

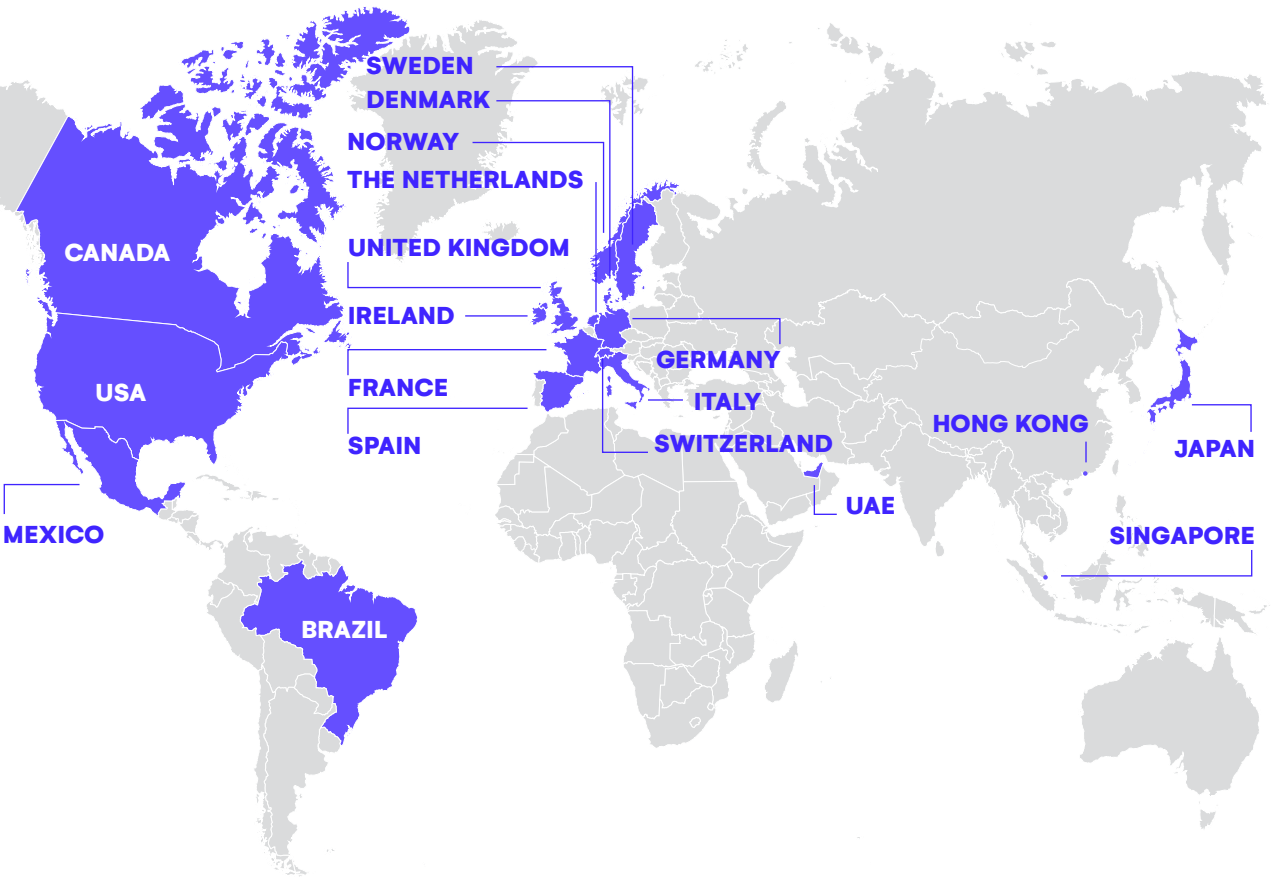
GLOBAL HIRING GUIDE: IN-HOUSE LEGAL

Salary data and hiring considerations, country by country



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01.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Leonid's Global Hiring Guide for in-house legal roles.

We will start by taking a look at some of the key global issues which have affected how legal teams operate around the globe, then move onto a country-by-country overview, which should act as a useful reference guide for anyone hiring overseas. We provide average salary ranges*, along with key hiring considerations, both cultural and practical.

*As with all salary guides, it's important to understand the factors that impact where on the range a particular role should sit; this includes things like sector pay differentials, scope of role and seniority within a job title (which may sometimes include an understanding of PQE ranges). For bespoke advice on salary bandings, please get in contact with [Phil Redhead](#), Head of Legal at Leonid Group, directly.

The contentious trade relationship between the U.S. and China continues to impact trade routes around the world as companies respond to various tariffs and sanctions, sometimes by creating supply chains that circumvent China altogether.

Cost-control remains a top priority

The pressure to do more with less has been a key theme throughout 2023 and only looks set to continue through 2024.

Research from the [Thomson Reuters Institute](#) found that 65% of corporate law departments are experiencing increasing workloads, driven primarily by growing global regulatory complexity, along with fallout from the global economic slowdown.



As such, more organisations anticipate a rise in their legal spend, in spite of the pressures to keep costs as low as possible. It creates a disconnect between the desire to keep the team lean and the unpredictable nature of work, due to the volatile geopolitical conditions. This is a trend affecting almost every geography and industry sector.

ESG and regulatory compliance

In-house lawyers are the protectors of an organisation and its reputation. So it is logical that ESG compliance — which is a huge area of focus now for businesses, investors and consumers — will, to varying degrees, become the remit of the legal team. As such, demand for expertise in ESG compliance is soaring, and organisations are increasingly looking to their General Counsel to drive and implement a robust and effective ESG strategy.

That said, in large organisations, there are likely to be multiple stakeholder groups involved in ESG compliance, such as risk, sustainability and compliance teams. Therefore, General Counsels must be skilled in cross-functional working and managing competing interests, while acting in the best interests of their employer.

ESG is not the sole focus, however, when it comes to regulatory issues. Legal departments are working hard to keep up with a range of other global compliance concerns, such as changing securities regulations, geopolitical tensions, anti-money laundering efforts, cybersecurity and data privacy.



The adoption of generative AI

New AI platforms are emerging on an almost daily basis. This form of technology is playing an increasing role in the legal sector — as with just about every other sector — already powering legal research platforms. According to the [Future Ready Lawyer survey](#), 73% of legal professionals plan to integrate GenAI into their work in 2024.

Some of the ways in which generative AI can assist an in-house legal team include:

- Document review and summaries
- Legal research
- Drafting memoranda, contracts, clauses, email, legal briefs, and motions
- M&A due diligence
- Simplifying text for employees not familiar with legal jargon
- Creating checklists
- Redlining documents
- Editing your writing

The adoption of generative AI is a trend we expect to see accelerating throughout 2024.

Talent Management, Recruitment and Retention

The biggest challenge for in-house legal teams remains the high salary benchmark set by private practice firms, which in turn creates inflationary pressure on salaries in-house, especially at the junior end of the market. To counter this, we are seeing a number of businesses extending their wider benefits offering to include greater flexibility, performance-related bonuses and earlier introduction to long term incentive plans normally reserved for higher seniorities.

The demand for specialist expertise, especially in growth areas like ESG compliance or AI regulatory and privacy issues is creating talent shortages globally.

The industry is also under increasing pressure to improve levels of diversity and inclusion, especially with regards to hiring practices. This is why at Leonid, rather than advertise most of our roles, we offer a proactive headhunt methodology and innovative video shortlisting — [LeonidLive](#) – to ensure a fair, balanced and inclusive recruitment process.





02.

REGIONAL & COUNTRY GUIDES

2.1 AMERICAS — SUMMARY

The evolution of in-house legal teams

Across the Americas, the optics of the in-house legal team is firmly shifting from business blocking cost centres to business enabling strategic advisors. This is likely to continue, given the volatility of the geopolitical landscape, the uncertainty posed by the upcoming US presidential election and the recent changes of government in Argentina. In-house legal teams have a broad view of their organisation and offer a different perspective. A key skill for success for any in-house lawyer is being adept at responding to unforeseen events.

The culture of in-house legal continues to change, too, something which really began post-pandemic. Where roles have continued to shift to a hybrid or more remote basis, ways of working are having to adapt to ensure junior lawyers can still learn by osmosis and develop the key softer skills like collaboration, communication, interpersonal skills as well as adaptability.

Data privacy and cyber security

Privacy continues to be a hot topic in law, politics — and indeed in everyday life, in the Americas. With GDPR, CCPA and other privacy laws continuing to affect companies' business practices and 12 states in America enacting comprehensive consumer privacy laws, the landscape is constantly changing and it falls to lawyers to keep up; offering the right balance between privacy rights versus business interests.

General Counsels tend to be handed responsibility for data privacy. This is especially true in North America. From an organisational perspective, it makes sense to make use of the legal team's expertise to navigate this complex area. Increasingly, however, these roles are being taken out of the legal team and a standalone data privacy team is formed, led by a data privacy officer.

Leonid's Global Guide to Data Privacy will be the next guide in this series and it will take a deeper dive into this sector, its challenges and opportunities.

Meanwhile, cybercriminals are constantly finding new and clever ways to exploit vulnerabilities, so having a legal team on hand to assist organisations in identifying and mitigating threats of security breaches and responding to attacks is now non-negotiable.

Large organisations will now typically have a dedicated cyber security team. However, it is crucial that in-house legal teams upskill in this area, as they will undoubtedly be involved in this niche. They will need to understand the process for response procedures, cyber due diligence, risk management, evaluation of insider threats and monitoring regulatory changes.

In the following section, we look at country-specific hiring considerations and salary bands.

Please note that this is a guide only, based on placements we have made over the past twelve months and local benchmarking data. As with all salary guides, it's important to understand the factors that impact where on the range a particular role should sit; this includes things like sector pay differentials, scope of role and seniority within a job title (which may sometimes include an understanding of PQE ranges).



USA

With a GDP of more than USD\$23 trillion, the United States is a leader in several key industries, including technology, oil and gas and renewable energy. The country has one of the largest tech markets in the world, with four cities ranking in the top 10 for global fintech, including Silicon Valley (#1) and Boston (#7).

The United States workforce serves as the backbone of its economy. Employment rates have been steadily rising, with the notable exception of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to the phenomenon coined as the “Great Resignation,” prompting workers to contemplate the trajectory of their lives.

We are now seeing a re-stabilisation of the employment market, and the Corporate Governance world is no exception.

The US is an exciting place to work and to do business with, but in terms of hiring, it does bring a degree of complexity due to a number of stringent labour laws.

Ease of doing business ranking = 6

CAPITAL	Washington
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English
POPULATION	332 million
PAYROLL	Varies; usually weekly or bi-weekly
CURRENCY	US Dollars (USD)
VAT	Nil



Hiring Considerations

- Most companies in the U.S. operate on an ‘at-will’ basis. This means that employees can leave their jobs at any time, for any reason. Companies can terminate their employees’ service – with a few exceptions – without giving notice or providing redundancy pay.
- Many companies do give notice as a courtesy, but the law does not require it. Some companies also negotiate severance pay, especially for higher-level executives.
- The practice of at-will employment means signing formal employment contracts is not a common practice in the U.S. Some companies use them, especially for key executives or other important members of a firm. However, contracts are not standard.
- The standard workweek in the U.S. consists of 40 hours — eight hours per day, five days per week. However, variations on this schedule are common.
- There is no legal requirement to give paid holidays; however, on average, US workers will take 10 vacation days per year.

Cultural Considerations

- In the US, business culture places a strong emphasis on equality and non-discrimination. This is reinforced by numerous laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin in any aspect of employment.
- The ‘hustle mentality’ is a prominent aspect of the work culture in the United States. It encompasses a mindset that emphasises relentless effort, ambition, and a constant drive for success. It is deeply ingrained in the American work ethic, with many professionals adopting a “work hard, play hard” approach to their careers.

“The US has one of the most developed in-house legal markets in the world and this is one of the reasons it’s a very significant region for us at Leonid. The competition for legal talent is as fierce as ever especially in key markets in New York, LA and San Francisco.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE USA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$84,000 – \$130,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	\$100,500 – \$240,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$230,000 – \$430,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$240,500 – \$450,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$300,000 – \$1,100,000

CANADA

Canada has a robust economic base, low taxes, abundant natural resources, and a stable political climate. These factors create an environment for international businesses to flourish. When it comes to ease of payment for small to medium-sized businesses, Canada has one of the lowest tax burdens among the G7 countries.

Canada's economy is also one of the most resilient in the world, with a GDP of \$1.98 trillion in 2023.

Hiring in Canada has become increasingly popular among foreign companies as the country offers a diverse and highly skilled labour force.

Ease of doing business ranking = 23

CAPITAL	Ottawa
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English, French
POPULATION	38.7 million
PAYROLL	Bi - weekly
CURRENCY	Canadian Dollars (CAD)
VAT	5%



Hiring Considerations

- Canada is officially a bilingual country, home to both English and French speakers. Fluency in English will be enough to navigate around the vast majority of Canadian cities and provinces.
- Each province in Canada has its own employment standards legislation that outlines minimum requirements for employment relationships. These standards cover areas such as hours of work, overtime pay, vacation entitlement, public holidays and termination notice.

Cultural Considerations

- Canadian workplaces are typically friendly and non-hierarchical compared with other nations, and there is a strong emphasis on harmonious and social environments. Therefore, friendly chatter — or small talk — is very much the norm when meeting Canadian workers.
- Punctuality and good manners are both expected and highly valued.

“The Canadian Corporate Counsel Association’s latest research noted an expected 50% increase in in-house demand for workflows across data privacy and risk & compliance. As we’re seeing this translate into larger in-house legal budgets, we’re expecting Canada to remain an important market for us.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE CANADA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CAD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$90,000 – \$140,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	\$120,000 – \$180,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$160,000 – \$200,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$190,000 – \$300,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$270,000 – \$600,000

BRAZIL

As the largest and most populous country in South America and the eighth-largest economy in the world, Brazil is an attractive place for companies looking to expand globally. Brazil does however present some challenges for international companies, with strong employment laws in place that favour local employees.

Ease of doing business ranking = 124

CAPITAL	Brasília
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Portuguese
POPULATION	212 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Brazilian Real (R\$)
VAT	VAT on Sales and Services are PIS/COFINS — at 9.25%, & Municipal Service Tax (ISS) with rates varying from 2 to 5% depending on the Municipality in which the company is located.



Hiring Considerations

- In addition to regular pay, employees in Brazil are entitled to a 13th-month salary paid in 2 instalments each year; usually split across November and December. The 13th-month payment is a legal benefit and is not part of the base salary.
- Unions and collective bargaining agreements are common in Brazil.
- The working week is 44 hours, which can be divided across the five weekdays or can be eight hours Monday through Friday with a half-day on Saturdays. When employees work overtime, they should receive 1.5 times their usual hourly wages or double their usual pay if it is a holiday or Sunday.
- Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in South America, and Spanish — the prevailing language throughout the rest of the continent — is not a very common second language for Brazilians. It is expected that employees in Brazil will speak a good level of Portuguese.

Cultural Considerations

- Despite the friendly atmosphere among teams, there are strict hierarchies that are routinely followed when it comes to decision-making. Typically, only the most senior leaders will make the important decisions, and often without consulting more junior colleagues.
- Brazilians often prefer working with either people they know, or, with someone who has been recommended — which means it can take time for an unknown outsider to gain trust.
- Brazilians are notoriously ‘time fluid’, so it’s not unusual for meetings to start late or for deadlines to be extended.

“Brazil has experienced some significant growth across its Real Estate, Healthcare and Technology sectors leading to an increased demand for law firms specialising in these areas but also in-house counsel. It’s an incredibly important region for LATAM headquarters and we’re always keen to provide our expertise to searches in this area.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE BRAZIL

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (R\$)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	R\$ 130,000 – R\$ 200,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	R\$ 191,000 – R\$ 280,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	R\$ 270,000 – R\$ 400,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	R\$ 325,000 – R\$ 450,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	R\$ 400,000 – R\$ 600,000

MEXICO

Mexico is an increasingly attractive prospect for international businesses who want to move their operations closer to the U.S market, while retaining a competitive cost-base; a practice known as ‘nearshoring’. This has led to a marked increase in recruitment activity in Mexico.

Mexico has also recently implemented new legislation which makes employers responsible for higher ethical standards, especially with respect to supply chain due diligence

Ease of doing business ranking = 60

CAPITAL	Mexico City
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Spanish
POPULATION	126.7 million
PAYROLL	Monthly or Bi-Monthly
CURRENCY	Mexican Peso (MXN)
VAT	Standard VAT of 16% / 8% reduced at Southern and Northern borders / 0% exports, medicine, milk, wheat, meat and corn and a few agriculture services



Hiring Considerations

- The standard workweek is 48 hours, with an eight-hour workday
- Overtime: Employees receive 200% of their regular wage for the first nine hours of overtime per week and 300% for any additional hours.
- Bonuses: Employees are entitled to an annual Christmas bonus ('aguinaldo') in mid-December worth 15 days of their salary, though many employers pay four weeks' worth.
- Employers must pay all wages and statutory payments in pesos to a government-designated in-country bank account. If hiring from overseas, it is important to be aware of this as it can cause delays when setting up payroll in Mexico.
- Under Mexican federal labor law, termination and resignation notices are not mandatory. Once your employee has worked for your company for a month, they become an indefinite employee and, except in cases of gross misconduct, are entitled to three months' severance pay.

Cultural Considerations

- The work culture in Mexico places a significant emphasis on hierarchy and respect for authority; addressing superiors with proper titles and using formal language is expected.
- Mexicans tend to value politeness and diplomacy in their communication styles. Direct criticism or disagreement may be perceived as rude or confrontational, leading to strained relationships.
- The concept of "mañana" (tomorrow) is deeply ingrained in Mexican culture and has implications for punctuality. While punctuality is valued in professional settings, it is not uncommon for appointments and meetings to start a little later than scheduled and for deadlines to have a degree of flexibility.

"Many of our European and US clients are building or expanding their legal teams in Mexico (and functions here are increasingly getting involved in legal support beyond the LATAM region). Although it remains a cost effective market to grow a legal function, there is increasing competition for junior and mid-level candidates."

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE MEXICO

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (MXN)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	400,000 MXN – 670,000 MXN
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	590,000 MXN – 700,600 MXN
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	600,000 MXN – 900,000 MXN
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	1,300,000 MXN – 1,800,600 MXN
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	2,050,000MXN – 2,650,000 MXN



2.2 EMEA – SUMMARY

ESG and Human Rights Legislation

ESG regulations continue to be a primary focus for EMEA organisations, which are driven to provide high quality reporting and to reinforce a culture of greater accountability.

The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive comes into force on 6 July, 2024. This will introduce more detailed social and environmental reporting requirements, for more organisations. It will impact more than 50,000 companies in Europe, as well as businesses based overseas which have a presence in the EU.

On 15 March 2024, the European Union Council voted to adopt the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D). The scope of the approved CS3D has been significantly reduced from the provisional agreement reached on the text by the European Council and European Parliament in December 2023. However, large companies based in the EU and foreign companies generating significant revenues in the EU will be obliged to comply with the new law, which includes the obligation to appoint a Human Rights Officer.

The directive will now need to be formally approved by the European Parliament before being transposed into national law throughout the EU. This is expected to happen in early 2026. However, businesses should be focused on this now, particularly with respect to ensuring they have the right skills and experience in place to handle the upcoming changes. It is highly likely that workflow generated from this focus on ESG will directly affect legal functions more prominently than most others.

Data Privacy and GDPR

Data privacy is a key topic in all geographies and in EMEA there is a particular focus in healthcare and the reusing of patient data, recent Chinese laws on data sovereignty and concerns over overlapping legislation involving artificial intelligence and the EU European Healthcare Data Space.

GDPR serves as a common framework for data protection across EU member states. However, there are still differences between GDPR and other regional data protection laws within the EMEA region, adding an extra layer of complexity. These differences may include variations in the definition of personal data, lawful bases for processing and the rights of data subjects. General Counsels in EMEA must understand these variations to ensure compliance with each specific data privacy law which impacts on their organisation's operations.

Brexit has resulted in data privacy compliance changes in the UK. The UK has implemented the Data Protection Act 2018, which largely mirrors GDPR. However, General Counsels in other EU jurisdictions need to be aware of the nuances; it is also likely to evolve at some stage.

POPIA in South Africa focuses on lawful processing and safeguarding data subject rights. The Middle East is also witnessing the emergence of new data protection laws, with countries such as UAE and Saudi Arabia heavily focused on data localisation and cybersecurity.

In the following section, we look at country-specific hiring considerations and salary bands.

Please note that this is a guide only, based on placements we have made over the past twelve months. As with all salary guides, it's important to understand the factors that impact where on the range a particular role should sit; this includes things like sector pay differentials, scope of role and seniority within a job title (which may sometimes include an understanding of PQE ranges).



UNITED KINGDOM

According to The Global City, the United Kingdom is a ‘global centre of academic excellence.’ 58.5% of the UK’s workforce are educated to at least a degree level, making it one of the most skilled workforces in the world.

It’s been a turbulent few years for the UK politically and economically, following its departure from the European Union. Many talented workers from neighbouring European countries were forced to move away. However, the employment market remains robust, and wages are relatively competitive versus many of its European counterparts.

The UK workforce has seen a notable shift towards remote and hybrid work arrangements due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a high emphasis on employee wellbeing. Environmental sustainability is also growing in importance for both employers and employees.

Ease of doing business ranking = 8

CAPITAL	London
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English
POPULATION	67.22 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Pound Sterling (GBP)
VAT	20%



Hiring Considerations

- The average working week is between 37 and 40 hours.
- Flexible working arrangements have become increasingly popular in recent years and many employees prefer to split their time between an office and working from home.
- Employers are required to offer British workers at least 5.6 weeks of paid leave. This may include public and bank holidays, of which there are eight in the UK. For someone who works full-time, this will equate to 28 days of paid holiday.
- British workers between the ages of 22 and state pension age who earn £10,000 or more per year and usually work in the UK are legally entitled to a pension scheme, provided by their employer.

Cultural Considerations

- Handshakes are expected when you meet someone for the first time
- Businesses place high importance on good etiquette when it comes to phone and email communication; blunt messages can be interpreted as rudeness
- Workplaces are friendly and dress codes range from casual to formal, depending on the industry and the company's individual culture.

“After a considerably lacklustre recruitment market in 2023 in the UK (especially at the senior end), we are starting to see some green shoots of activity in 2024. Despite the challenges for moving jobs for General Counsels, competition for newly qualified candidates in-house has exacerbated the significant wage inflation we’ve seen at this end of the market.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE UNITED KINGDOM

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	£70,000 – £90,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	£90,000 – £150,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	£120,000 – £180,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	£130,000 – £190,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	£150,000 – £260,000

IRELAND

With a population of 4.9 million people, Ireland offers a talented, well educated and diverse workforce, with low unemployment rates. This, combined with its modern and flexible employment law framework, creates an alluring business climate for both local and international companies. The top industries here are technology, financial services and pharmaceuticals. However, these sectors often experience skill shortages, so there is a growing trend towards employing more remote and freelance workers.

Many of the world's leading tech companies have set up a base in Ireland, including Facebook, Google and Apple.

Ease of doing business ranking = 24

CAPITAL	Dublin
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English, Irish
POPULATION	5.1 million
PAYROLL	Monthly/Weekly
CURRENCY	Euro (N.B — Republic of Ireland only; Northern Ireland is pound sterling)
VAT	23%



Hiring Considerations

- Ireland boasts a comprehensive legal framework governing employment, ensuring fair treatment and protection for both employers and employees. Key legislation includes the Employment Equality Acts, the Unfair Dismissals Acts, and the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts. These laws collectively address issues such as discrimination, termination procedures, and basic employment terms. It is crucial for employers to familiarize themselves with these statutes to ensure compliance and foster a harmonious work environment.
- Employers are responsible for making several mandatory contributions as part of the payroll process. These include Employer PRSI (Pay-Related Social Insurance) contribution. This contribution is a percentage of the employee's gross earnings and funds the country's social insurance program. The rate varies depending on the employment type and the employer's size.
- The probationary period for employees in Ireland can range from six months to two years, depending on the terms of their employment contract. During this period, the employer can assess the employee's suitability for the role and terminate the employment without providing a reason.
- The legal minimum annual leave is four weeks per year, but the majority of employers offer five.

- Ireland has truly embraced the trend for remote work. Since the Covid pandemic, around 60% of employees now work either fully or partly from home and a significant proportion work remotely. The Irish government has introduced legislation with grants employees the right to request reasonable adjustments to their working hours and place of work, after six months of employment.

Cultural Considerations

- Irish workplaces are typically relaxed, friendly and informal.
- Family, the traffic and weather are common conversation-starters! (Much like the UK, the Irish love to talk about the weather).
- The Irish are known for their good sense of humour.
- Business meetings often take place at social venues, such as bars and golf courses.

“In-house counsel salaries in Dublin have followed similar trends to the rest of Western Europe including healthy increases at the junior and early mid-level of the market. Businesses have struggled to remain competitive in securing junior talent and will occasionally look at international profiles from other parts of the EU.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE IRELAND

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€ 65,000 – €93,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€ 82,000 – €115,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€ 100,000 – €125,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€135,000 – €180,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€ 160,000 – € 230,000

FRANCE

France is the third-largest economy in Europe, and the sixth largest in the world in terms of GDP. It is an advanced and industrialised country and is home to a sophisticated financial market. This, coupled with France's highly educated workforce, makes it an attractive place for business growth.

Several industries contribute to the French economy, namely energy, transport, manufacturing, technology, tourism and agriculture.

In the face of global economic challenges, France has maintained a relatively stable job market — as of December 2023, the national unemployment rate stands at 7.2%, outperforming the average rate in the European Union.

One of the key contributors to France's employment landscape is its thriving tech industry and a steadily growing financial services sector.

Ease of doing business ranking = 32

CAPITAL	Paris
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	French
POPULATION	67.39 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro
VAT	20%



Hiring Considerations

- Probation periods are not mandatory in French employment contracts, but they typically last between two to four months.
- Notice periods: this depends on how long the employee has worked for the company. Employees will usually need to provide one month's notice if they've been employed for six months to two years.
- Employees who have been employed for more than two years usually must provide two months' notice, and those in executive positions may need to provide a three-month notice.

Cultural Considerations

- French business etiquette is rather formal, and it's always better to err on the side of formality than to be seen as disrespectful.
- It's customary to address people by their formal title, such as Monsieur or Madame, until invited to use their first name.

- Handshakes are the norm in business situations, and it's considered polite to greet everyone individually when entering a room.
- The French place a high value on work-life balance. You may find that work hours are shorter than in some other countries, with 35 hours per week on average.
- French people tend to be direct in their communication

“The in-house legal market in France is still a comparatively more cost-effective market to recruit in than most of its Western European counterparts. It still remains the case however that Legal Counsel and early-Senior Legal Counsel candidates have more choice in the market and will still command competitive salaries, especially in high-demand areas like data privacy, technology & AI counsel hiring.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE FRANCE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€ 40,000 – € 60,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	€ 50,000 – € 90,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€ 95,000 – € 120,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€ 100,000 – € 150,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€ 160,000 – € 250,000

GERMANY

Germany has a diverse population of over 84 million people, with a highly skilled talent pool. The country places a high emphasis on education, with a literacy rate of 99% and an extensive system of universities and vocational schools.

The business climate is favourable, with a strong focus on innovation and a range of government incentives for business growth.

Germany's top industries include automotive manufacturing, chemical production, engineering, and healthcare. The country is the world's leading exporter of cars, with major companies such as Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz headquartered in Germany.

German employees value a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Studies have found that they prioritise work-life balance, job security and professional development opportunities.

Ease of doing business ranking = 22

CAPITAL	Berlin
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	German, plus some regional dialects
POPULATION	84.5 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro
VAT	19%



Hiring Considerations

- The standard working week in Germany is 40 hours, with an average of 8 hours per day.
- Employers are obligated to provide health insurance, pension insurance, accident insurance and unemployment insurance to all employees.
- Bundesurlaubsgesetz — the Federal Holiday Act — dictates that employees get 20 days of leave or 24 days if they work six days a week instead of five. However, most employers offer more this statutory minimum.
- Notice periods are typically stipulated in the employment contract and vary based on the length of service. For example, a standard notice period is four weeks but can be longer for employees with several years of service.

Cultural Considerations

- Germans value punctuality, professionalism, and a thorough approach to business. Be prepared for structured and detail-oriented interactions with German professionals.
- While many Germans are proficient in English, especially in business settings, a basic understanding of the German language can be highly beneficial.

“Germany has been, and is very likely to continue to be, one of our largest markets. This in part is due to the fact that it remains very challenging for businesses to recruit strong in-house legal talent as German lawyers are, on average, still much less responsive to job advertisements than some of their neighbours. We’re pleased to offer significant track record across Germany and find our methodology engages candidates really well in this market.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE GERMANY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€ 60,000 – € 100,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	€ 90,000 – € 140,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€ 130,000 – € 170,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€ 150,000 – € 180,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€ 160,000 – € 280,000

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is widely recognised as a ‘safe haven’ within Europe and a land of opportunity for both individuals and businesses to live and work. Given its relatively small size and a highly liberal economic structure, it can quickly adapt to internal and external challenges. Switzerland is renowned for its stable and reliable business environment, which is supported by its well-developed legal system and robust regulations.

Around two thirds of Switzerland’s working population originate from EU countries, predominantly Italy, Germany, Portugal, France and Kosovo.

Ease of doing business ranking = 36

CAPITAL	Bern
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	German, French
POPULATION	8.7 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Swiss Franc (CHF)
VAT	8.1%



Hiring Considerations

- The working week in Switzerland is 40 to 42 hours. Workers are generally entitled to 4 weeks' holiday.
- Notice periods are variable, typically ranging from one to six months.

Cultural Considerations

- Swiss work culture is rooted in formality. Formal business attire is generally expected and it is usual to address someone by their last name and title (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Dr) until they indicate otherwise.
- There are three main languages spoken in Swiss workplaces: German, French, English — it is widely expected that job candidates would have fluency in at least two of these three.
- The Swiss value punctuality and direct communication, so when interviewing Swiss candidates, it is important that the interview is well-structured.

“Our expertise is strongly entrenched in a number of key sectors for Switzerland including (but certainly not limited to) Pharmaceuticals, Energy and Retail and our searches in this region will often involve looking at local talent as well as relocating high calibre lawyers from other markets. Switzerland remains high on the list for many lawyers looking for an international move.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SWITZERLAND

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	CHF 110,000 – CHF 165,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	CHF 131,000 – CHF 180,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	CHF 170,000 – CHF 220,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	CHF 180,000 – CHF 230,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	CHF 200,000 – CHF 350,000

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is a forward-thinking nation, well connected to the other major economies of Europe and with a favourable fiscal climate, making it a prime country for sourcing multilingual and highly-skilled workers. The Dutch typically have excellent English language skills and many also speak German.

It is a small but mighty country, having the fifth-largest economy in the EU in 2023. The key industries here are aerospace, chemicals, energy, financial services, life sciences, IT and logistics.

The country has a strong focus on work-life balance, and family-friendly benefits are commonplace.

Dutch employment law is extensive, and regulations must be followed by any company that employs workers in the Netherlands, even if the organisation is registered in a different country.

Ease of doing business ranking = 42

CAPITAL	Amsterdam
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Dutch, English
POPULATION	17.6 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro (EUR)
VAT	21%



Hiring Considerations

- The Netherlands has an extensive social security system which covers employees for health, death, old age, long-term disability, certain medical expenses and childcare and unemployment.
- National insurance is compulsory for anyone permanently working in the Netherlands. Social security premiums (also referred to as employee insurance) must be paid entirely by the employer.
- Many people work part-time in the Netherlands and requests for part-time work can only be turned down if there is a strong, objective reason not to permit it.
- Probation periods can last for a maximum of two months for permanent employees. Fixed-term contracts permit a maximum of one month's probation.

Cultural Considerations

- The Dutch are known for their direct manner and honesty. It's not a case of being harsh; they simply value pragmatism and clear communication.
- Decision-making is very much done by consensus, with multiple stakeholders involved.
- Efficiency and punctuality are highly valued.
- Workplace hierarchies tend to be flat, with everyone encouraged to voice their views and senior management are typically open to challenge, so long as it is done respectfully.

“The Dutch in-house legal market remains incredibly buoyant across its key industries in Agriculture, Energy, Chemicals and Shipping but there is increasing competition for legal talent across a diversified technology sector. Salaries have crept up at the junior end of the market but remained relatively flat at a senior level.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE NETHERLANDS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€ 40,000 – € 70,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	€ 65,000 – € 100,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€ 105,000 – € 145,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€ 120,000 – € 180,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€ 150,000 – € 220,000

SPAIN

Spain is one of the largest countries in Europe and home to a highly educated, diverse and international workforce.

Spain's economy is the fifth-largest in the European Union by GDP. The country's major industries include technology, tourism, textiles, automotive manufacturing and construction.

Compared with other EU countries, labour costs in Spain are relatively high, owing in part to high social security contributions and taxes. Nonetheless, the country remains a desirable destination for foreign workers, since the cost of living is generally lower — and there are the additional draws of a vibrant culture, great cuisine and a balmy climate.

Ease of doing business ranking = 30

CAPITAL	Madrid
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Spanish
POPULATION	47.4 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro (EUR)
VAT	21%



Hiring Considerations

- The standard working week is 40 hours. Some consumer-facing businesses do stop between 14:00 and 16:00 for ‘siesta’ and continue working until 8pm, but this is no longer usual practice in corporate environments.
- It is mandatory for employees to receive a thirteenth and fourteenth month’s salary payment. The annual salary is usually split into 14 instalments, which includes the double salary payment made by the employer in July and December.
- Internationals who want to work in Spain must meet stringent requirements for work permits. EU citizens are exempt, but do need a certificate of residence if they plan to stay for over three months, while non-EU citizens need both a work and residency permit along with a firm job offer. Highly skilled foreign workers can apply for a Blue Card or a Highly Qualified Visa — options which allow them to work and live locally for up to four years if they meet specific requirements.

Cultural Considerations

- Just like in social settings, Spaniards are relaxed and friendly at work. You’ll be surrounded by approachable, humorous people who love to smile.

- Relationship-building is important here, and business talks or negotiations rarely take place without getting to know the other person first. So don’t be alarmed at the slow pace of business meetings – or the personal questions.
- Overall, as Spaniards get more comfortable, they tend to be quite tactile, with hugs or a pat on the back or arm fairly common practice. You’ll also notice that when they are comfortable, they may become quite animated and even interrupt someone. This is to be taken as a sign that someone is interested in what the other person is saying, rather than being rude.
- Working late into the evening is not uncommon; Spaniards typically eat their dinner late, at around 9pm.

“Spain will always be a significant market for Leonid. Barcelona is home to one of our main offices and many of our clients across a range of industries have operations throughout Spain. The market still requires a thorough search methodology to find and attract the best in-house legal talent and it remains an attractive move for expat lawyers looking for new options.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SPAIN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€ 25,000 – € 40,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	€ 46,000 – € 80,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€ 70,000 – € 110,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€ 90,000 – € 140,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€ 130,000 – € 200,000

ITALY

Italy is the third-largest economy in the European Union and the eighth-largest in the world. Its geographical position is beneficial for trade with Northern Europe, Southern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, making Italy a great place for businesses to expand internationally. Tourism is the top income generator, followed by manufacturing.

Around 10% of Italy's workforce is made up of international employees and foreign-owned business accounts for approximately 19% of the country's turnover.

Italy's science, technology and engineering sector is growing rapidly and projected demand for employees in these sectors is expected to rise dramatically in the coming years, which presents excellent opportunities for well qualified individuals in this space.

Ease of doing business ranking = 58

CAPITAL	Rome
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Italian
POPULATION	60.4 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro (EUR)
VAT	22%



Hiring Considerations

- Individual income taxes in Italy fall into different bands (23%, 35%, 43%) depending on the employee's income.
- Both employers and employees are obliged to make social security contributions. The total rate is around 40% of the employee's gross compensation, of which 30% is paid by the employer.
- Italy has unique parental leave legislation. Pregnant Italian employees don't work from two months before the birth date and for three months afterwards, during which they receive at least 80% of their pay. There are also five days of compulsory paternity leave, after the birth.
- Standard working hours are between 9:30 and 18:30, Monday to Friday. Lunch breaks can be up to two hours long.
- Employees are entitled to a minimum of 22 days' annual leave, along with 12 public holiday days.
- Freedom to express opinions is very much the 'modus operandi' of Italian businesses.
- Interpersonal relationships are highly valued in the workplace, so for international workers, learning a few words of Italian can really help when getting to know colleagues.
- First meetings will rarely result in an immediate agreement between the participating parties. They are viewed as the opportunity to develop a sense of mutual trust and respect.

Cultural Considerations

- Flexibility is generally more valued than punctuality in Italian business culture. It's not uncommon for people to turn up late for meetings or for these to overrun — especially if it's a lunch meeting! However, it is always expected that candidates will be on time for a job interview.

“Milan remains one of the key markets for legal talent in Italy but competition for in-house lawyers (especially those around 3–6 PQE) is increasing across the whole country. Salaries have not seen significant increase compared to other countries in Europe and remain largely in line with in-house counsel salaries in Spain. The big exception being at the senior end of the market where larger multinationals are paying competitively to attract talent from other jurisdictions globally.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE ITALY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€ 28,000 – € 45,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	€ 45,000 – € 78,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€ 70,000 – € 115,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€ 100,000 – € 150,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€ 170,000 – € 250,000

SWEDEN

Sweden is renowned for its high quality of life, social welfare system and progressive attitudes.

The country is highly educated, with a literacy rate of 100% and a high percentage of the population holding advanced degrees. Employment laws in Sweden prioritise workers' rights, with significant protections for job security, parental leave and workplace safety. The business world here has a keen focus on innovation, sustainability and equal opportunities.

Sweden is an excellent country to set up or expand a business in, owing to its political stability, strong public finances, well-performing economy and reliable banking system. It also provides some of the EU's lowest corporate tax rates.

The key industries here are manufacturing, forestry and technology.

Ease of doing business ranking = 10

CAPITAL	Stockholm
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Swedish
POPULATION	10.5 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Swedish Krona (SEK)
VAT	25%



Hiring Considerations

- While the Swedish personal income tax is among the highest in the world, their social security benefits greatly offset the amount of taxes paid.
- Employers are required to pay Swedish employment social security contributions on compensation for employees covered by the system. These cover a range of events, including retirement pension, health insurance, labour fees and parental benefits.
- Work-life balance and wellbeing are vitally important in Sweden and many employers are now offering flexible working, additional annual leave and even unlimited annual leave.
- Gender equality is actively supported as well and it is expected that both mothers and fathers will share the 480 days leave which they are entitled to. Parents can take it at the same time or separately, all in one go or spread over time.
- Decision-making is driven by consensus from all stakeholders, so the process can take a little longer than in other cultures.
- Work-life balance is an absolute priority and there's a strong emphasis on putting family first. This attitude has no doubt contributed to the country's very low staff turnover rate.
- "Fika" is a Swedish tradition of taking a break to enjoy a hot drink and sweet treat with colleagues. It is viewed as an opportunity to bond, and discuss non-work topics, helping to cultivate an amiable atmosphere.

Cultural Considerations

- Swedish people are very straightforward and humble. They value substance over showiness.
- Hierarchies in the workplace are typically flat, with everyone encouraged to contribute to ideas and discussions, regardless of seniority.

"Sweden's in-house legal market remains one of the most active in Northern Europe, especially in Stockholm, with strong hiring from Swedish companies and (especially US) multinationals which have made this area their European hub. Salaries here are generally still tracking lower than Western European markets like Germany and the UK but this is still a popular destination for lawyers looking for an international move."

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SWEDEN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SEK)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	SEK 360,000 – SEK 720,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	SEK 660,000 – SEK 912,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	SEK 900,000 – SEK 1,400,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	SEK 1,320,000 – SEK 2,000,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	SEK 1,820,000 – SEK 2,580,000

NORWAY

Norway is the best country to live in according to the United Nations, thanks to its impressive healthcare system and work-life balance.

Norway is home to one of the strongest economies in the world, and the country places a high priority on technology, knowledge development and sustainable business.

Norway is a world leader in energy, oil and gas and maritime sectors and is seeing huge developments in other areas, such as fintech, medtech and edtech. It is also rich in natural resources and is a leading European producer of renewable energy: 98% of the country's electricity production is based on renewables.

Ease of doing business ranking = 9

CAPITAL	Oslo
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Norwegian
POPULATION	5.4 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Norwegian Krone (NOK)
VAT	25%



Hiring Considerations

- Working hours in Norway are typically nine hours per day within a 24-hour period, or 40 hours per week within a seven-day work week.
- Employees (even those who are not residents) receiving remuneration for work performed in Norway are eligible for social security and pension contributions.
- Norway offers a generous maternity and paternity leave package. This is either 80% compensation rate of the average salary for 59 weeks or 100% of the average salary for 49 weeks. Parents also have the option to take a leave of absence for an additional year without compensation.
- Probation periods can be up to six months long.

Cultural Considerations

- Continuous development is important – Norway has the second highest participation rate in job-related continued education and training, in all of Europe.
- Norwegians are focused on high quality output and efficiency. They are honest and direct in their communication, but typically warm and friendly, too.
- Workplaces are generally quite informal in terms of business dress.
- Work-life balance and ‘family time’ are highly valued.

“Our activity across the Nordic region remains strong, especially across data privacy and Norway is no exception. Junior salaries have become increasingly competitive, likely due to an increase in hiring at this level as in-house Norwegian legal functions grow in size and complexity.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE NORWAY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (NOK)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	NOK 680,000 – NOK 1,000,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	NOK 942,000 – NOK 1,150,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	NOK 1,100,000 – NOK 1,400,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	NOK 1,400,000 – NOK 2,000,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	NOK 1,751,000 – NOK 3,200,000

DENMARK

This small but perfectly formed Nordic country is renowned for its high standard of living, advanced welfare state and innovative business climate.

The country has a highly educated talent pool, with over 80% of the population having completed some form of post-secondary education. Denmark has strong employment laws which protect workers, such as a minimum wage, a maximum workweek of 37 hours and generous parental leave.

The Danish business culture is also attractive, with a low corporate tax rate, easy access to capital and a high degree of government support for entrepreneurship. The top industries in Denmark include information technology, life sciences, renewable energy, and food and agriculture.

Ease of doing business ranking = 4

CAPITAL	Copenhagen
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Danish
POPULATION	5.8 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Danish Krone (DKK)
VAT	0-25%



Hiring Considerations

- Employers must contribute to social security and other government initiatives on behalf of their employees. These contributions are typically calculated as a percentage of salary and are paid monthly.
- Income tax rates range from 0% to 55.8% depending on the employee's income level.
- Probationary periods can be up to three months long and no notice of termination is required by either party, during this time.
- English is very widely spoken by Danes, and with high levels of proficiency.

Cultural Considerations

- Danish workplaces are typically informal, with a flat hierarchy. People are trusted to manage their own workloads and time, with minimal supervision.

- It's usual for groups of co-workers to take their lunch together, but socialising with colleagues outside of work hours is rare.
- Work-life balance is highly prioritised. Denmark ranks 3rd on OECD's scale of countries with the best balance. This is partly down to flexible working hours and outstanding social and welfare support.

“Although the Danish in-house legal market is still relatively small by comparison to many of its European neighbours, it has still seen reasonably stable recruitment activity and competitive salary offerings (especially at the 0–3 PQE end of the market). We find that the intensity of our search methodology is really crucial in Denmark where it's often difficult to find those with strong in-house experience.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE DENMARK

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (DKK)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	DKK 620,000 – DKK 830,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	DKK 800,000 – DKK 980,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	DKK 900,000 – DKK 1,200,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	DKK 1,000,000 – DKK 1,500,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	DKK 1,224,000 – DKK 1,980,000

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (or UAE) is an economic powerhouse of the Middle East and is widely known as a business-friendly country in the region that welcomes foreign workers and investments. And since around 89% of the population originates from outside the UAE, it's also a great place to look for remote talent as it's one of a growing number of countries now offering digital nomad visas.

The UAE's economy is the 5th largest in the Middle East, with a gross domestic product of US\$501 billion (AED 1.84 trillion) in 2022.

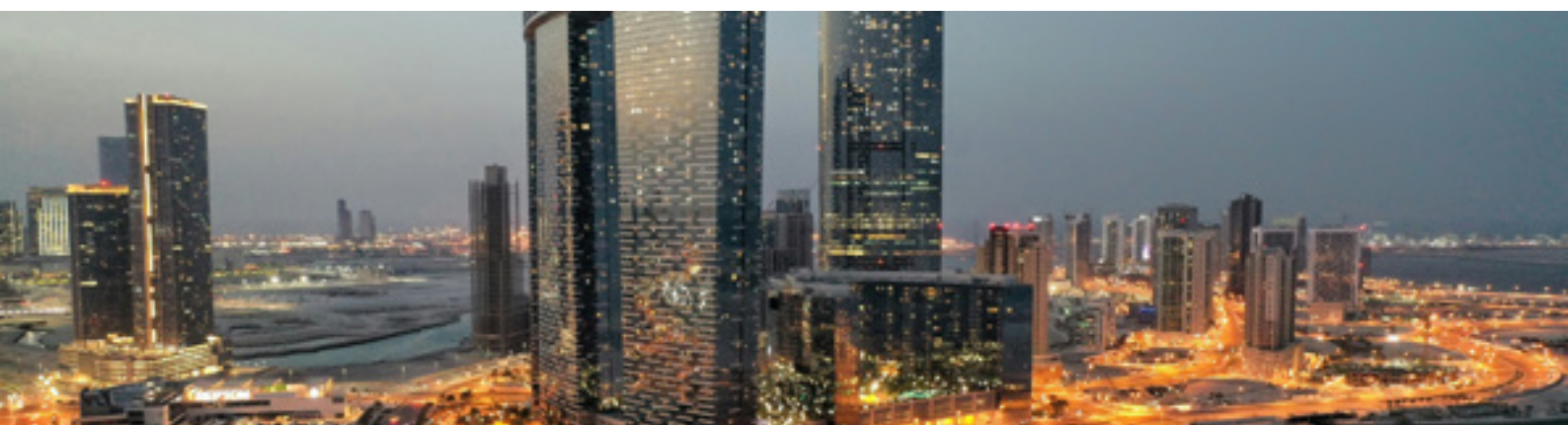
The economy in the UAE relies on revenue from the natural gas and petroleum industries. One of its bigger non-oil revenue sources is tourism, and the UAE's thriving services sector is contributing to the diversification of the economy. Across the nation, there is currently \$350 billion worth of active construction in process.

Ease of doing business ranking = 16

CAPITAL	Abu Dhabi
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Arabic, English
POPULATION	9.89 million
PAYROLL	Monthly or Bi-Weekly
CURRENCY	United Arab Emirates Dirham (AED)
VAT	5%

“The UAE hosts a significant in-house legal market that is now well established and is why it was our fourth largest market in 2023. We help a number of businesses looking to hire in-house counsel in the region as search methodologies differ greatly from those employed in Europe and North America.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group



Hiring Considerations

- The UAE does not have any enforced federal income tax legislation for general business. Each Emirate has enacted an income tax decree, but enforcement is restricted to oil companies and foreign banks.
- According to the terms of the UAE Labour Law, introduced in February 2022, companies operating in the private sector are required to employ individuals on fixed-term contracts. However, the fixed-term aspect of the agreement is, in practice, insignificant. For instance, even if a five-year term is agreed upon, it essentially functions as a permanent employment contract and can be terminated with notice by either party.
- The working week used to be Sunday to Thursday, but it has recently changed to Monday to Friday.
- Usual business hours are from 8am to 1pm, resuming at 4pm (once temperatures have reduced) and continuing until 7pm.
- It is compulsory to register employees with the national government pension programme and contribute to it regularly.
- Compensation packages are structured differently; instead of the usual base salary + bonus, firms typically offer base salary + housing allowance + transportation allowance (and schooling allowance, if the employee has children).

Cultural Considerations

- Islam is the cornerstone of UAE culture and profoundly influences its business practices. Most Emiratis are Muslim, so expats would do well to familiarise themselves with the principles of Islam to help cultivate relationships, and avoid inadvertently offending anyone.
- Islamic principles, such as honesty, integrity, and fairness, underscore all aspects of business dealings. Upholding one's word and delivering on promises are highly valued traits that contribute to building trust and lasting partnerships in the UAE.
- Religious holidays have a significant impact on business operations in the UAE. For instance, during Ramadan — a month of fasting from dawn to sunset — working hours are reduced, and the pace of business may slow down. Many companies operate with shorter business hours to allow employees to break their fasts and engage in prayers.
- Traditional hierarchical structures are prevalent in organisations, with clear lines of authority. Decision-making processes often involve higher-level management, and their input carries significant weight in final outcomes.

SALARY GUIDE UAE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AED)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	280,000 AED – 400,000 AED
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	450,000 AED – 660,000 AED
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	640,000 AED – 900,000 AED
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	700,000 AED – 950,000 AED
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	860,000 AED – 1,320,000 AED



2.3 ASIA–PACIFIC – SUMMARY

In Asia, in-house legal counsels don't always have a seat on the global leadership team. However, as regulations increase in the region, we expect to see this change. The scope of the role is changing, and so is the gravity of the matters they have to handle on a daily basis.

Geopolitics and Sanctions

For General Counsels across Asia, the potential extra-territorial effects of the current geopolitical issues add an extra layer of complexity. Ensuring compliance with different sanctions and export control programmes has now become a regular feature of daily life within an in-house legal team. As Asian companies have expanded out of the region, they have had to pay much closer attention to where sanctions and export control programmes – particularly from the United States – might be affected by cross-border alliances, partnerships and the global interconnectivity of supply chains.

Financial Crime

Across Asia, there has been a surge in regulatory developments aimed at combatting financial crime, specifically focusing on anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT) activities. In-house legal teams are taking a proactive stance, in order to avoid penalties. Hong Kong, Japan, China and Singapore are among the locations introducing or updating AML/CFT-related regulations.

Regulatory initiatives in the region underscore a firm commitment to advancing financial innovation, particularly around virtual assets. Recent measures include the Hong Kong Virtual Asset Licensing Regime (VASP) established in 2023, requiring all Virtual Asset Trading Platforms (VATPs) to be licensed under the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC). In Singapore, the Monetary Authority of Singapore recently strengthened regulatory measures for Digital Payment Token (DPT) service providers.

ESG

Environmental regulation has been gathering momentum in recent years, with a number of jurisdictions introducing new framework including China's Certified Emission Reduction (CCER) and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange's adoption of the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB).

The region has also witnessed the evolution of sustainable finance, with locations such as Japan, Singapore and South Korea implementing ESG disclosure regulations and guidelines.

Investigations

The rise of big data and increasingly sophisticated technology, along with rapidly changing regulatory environments, have led to significant changes in how investigations are handled.

Investigations feature as a key component of the in-house General Counsel role in Asia, with 56% of companies having dealt with an investigation during the past two years. According to a recent FTI consulting report, most common causes for internal investigations are financial misconduct (51%), employee misconduct (49%), intellectual property loss/theft (46%), fraud and whistleblower allegations (both 39%).

Many firms across Asia have either recently implemented new protocols for investigations, or they are in the process of doing so.

In the following section, we look at country-specific hiring considerations and salary bands.

Please note that this is a guide only, based on placements we have made over the past twelve months and other local benchmarking data. As with all salary guides, it's important to understand the factors that impact where on the range a particular role should sit; this includes things like sector pay differentials, scope of role and seniority within a job title (which may sometimes include an understanding of PQE ranges).



SINGAPORE

Singapore has a successful free-market economy and consistently ranks among the least corrupt nations in the world. Unemployment is low, and its port is one of the busiest in the world.

Singapore's workforce is highly multicultural, comprising Chinese, Malay, and Indian workers, as well as expatriates from around the globe. While the government has taken steps to reduce the country's reliance on foreign labour, particularly in unskilled roles, Singapore remains an open and diverse society.

Ease of doing business ranking = 2

CAPITAL	Singapore
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin & Tamil
POPULATION	5.686 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Singapore Dollar (SGD)
VAT	7%



Hiring Considerations

- The Employment Act specifies that all employees are entitled to one rest day out of the week. Typically, this is Sunday, but employers can choose a different rest day as long as they inform their employees.
- Employers typically provide a 13th-month bonus to their employees. 13th-month bonus is also known as Annual Wage Supplement (AWS). It is a single annual payment on top of an employee's total annual wage. AWS is not compulsory. Employers are encouraged to give their employees AWS to reward them for contributing to the company's performance.

Cultural Considerations

- Singapore places importance on proper business etiquette and protocol. Handshakes are common as a form of greeting, and it is polite to address individuals using their titles and surnames, especially in formal settings.

- It is also customary to exchange business cards during introductions, with proper attention given to receiving and presenting them with both hands.
- Teamwork and collaboration are highly valued in Singapore's work culture. Employees are expected to work well in teams and contribute to collective goals. Communication tends to be polite, indirect and harmonious, with an emphasis on maintaining positive relationships.

“Singapore remains a significant host for APAC legal functions and the market continues to have a strong availability of diverse talent from across the region. Candidates at all levels, but especially those earlier in their career (0 — 7 PQE), command competitive salaries across the majority of sector verticals.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SINGAPORE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SGD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	68,000 S\$ – 140,000 S\$
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	140,000 S\$ – 200,000 S\$
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	190,000 S\$ – 280,000 S\$
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	220,000 S\$ – 300,000 S\$
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	250,000 S\$ – 375,000 S\$

JAPAN

Japan is smaller than the U.S. state of California, and yet it boasts the world's third-largest economy, after the United States and China. It is home to 62 of the Fortune 500 companies and excels in the IT, automotive and healthcare sectors.

Japan is a stable place to do business and a sensible stepping stone into other Asian territories.

It is, however, one of the more challenging environments in which to attract job candidates. An aging population and declining birth rates has led to a serious labour shortage in the country. This means employees are used to excellent job security and, when they are looking for a job, receiving job offers from multiple companies.

Ease of doing business ranking = 29

CAPITAL	Tokyo
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Japanese
POPULATION	125.7 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Japanese Yen (JPY)
VAT	10%

“We are pleased to maintain a 100% search success rate in Japan which is largely due to the intensity of our search methodology as well as our ability to build networks for recommendations, which is key when recruiting in Japan (only around 3% of the adult population is on LinkedIn). Recruitment here can sometimes take longer to finalise which is why it’s so important to maintain momentum with a trusted search partner.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group



Hiring Considerations

- Employees in managerial positions are generally expected to work unpaid overtime.
- Termination of employment can be difficult in Japan and employers will generally seek to obtain the employee's resignation before handing out a termination notice. In some cases, financial incentives can be offered to encourage employees to resign.
- The notice period for resigning employees can range from two weeks to a month. In the case of dismissals, the employer must provide 30 days' notice or payment in lieu of the notice period.
- There is no payment for sick leave in Japan. For short-term cases, employees use their paid vacation to take leaves of absence.
- Employers are required to grant annual paid leave of at least 10 days upon completion of 6 months' employment. The entitlement increases by 1 day per year for the following 2 years and by 2 days per year thereafter, up to a maximum of 20 days per year.

Cultural Considerations

- Japanese employers expect unwavering dedication from their teams. And while there have been notable improvements in Japanese work conditions in recent years, Japan still carries its reputation of being a hard working country.
- Japanese 'nomikai' are company after-work drinking parties, which are often compulsory to attend. It is seen as disrespectful to refuse such an invitation from a senior employee.
- Career progression rewards behaviour which demonstrates team effort, for example by singing the company song, not taking all of one's vacation days, and sharing credit for accomplishments with the team.
- Non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions and body language, is heavily relied upon in Japanese workplaces.

SALARY GUIDE JAPAN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (JPY)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	¥8,000,000 – ¥12,500,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	¥10,000,000 – ¥16,500,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	¥15,000,000 – ¥20,000,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	¥17,000,000 – ¥28,000,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	¥20,000,000 – ¥40,000,000

HONG KONG

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China, located just off the Southeastern coast.

For a territory of less than eight million, Hong Kong boasts a vibrant economy with strengths in financial services, tourism and professional services. It acts as an excellent gateway to the Asia-Pacific market.

Combined with its 4th place ranking on the human development index and a GDP that is several times the size of comparative nations, Hong Kong offers an attractive option for companies looking to build a presence in Asia with strong global connections.

Hong Kong is uniquely positioned as a bilingual and multicultural society, with English and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) being widely spoken. This linguistic diversity is a valuable asset for businesses looking to engage with both local and international stakeholders.

LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Chinese, English
POPULATION	7.5 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Hong Kong Dollar (HKD)
VAT	3—45%

“The in-house legal market in Hong Kong is well established with multinationals continuing to offer opportunities across a range of sectors including more prominently: financial services, real estate, retail and hospitality. Roles will often seek and attract profiles with multijurisdictional experience which is why the majority of these searches require a cross-border focus.”

Phil Redhead
Leonid Group



Hiring Considerations

- Hong Kong operates on a territorial tax system, meaning that only income generated within the city is subject to taxation. Income earned abroad, even if remitted to Hong Kong, is generally exempt from taxation.
- Income tax rates are progressive, and capped at 17%.
- Hong Kong does not have a comprehensive social security system. Instead, social welfare is largely provided through a mix of means-tested assistance programs, non-contributory benefits and voluntary savings schemes.
- The standard working week is 44 hours, across 5 days.
- Employees are entitled to 7 annual leave days; this can rise to 14 days depending on an individual's tenure with their employer.
- Bonus culture is deeply ingrained, particularly within the finance and professional services sectors, where year-end bonuses can significantly boost overall compensation packages.
- Many companies in Hong Kong provide employee stock options as part of their compensation packages, which prove successful in retaining talent.

Cultural Considerations

- Hong Kong's business culture is influenced by a mix of Eastern and Western practices. Hierarchy and respect for authority are very much adhered to.
- It is not uncommon for employees to work long hours, especially in the run up to a project deadline.
- Workplaces are typically quite formal and focused on efficiency and punctuality.
- Formal business attire is expected in most offices, although there is a growing trend towards a slightly more relaxed approach in smaller firms and start-ups.
- Being consistently late or missing deadlines is considered disrespectful.
- English is the main business language, although knowing some Mandarin, Cantonese or Japanese is very helpful.

SALARY GUIDE HONG KONG

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (HKD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	HK\$ 650,000 – HK\$ 1,260,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	HK\$ 1,200,000 – HK\$ 1,600,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	HK\$ 1,650,000 – HK\$ 1,900,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	HK\$ 1,800,000 – HK\$ 2,200,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	HK\$ 2,160,000 – HK\$ 2,750,000



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CONCLUSION

In-house legal teams are under increasing internal and external pressure worldwide — and the profession is evolving. The challenges faced by legal teams require an agile mindset and adaptability to enable organisations to respond rapidly and effectively.

To summarise this report's findings, some of the key challenges this year will be:

- **Cost control** — always a challenge for in-house legal teams but even more so, with the current geopolitical climate.
- **Adopting generative AI** — adapting to new systems and handling complex and large amounts of data.
- **Regulatory frameworks and compliance** — these are constantly changing and the variations across different regions and industries can be a significant challenge.
- **Talent and skills gaps** — with all of the above taken into consideration, there is likely to be a growing shortage of skilled in-house lawyers with expertise in key emerging areas like cybersecurity, data analytics and AI regulations. A solid recruitment strategy as well as continued focus on internal training will be essential to futureproofing any legal function.

With the profession changing scope, demand rising and average salary levels increasing significantly over the past few years, employers will benefit from partnering with an experienced in-house legal search firm, in order to target and attract the best candidates in the market, who often are not proactively applying for roles.

At Leonid, we work globally and our consultants only handle a maximum of three roles at any time, to ensure we maximise our time in reaching out to our network and screening potential candidates.

Unlike other search firms, we pledge to fill all open roles within 30 days of instruction, using our '[Magic Month](#)' methodology as well as saving you significant time in the process by utilising our unique [LeonidLive](#) shortlist platform.

To find out more about our methodology or for bespoke salary benchmarking, please get in touch with [Phil Redhead](#).



leonid

CONTACT

Leonid is a leading, international recruiter in in-house legal and data privacy – and all areas of corporate governance.

If you are looking to bolster your team, we can proactively seek out the best candidates and have them ready to join you within 30 days of instruction.

To find out more about Leonid's service, please visit our website:

www.leonid-group.com

Or, to request a meeting with our Head of Legal, Phil Redhead, please email him directly:

philip@leonid-group.com

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