks.*”

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
ASSOCIATE	€35,000 — €45,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	€45,000 — €60,000
MANAGER	€55,000 — €90,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	€70,000 — €110,000
DIRECTOR	€100,000 — €150,000
PARTNER	€150,000 — €350,000





## SWITZERLAND

*The Swiss market is unique, defined by its privacy culture and global wealth management industry. This generates highly discrete, complex work in areas like matrimonial disputes, private bank-related investigations and arbitration. Fluency in German, French, and/or Italian is often a prerequisite. It's a niche and insular market where reputation and deep, trusted relationships are everything.*

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
ASSOCIATE	CHF 75,000 – CHF 100,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	CHF 100,000 – CHF 125,000
MANAGER	CHF 125,000 – CHF 160,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	CHF 155,000 – CHF 225,000
DIRECTOR	CHF 180,000 – CHF 275,000
PARTNER	CHF 240,000 – CHF 500,000+





## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**“Dubai remains the undisputed commercial hub of the Middle East, and its FID market is booming. The demand is broad: from financial crime and AML in the banking sector to complex commercial disputes and asset recovery. The market is incredibly international, and firms are hiring aggressively, often sourcing talent from the UK, South Africa and Asia. Retention is a key challenge as professionals are frequently presented with new, lucrative opportunities**

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

**”**

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AED)
ASSOCIATE	AED 180,000 – AED 240,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	AED 192,000 – AED 300,000
MANAGER	AED 300,000 – AED 480,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	AED 380,000 – AED 600,000
DIRECTOR	AED 500,000 – AED 720,000
PARTNER	AED 600,000 – AED 1,000,000+





## SAUDI ARABIA

**“** Riyadh is the single most dynamic market in EMEA for 2026. The RHQ programme has triggered an influx of investment, with every major global and regional firm significantly scaling up its presence. The demand is across the board — from infrastructure-related disputes and government contract work to the investigations arising from the rapid economic transformation. Hiring here is a primary strategic focus for all players, and experienced professionals with a willingness to relocate are commanding premium packages.

*Adam Nelson, Head of FIDS Recruitment, Leonid Group talent marketplace.*

**”**

JOB TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SAR)
ASSOCIATE	SAR 192,000 — SAR 230,000
SENIOR ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT MANAGER	SAR 216,000 — SAR 290,000
MANAGER	SAR 310,000 — SAR 500,000
SENIOR MANAGER / ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	SAR 400,000 — SAR 620,000
DIRECTOR	SAR 550,000 — SAR 800,000
PARTNER	SAR 600,000 — 1,300,000+



# 07.

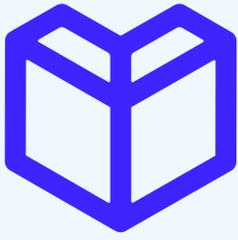
## THE 2026 OUTLOOK

Demand for FID services across EMEA will remain strong throughout 2026, driven by economic uncertainty, increased regulatory scrutiny, and a rising tide of commercial disputes. The skill sets required will continue to evolve at a rapid pace, with AI and machine learning tools becoming more integrated into investigative workflows. Firms that proactively address retention, invest in specialist training, and offer a compelling value proposition beyond salary will be best positioned to thrive in this dynamic and demanding market.

### Hiring in the USA?

Leonid has also produced a guide to hiring in Forensics, Investigations & Disputes in the US market. It includes salary guides for specific states and key cities. You can download your copy [here](#).





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## Ready to get in touch with us?

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