

2026 GLOBAL HIRING GUIDE: TRADE COMPLIANCE

Salary data and hiring considerations, country by country



CONTENTS

01. INTRODUCTION	03	Belgium	28
		Poland	30
		Portugal	32
02. REGIONAL AND COUNTRY GUIDES	05	Italy	34
		Switzerland	36
2.1 AMERICAS	05	Sweden	38
Americas Talent Intelligence	06	United Arab Emirates	40
USA	07	Saudi Arabia	42
Canada	09		
Brazil	11	2.3 ASIA – PACIFIC	44
Mexico	13	APAC Talent Intelligence	45
		China	46
2.2 EMEA	15	Singapore	48
EMEA Talent Intelligence	17	Japan	50
United Kingdom	18		
France	20	04. CONCLUSION	52
Germany	22	05. CONTACT	53
Spain	24		
Netherlands	26		



01.

INTRODUCTION:

A GLOBAL TRADE OVERVIEW

Global trade in 2026 continues to be defined by volatility, fragmentation, and rapid regulatory expansion and organisations are operating in one of the most complex environments in recent history. Trade compliance professionals have become central to business continuity, designing contingency plans, navigating shifting controls, and keeping supply chains resilient under pressure.

Geopolitical Climate and Supply Chains

The ongoing Russia Ukraine conflict, tensions in the Middle East, and wider global instability are still reshaping trade routes and commodity flows. Energy markets remain unpredictable – particularly in Europe – as companies diversify away from single source suppliers and accelerate localisation and “friend shoring” strategies.

Inflation has eased in many regions but remains elevated in others, and tighter monetary policies continue to push up financing and logistics costs. In 2026, trade compliance teams are now directly involved in supply chain restructuring decisions, risk mapping, and evaluating the regulatory implications of alternative sourcing models.

Sanctions, Tariffs, and Regulations

Sanctions have expanded dramatically across multiple jurisdictions; not only in response to conflicts but also as tools of economic policy and technological competition. Unlimited retaliatory tariffs remain a real possibility between major powers, while cross border financial restrictions, export bans and licensing regimes continue to proliferate.

Governments worldwide are aggressively digitalising customs and border control systems, creating new compliance obligations and eliminating many legacy processes. For global trade compliance professionals, keeping pace with continuous tariff revisions, new licensing requirements, and evolving customs platforms has become a full time discipline.



U.S.–China Trade Relations

The U.S. – China trade relationship remains one of the greatest sources of uncertainty in global trade. The U.S. has expanded export controls on advanced chips, AI infrastructure, quantum related tech and dual use goods. China has responded with new licensing requirements for critical minerals and restrictions affecting foreign technology companies.

The result is ongoing supply chain realignment, particularly within electronics, automotive, battery technology, aerospace and semiconductors. Manufacturers continue to diversify into Southeast Asia, India, Mexico and Brazil to reduce exposure to political risk, thereby increasing the need for compliance expertise in these regions.

Technological Advancements

Technology continues to redefine trade compliance. AI-driven classification tools, automated restricted party screening, real time customs data integration and machine learning risk flags are now mainstream in top tier compliance functions.

Organisations are also deploying AI to model trade disruptions, predict regulatory exposure and detect anomalies in customs documentation. These systems improve efficiency, but they also create new accountability requirements, meaning compliance teams must balance innovation with governance and explainability.

Trade Compliance Recruitment Market

The visibility of trade compliance as a corporate function has never been higher. Many organisations have moved trade compliance out of logistics or finance and into Legal, Compliance or Risk, reflecting its growing strategic importance.

Salaries continue to increase across all regions due to intense competition for experienced talent, especially in:

- export controls
- sanctions
- supply chain risk and forced labour due diligence
- classification and customs optimisation
- ESG linked trade + supply chain traceability.

Pay disparities remain significant between regions – with U.S. compensation still 40–50% higher than comparable roles in Europe and APAC.

In 2026, demand for trade compliance professionals will remain extremely strong – and organisations that invest early in the right talent, technology and governance frameworks will be best placed to navigate global uncertainty and maintain competitive, compliant supply chains. Our team remains ready to support companies in building world class trade compliance functions.





02. REGIONAL & COUNTRY GUIDES

2.1 AMERICAS

Geopolitical Climate and Regulatory Changes

The Americas remain at the centre of global trade disruption. Ongoing tariff volatility, expanding export controls and heightened sanctions enforcement are forcing organisations to continuously reassess supply chains, sourcing strategies and market access. Across the region, trade compliance teams are playing an increasingly strategic role as businesses respond to a more fragmented and unpredictable regulatory environment.

Technological Advancements

Technology is reshaping the trade compliance function across North and South America. AI-powered classification tools, automated screening platforms and advanced trade analytics are helping organisations manage growing regulatory demands more efficiently. As compliance programmes become increasingly data-driven, demand is rising for professionals who can combine technical trade expertise with digital and analytical capabilities.

USMCA Impact

USMCA continues to strengthen economic integration across the United States, Mexico and Canada, particularly within manufacturing, automotive, semiconductors, life sciences and energy. Growing cross-border investment is increasing demand for expertise in customs valuation, rules of origin, tariff optimisation and

supply chain traceability, making trade compliance a critical enabler of regional growth.

Political and Economic Uncertainty

Political shifts, changing trade priorities and economic volatility across the Americas continue to create uncertainty for multinational organisations. At the same time, nearshoring and friendshoring strategies are accelerating investment into Mexico and other key manufacturing hubs, creating new opportunities while increasing the complexity of cross-border compliance and risk management.

Data Privacy and Security

Data governance has become an increasingly important consideration for trade compliance teams. As organisations adopt AI-enabled compliance technologies and digitise trade operations, they must navigate a growing patchwork of privacy, cybersecurity and data protection requirements across multiple jurisdictions while safeguarding sensitive commercial and supply chain information.

Digitalisation and Customs Modernisation

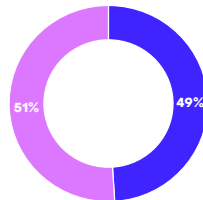
Customs authorities across the region continue to invest in digital transformation programmes, including electronic documentation, automated customs processes and real-time data reporting requirements. While these initiatives are improving transparency and efficiency, they are also creating demand for experienced professionals who can adapt systems, manage change and ensure ongoing compliance in a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape.

AMERICAS TALENT INTELLIGENCE DATA

In addition to recruitment, Leonid also offers **‘Talent Intelligence’** — data-driven insights to guide our clients’ decisions around hiring, retention, and workforce planning. Here’s a snapshot of what our data is telling us about the current trade compliance hiring market in The Americas.



Hiring demand in Trade Compliance in The Americas is **High**



Gender Diversity Split
51% Female 49% Male

2.8 YEARS

Median Tenure of Candidates

8.2%

% of professionals who moved jobs in the last year

What matters most to trade compliance candidates (The Americas)

Value proposition	Top Priority
1. Salary and benefits	67%
2. Work life balance	67%
3. Opportunities for career growth	53%
4. Flexible work arrangements	50%
5. Helpful & supportive direct managers	47%

Top 3 industries

employing this talent



Aerospace & Defense

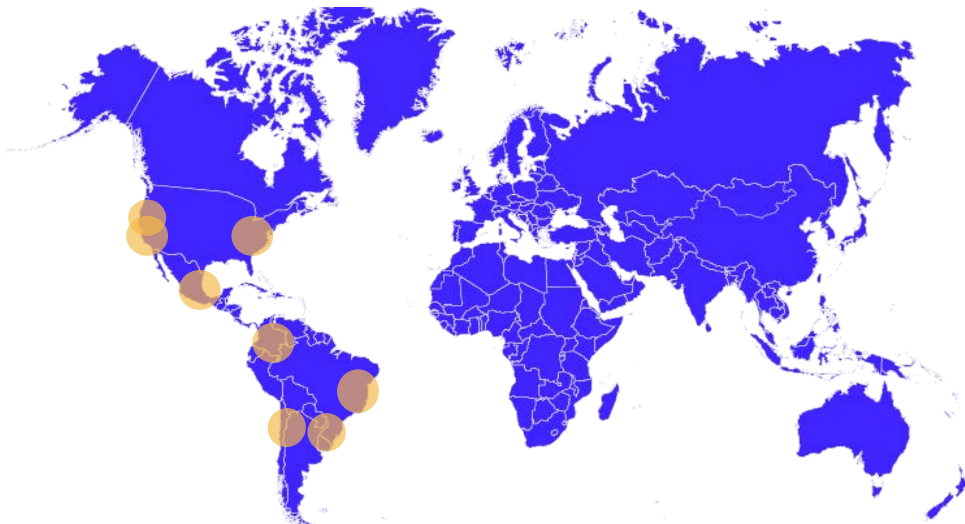


Technology



Industrial Manufacturing /Machinery

Hiring Hotspots



What are the top locations for this talent? (highest number of professionals)

1. Washington, D.C, USA
2. Chicago, USA
3. New York/New Jersey, USA
4. Los Angeles/Long Beach, USA
5. Mexico City/Monterrey, Mexico

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	335 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. Many professionals adopt a “work hard, play hard” approach to their careers.

“The U.S. continues to be our largest and most active market and trade compliance hiring is stronger than ever. The introduction of more protectionist policies under the current administration is creating both challenges and opportunities for compliance teams.

Salaries remain the highest globally, and demand for senior export controls and sanctions professionals continues to grow.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE USA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	\$75,000 – \$110,000
Trade Compliance Manager	\$125,000 – \$180,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	\$180,000 – \$310,000
Head of Trade Compliance	\$250,000 – \$415,000

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 \$2.24 trillion in 2025.

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	40.1 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.

“Toronto is still the centre of trade compliance hiring, followed by Montreal and Vancouver. Canada continues to attract global investment in clean tech, energy, and advanced manufacturing, all of which drive demand for trade compliance expertise. It remains a market where relationships matter enormously, and our network has been vital in helping clients secure top talent.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

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SALARY GUIDE CANADA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CAD)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	\$60,000 – \$80,000
Trade Compliance Manager	\$100,000 – \$160,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	\$130,000 – \$170,000
Head of Trade Compliance	\$150,000 – \$320,000

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	216.4 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 remains one of LATAM’s most strategically important trade compliance hubs. DUIMP and other customs modernisation initiatives continue to push companies toward hiring professionals who are both adaptable and detail driven. Multinationals still tend to base LATAM HQs in São Paulo or Mexico City, but demand in Bogotá and Santiago is rising. Brazil’s regulatory complexity means hiring can be challenging; yet the talent landscape is vibrant and maturing quickly.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist

SALARY GUIDE BRAZIL

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (R\$)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	R\$90,000 – R\$145,000
Trade Compliance Manager	R\$165,000 – R\$230,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	R\$210,000 – R\$390,000
Head of Trade Compliance	R\$350,000 – R\$540,000

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.

In 2025, Claudia Sheinbaum became the first female president in the country’s 200 year history. She shares similar left-leaning views to her predecessor but her cool-tempered style offers a sharp contrast to Mexico’s male-dominated political culture.

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

CAPITAL	Mexico City
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Spanish
POPULATION	128.5 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.

"Mexico is one of the most exciting trade compliance markets globally. With nearshoring accelerating and the evolving relationship between Presidents Trump and Sheinbaum, companies need strong local expertise to navigate cross border regulations. We expect demand for compliance professionals in manufacturing, electronics, automotive and logistics to continue rising. It's a competitive market and speed in hiring remains essential."

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE MEXICO

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (MXN)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	MXN620,000 – MXN950,000
Trade Compliance Manager	MXN820,000 – MXN1,050,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	MXN920,000 – MXN1,250,000
Head of Trade Compliance	MXN1,150,000 – MXN1,550,000



2.2 EMEA

Trade compliance hiring across EMEA continues to strengthen as organisations navigate an increasingly complex regulatory environment. Geopolitical tensions, evolving sanctions regimes, export control reforms, tariff uncertainty and growing supply chain transparency requirements are elevating the importance of in-house trade expertise. For many organisations, trade compliance has evolved from a technical support function into a strategic capability that directly influences business continuity, market access and supply chain resilience.

Rising Demand for Trade Compliance Professionals

Demand remains particularly strong across manufacturing, defence, aerospace, technology, chemicals, energy and life sciences. Employers are investing in talent capable of managing complex customs requirements, export controls, sanctions compliance and cross-border risk management across multiple jurisdictions.

As regulations become more interconnected, organisations are increasingly seeking professionals who can work across trade, legal, compliance, procurement and supply chain functions. The ability to translate regulatory change into practical business decisions is becoming just as valuable as technical trade knowledge.

Sanctions, Export Controls and Supply Chain Risk

Sanctions compliance remains a major focus across the region, particularly as businesses continue to navigate restrictions involving Russia and other high-risk jurisdictions. At the same time, governments are introducing tighter controls around advanced technologies, critical raw materials, defence-related products and dual-use goods.

As a result, companies are strengthening screening programmes, supply chain due diligence processes and third-party risk management frameworks. This has created growing demand for professionals who can assess risk across increasingly complex global supplier and distribution networks.

Sustainability and Trade Compliance

Sustainability remains an important component of the EMEA trade agenda, but the focus has shifted towards implementation. Trade compliance teams are playing a larger role in helping organisations meet obligations linked to carbon reporting, supply chain transparency, responsible sourcing and human rights due diligence.

Rather than operating as standalone initiatives, sustainability requirements are becoming integrated into broader trade, customs and procurement processes, creating demand for professionals who can bridge compliance, operational and ESG objectives.



CBAM, EUDR and Supply Chain Transparency

The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and European Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) continue to drive significant investment in data collection, supplier oversight and traceability capabilities. Organisations are under increasing pressure to obtain more detailed information from suppliers, improve reporting accuracy and demonstrate greater visibility across their value chains.

These requirements are reinforcing the convergence of trade compliance, sustainability and supply chain management. As a result, employers are seeking professionals who can navigate evolving regulations, implement new reporting processes and help businesses adapt to a regulatory landscape that continues to grow in both scale and complexity.

Technology and Modernisation

Digitalisation is also reshaping the profession. Automated screening platforms, AI-enabled monitoring tools and advanced trade management systems are becoming standard features of mature compliance programmes. While technology is improving efficiency, it is also increasing demand for professionals who can interpret data, oversee controls and ensure compliance frameworks remain effective as regulatory expectations continue to evolve.

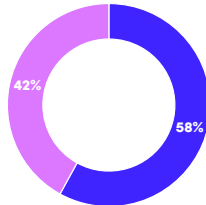
The overall trend is clear: trade compliance is becoming more specialised, more strategic and more closely aligned with business decision-making than ever before. Across EMEA, organisations that invest in both talent and technology will be best positioned to navigate the next phase of regulatory change.

EMEA TALENT INTELLIGENCE DATA

In addition to recruitment, Leonid also offers **'Talent Intelligence'** — data-driven insights to guide our clients' decisions around hiring, retention, and workforce planning. Here's a snapshot of what our data is telling us about the current trade compliance EMEA hiring market.



Hiring demand in
Trade Compliance in
EMEA is **High**



Gender Diversity Split
42% Female 58% Male

2.5 YEARS

Median Tenure of
Candidates

8%

% of professionals who
moved jobs in the last
year

What matters most to trade compliance candidates (EMEA)

Value proposition	Top Priority
1. Salary and benefits	66%
2. Work life balance	56%
3. Opportunities to learn new skills	43%
4. Flexible work arrangements	38%
5. Job security	37%

Top 3 industries employing this talent



Aerospace & Defense

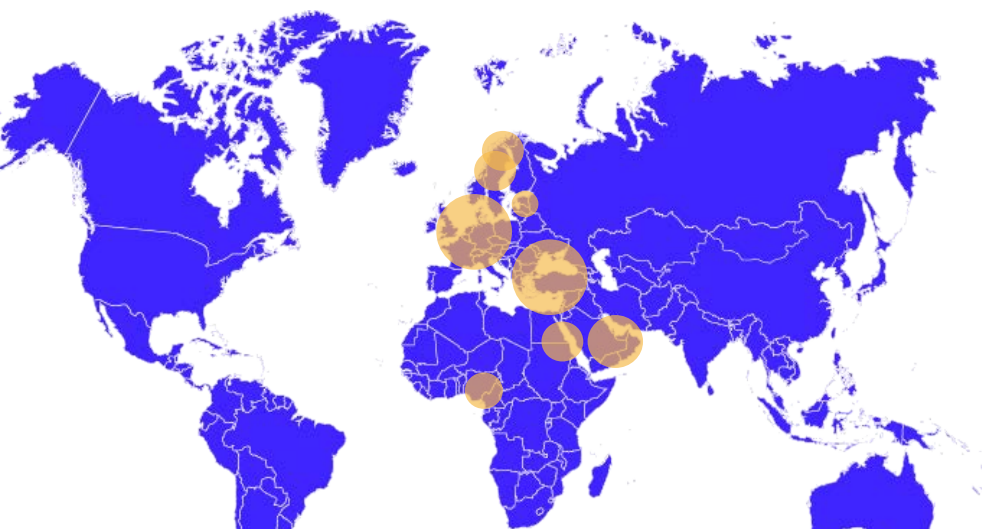


Automotive/Industrial
Manufacturing



Energy & Commodities/Oil
and Gas

Hiring Hotspots



What are the top locations for this talent? (highest number of professionals)

1. London, UK
2. Frankfurt/Munich, Germany
3. Geneva, Switzerland
4. Dubai, UAE
5. Amsterdam/Rotterdam,
Netherlands

UNITED KINGDOM

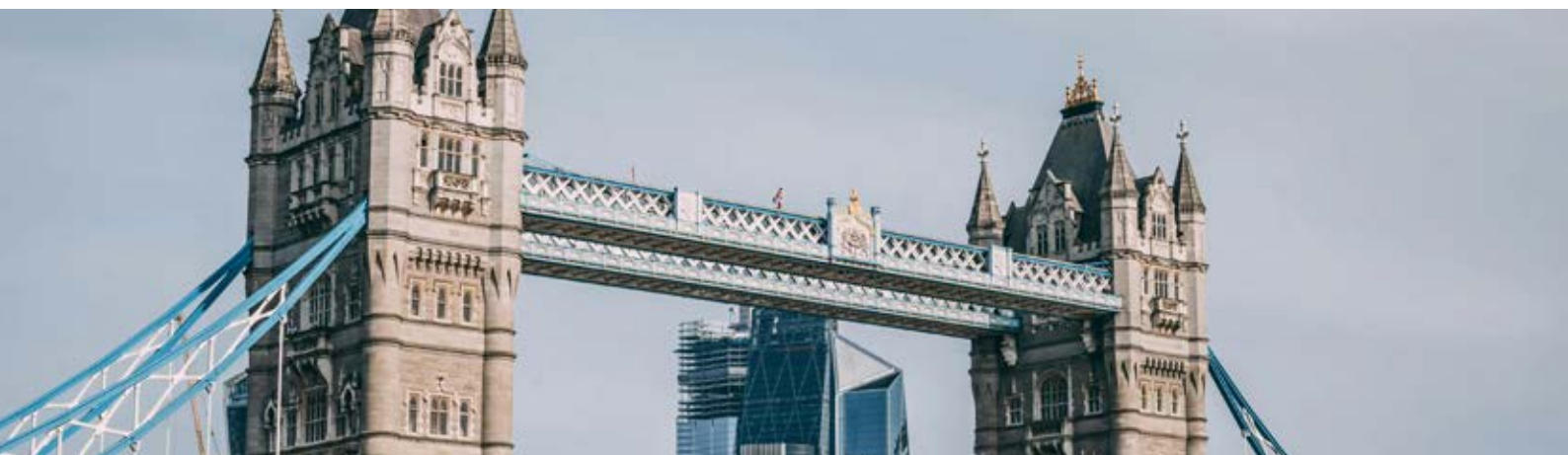
According to The Global City, the United Kingdom is a ‘global centre of academic excellence.’ 58.5% of the UK’s workforce are educated to at least a degree level, making it one of the most skilled workforces in the world.

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	68.35 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.

“UK businesses still face dual pressures: ongoing Brexit related complexities and global disruptions. The country continues to position itself as a global trade player through new FTAs and investment agreements, keeping trade compliance talent in high demand, especially in sectors like aerospace, pharmaceuticals, defence, and manufacturing”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE UNITED KINGDOM

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)
Trade Compliance Analyst	£50,000 – £75,000
Trade Compliance Manager	£65,000 – £110,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	£120,000 – £160,000
Head of Trade Compliance	£150,000+

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 2025, the national unemployment rate stands at 7.9%.

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	68.17 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.

“France remains a challenging market for trade compliance recruitment due to high competition, strong demand for EU regulatory expertise, and an evolving political environment. Candidates with deep knowledge of EU customs, export controls and sustainability reporting are especially valued. Despite the challenges, France has a strong talent pool, and those with the right mix of regulatory and stakeholder management experience are highly sought-after.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE FRANCE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst	€50,000 — €65,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€60,000 — €100,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€125,000 — €180,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€160,000 — €260,000

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 remains one of our busiest EMEA markets. Demand is particularly strong for customs compliance experts due to Germany’s manufacturing and export footprint. With the upcoming federal election bringing regulatory uncertainty, companies are investing early in trade compliance capability. Candidates remain less responsive to job postings, so targeted outreach is critical, especially for niche customs and origin roles.”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE GERMANY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	€60,000 – €85,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€80,000 – €125,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€125,000 – €190,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€155,000 – €250,000

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	48.37 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’s growth story is being driven by automotive, renewables, life sciences, and logistics, plus its position as a gateway to North Africa and Latin America. Competition for experienced mid-senior people is intensifying – especially around customs and EU regulatory change – and we’re increasingly seeing companies open to relocating talent from Portugal and elsewhere in the EU to fill the gaps.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SPAIN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst	€35,000 — €65,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€60,000 — €100,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€110,000 — €170,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€150,000 — €220,000

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 2024. 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	8.1%



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 Netherlands continues to be one of the most internationally connected and forward-thinking trade compliance markets in Europe, and 2026 is shaping up to be another year of strong hiring activity. What really sets the Dutch market apart is how quickly organisations here adapt to regulatory change, especially around export controls, ESG-linked trade obligations, supply-chain transparency and digital customs modernisation. While the Netherlands has a strong and mature talent pool, competition for experienced mid-senior professionals is intensifying.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE NETHERLANDS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst	€50,000–€75,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€85,000–€130,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€130,000–€170,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€140,000–€250,000+

BELGIUM

Belgium is home to an open market with strong connections to the world's major economies. It is also the location of many European Union institutions — including the European Commission and Council of the European Union – making it an attractive market for business owners.

Belgium has a talented, multi-lingual workforce and a strong economy which appeals to investors across a range of industry sectors.

Major Belgian exports include chemicals (65.6%), machinery and equipment (9.7%), and transport equipment (4.5%).

According to data from the OECD, 64% of Belgian citizens are currently employed, and the nation has a high ranking among the happiest workforces in the world.

Ease of doing business ranking = 46

CAPITAL	Brussels
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Dutch, French, German
POPULATION	11.82 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro
VAT	21%



Hiring Considerations

- Employers must pay two additional 13th and 14th month salaries per year, as well as an Eco voucher (of EUR 250) according to Belgian employment law.
- Employees in Belgium must work continuously for a full year before receiving any holiday entitlement. Full-time employees are entitled to 20 paid holidays per year if they are working a 38-hour week or 21 days of paid leave for those who work 40-hour weeks
- After the birth of a child, fathers or co-parents are entitled to 20 paid days of paternity leave. The state also offers a comprehensive maternity leave package.
- 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 Northern half of Belgium is Dutch-speaking and the Southern half is French-speaking. However, most business people

speak both and additionally have a proficient level of English.

- Personal connections are important in Belgium's business world, so it's not unusual for someone to socialise with you before they start working with you!
- Decision-making tends to be slower and more considered than in neighbouring countries such as The Netherlands and Germany. This is to ensure that decisions are always agreeable to everyone involved in the process.

“Belgium is really two markets in one. You’ve got Brussels, where roles sit close to EU policy and regulation, and Antwerp, home to one of Europe’s largest ports, where the work is hands-on customs and logistics compliance. Very few candidates genuinely cover both – which is exactly why demand stays high.”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

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SALARY GUIDE BELGIUM

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst	€55,000–€75,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€80,000–€120,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€120,000–€170,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€150,000–€250,000+

POLAND

Poland has a nominal GDP of approximately USD\$1.13 trillion, making it the sixth-largest economy in the European Union. Key industries include manufacturing (automotive components, machinery, and chemicals), IT and business process outsourcing, and video game development. Warsaw, Kraków, and Wrocław have developed into established hubs for shared services and IT delivery, and the country has become a significant nearshoring destination for manufacturers and service providers looking for alternatives to more distant supply chains.

The Polish labour market has tightened in recent years, with unemployment remaining low and average wages rising steadily. This has increased competition for skilled workers, particularly in IT, engineering, and finance roles concentrated in the major cities.

Poland operates within the EU regulatory framework, and its Labour Code sets out detailed, formal requirements for employment contracts, working time, and termination — a more prescriptive framework than at-will jurisdictions.

Ease of doing business ranking = 40

CAPITAL	Warsaw
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Polish
POPULATION	37.8 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Polish Złoty (PLN)
VAT	23%



Hiring Considerations

- Termination must be justified in writing, and notice periods are set by law based on tenure: two weeks (under 6 months), one month (6 months to 3 years), and three months (3 years or more).
- The standard workweek is 40 hours — 8 hours per day, five days per week, averaged over a reference period of up to four months.
- Paid annual leave is either 20 or 26 days depending on total years of professional experience (including certain periods of education).
- Sick pay is generally covered by the employer for up to 33 days (or 14 days for employees over 50), after which state social insurance (ZUS) takes over.
- Probationary periods are capped at three months.

Cultural Considerations

- Business culture in Poland tends to be more formal in traditional and larger organisations, with flatter, more informal structures common in tech and startup environments.
- Hierarchy and title are generally respected in meetings and communications, particularly with more established companies.
- Building trust and a working relationship before finalising business decisions is common practice.
- Poland’s role as a nearshoring and outsourcing hub has brought a more internationally minded, English-proficient workforce into IT and business services roles.always agreeable to everyone involved in the process.

“Poland is one of the busiest markets we cover in Central and Eastern Europe. Its position as a manufacturing and logistics base – right on the EU’s eastern border – means export controls scrutiny has really sharpened, particularly around dual-use and defence-related trade. The talent pool is strong and well-educated, but senior export controls professionals are still thin on the ground relative to demand.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE POLAND

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (PLN)
Trade Compliance Analyst	zł 50,000 — zł 240,000
Trade Compliance Manager	zł 260,000 — zł 350,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	zł 430,000 — zł 690,000
Head of Trade Compliance	zł 560,000 — zł 870,000

PORTUGAL

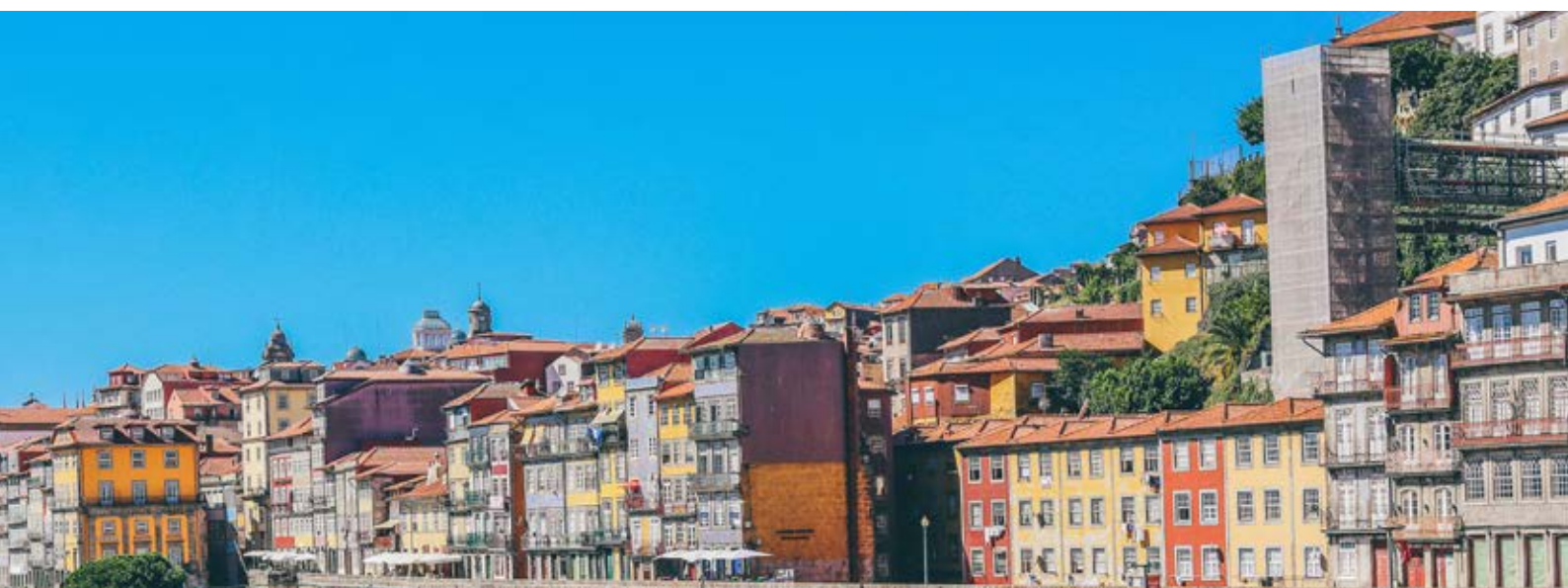
Portugal has a nominal GDP of approximately USD\$380 billion. The economy is built around tourism, automotive manufacturing (including Volkswagen's Autoeuropa plant), textiles, cork production, and wine, alongside a growing technology and ICT sector centred in Lisbon, which has developed a notable startup and tech ecosystem in recent years.

Wages in Portugal remain comparatively lower than in other Western European countries, which has contributed to some outflow of younger, skilled professionals seeking higher pay elsewhere in the EU. Unemployment sits at around 6%, and the government has continued structural reforms aimed at improving competitiveness and public finances following the debt crisis of the early 2010s.

Portuguese labour law is detailed and worker-protective, with specific requirements around working time, notice periods, and mandatory salary payments that differ from many other EU jurisdictions.

Ease of doing business ranking = 39

CAPITAL	Lisbon
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Portuguese
POPULATION	10.4 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro (EUR)
VAT	23%



Hiring Considerations

- Written employment contracts are required, setting out terms including salary, working hours, and role.
- Employers must pay mandatory 13th and 14th month salary instalments, typically disbursed in June (holiday allowance) and December (Christmas allowance), or spread across the 12 regular salaries.
- The standard workweek is 40 hours — 8 hours per day, five days per week. Overtime is capped at two hours per day and 150 hours per year, with tiered premium rates.
- Notice periods for dismissal scale with tenure, ranging from 15 days for employees with up to one year of service to 75 days for those with 10 or more years.
- Objective dismissals require severance pay, calculated based on salary and length of service.
- Legislation protects an employee’s “right to disconnect,” restricting employer contact outside working hours except in emergencies.

Cultural Considerations

- Portuguese business culture places emphasis on personal relationships, and initial meetings often include informal conversation before moving to business matters.
- Decision-making can be hierarchical, particularly in traditional industries and family-owned businesses.
- Punctuality is valued in formal business settings, though the overall pace of business can be less rushed than in some other European markets.
- The expansion of Lisbon’s tech and startup sector has introduced more informal, internationally oriented working norms alongside the country’s traditional corporate culture.

“Portugal is quietly becoming a genuine trade compliance hub, largely because so many multinationals have moved their global business services centres there. The local talent pool hasn’t caught up yet, so we’re seeing companies either grow their own juniors or bring experience in from Spain and the wider EU. It’s a market to watch.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE PORTUGAL

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst	€35,000–€50,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€45,000–€75,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€80,000–€110,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€100,000–€160,000+

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	58.76 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.

“What's interesting about Italy right now is how much of the demand is coming from mid-sized and family-owned exporters — businesses with real dual-use and sanctions exposure that are only now building formal compliance functions. They don't need someone to maintain a framework. They need someone who can build one from scratch, and those people are hard to find.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE ITALY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Trade Compliance Analyst	€35,000–€65,000
Trade Compliance Manager	€65,000–€100,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	€90,000–€150,000
Head of Trade Compliance	€140,000–€220,000+

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	8.85 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.

“Switzerland remains a sophisticated and competitive market for global trade compliance hiring. In 2025 we completed several Global Head of Trade Compliance searches, and we expect further team-build projects in 2026. Our long-standing network across the Swiss trade compliance community continues to be invaluable. Success here often requires blending local Swiss expertise with international talent willing to relocate from Germany, France or Italy.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SWITZERLAND

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Trade Compliance Analyst	CHF90,000 — CHF130,000
Trade Compliance Manager	CHF125,000 — CHF180,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	CHF165,000 — CHF250,000
Head of Trade Compliance	CHF250,000+

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.

“Swedish organisations tend to run lean compliance teams, which means they prioritise candidates who can work autonomously, influence cross-functional stakeholders, and manage complex regulatory issues across multiple jurisdictions. Although Sweden maintains a strong domestic talent pool, competition for mid-senior professionals has intensified, particularly in export controls, CBAM/EUDR compliance, and supply-chain transparency. As a result, companies are becoming more open to relocating talent from other Nordic countries or the wider EU to fill specialist roles. Overall, Sweden remains a highly attractive and stable market for trade compliance professionals — but securing top talent requires targeted outreach and a deep understanding of the Nordic hiring landscape.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

SALARY GUIDE SWEDEN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SEK)
Trade Compliance Analyst	SEK425,000 — SEK745,000
Trade Compliance Manager	SEK725,000 — SEK1,280,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	SEK1,150,000 — SEK1,900,000
Head of Trade Compliance	SEK1,330,000 — SEK2,245,000

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\$517 billion in 2025.

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 an estimated \$715 billion worth of active construction in process (according to MEED Projects, 2024)

Ease of doing business ranking = 16

CAPITAL	Abu Dhabi
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Arabic, English
POPULATION	11.2 million
PAYROLL	Monthly or Bi-Weekly
CURRENCY	United Arab Emirates Dirham (AED)
VAT	5%

“Trade compliance hiring in the UAE remains highly active in 2026, driven by the region’s push to cement itself as a global logistics, manufacturing and financial hub. With Dubai and Riyadh now openly competing for regional headquarters, the UAE is working hard to retain its position as the preferred base for multinational compliance teams. This has created a premium for experienced professionals who can operate across the GCC and advise on the regulatory differences between the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and broader Middle Eastern markets. While the talent pool here is strong, competition is intense, and companies must move decisively to secure senior candidates. I still find the UAE one of the most enjoyable markets to recruit in — the pace is fast, the roles are complex, and the professionals here are among the most globally minded in the sector.”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
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	PACKAGE RANGE (AED)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	AED150,000 – AED250,000
Trade Compliance Manager	AED200,000 – AED450,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	AED450,000 – AED750,000
Head of Trade Compliance	AED700,000 – AED1,100,000

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia's economy is a rapidly-developing major player on the global stage and the world's biggest exporter and producer of oil.

In spite of what may appear to be a low 'ease of doing business' ranking, the country rose 30 places since the previous report and has implemented some significant reforms in recent years, including enforcing contracts by publishing court performance measurement reports, tripling the VAT rate from 5% to 15%, implementing Transfer Pricing guidelines and Real Estate Transaction Tax, abolishing the sponsorship system and introducing E-Invoicing regulations.

In terms of non-oil exports, more than 90% comprises electrical appliances, petrochemicals, construction materials, plastics and metal goods.

Saudi Arabia's unique location – central to Asia, Europe and Africa – makes it a natural

channel for worldwide trade routes, as well as a popular location for international business expansion. It's a major member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and enables easy access to other Gulf markets.

Ease of doing business ranking = 62

“Saudi Arabia remains one of the fastest-accelerating trade compliance markets in the world as Vision 2030 continues to reshape the Kingdom's economic landscape. What makes Saudi Arabia particularly unique is the pace of transformation. Organisations here are often building trade compliance functions almost from scratch, which means they're looking for leaders who can design programmes, implement governance structures, and engage confidently with regulators. With Riyadh attracting an unprecedented number of regional HQ relocations, competition for skilled candidates has never been higher.”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

CAPITAL	Riyadh
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Arabic
POPULATION	35.34 million
PAYROLL	Monthly/Weekly
CURRENCY	Saudi Riyal
VAT	15%



Hiring Considerations

- The work week in Saudi Arabia is usually six days, with Friday as a rest day. Working days are typically eight actual hours, but during Ramadan, this is reduced to six hours.
- As per the labour law, at least 75% of the workforce in any organisation must consist of Saudi nationals. However, the Government has the authority to temporarily reduce this percentage in certain cases, such as when there is a lack of technically or academically qualified workers, or when a vacancy cannot be filled by a Saudi national.
- In reality, Saudi nationals only comprise approximately one-fifth of the private sector workforce. To increase this proportion, the Government follows a policy called “Saudization,” which includes the Nitaqat scheme. The Nitaqat scheme applies to private sector companies with six or more employees and sets quotas for the employment of Saudi nationals based on the company’s size and sector.
- Certain designated jobs can only be filled by Saudi nationals, including various clerical and supervisory roles, as well as positions in hospitality, tourism, retail, private security, healthcare, and HR.
- Foreign nationals working in Saudi Arabia must have sponsorship from an employer, typically a domestic or multinational company in the country.
- Employers of foreign nationals are responsible for all recruitment costs,

including work visas, residence permits, their renewal, and return tickets to the employee’s home country upon employment termination. Employers face higher “expat fees” if they employ more foreign nationals than Saudi citizens.

Cultural Considerations

- It is not uncommon for key employees to be family members.
- Some Saudis may view things as being willed by God. This is reflected in the common saying “Inshallah” (If God wills it).
- Although it remains a conservative business environment, cultural change is happening. Saudi Arabia is adapting in line with Saudi Vision 2030; of which one aim is to establish a “vibrant” society. One aspect which is particularly noticeable is the growing prominence of women in senior management and business founder roles.
- A divisive culture can prevail between locals and expats in some companies, and discrimination does, sadly, exist. The government’s Saudization policy – where citizens are fast-tracked into jobs, training, and promotion at the expense of expats – can create tension.
- Most Saudi businesspeople speak very good English, but a few words of Arabic are always very well received.
- In terms of clothing, offices and meetings demand formal attire. This means suits for expats, and national dress (white thobe, red/ white checked ghutra) for locals.

SALARY GUIDE SAUDI ARABIA

TITLE	PACKAGE RANGE (SAR)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	SAR120,000 – SAR220,000
Trade Compliance Manager	SAR175,000 – SAR375,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	SAR430,000 – SAR700,000
Head of Trade Compliance	SAR600,000 – SAR1,000,000



2.3 ASIA–PACIFIC

Asia-Pacific remains one of the most dynamic and strategically important trade regions in the world, but it is also becoming one of the most complex from a compliance perspective. As multinational organisations continue to diversify supply chains and manufacturing footprints, countries such as India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia are attracting significant investment, while China remains a critical hub for global trade despite ongoing geopolitical tensions and regulatory scrutiny.

The shift towards regionalisation, friendshoring and supply chain resilience has created new opportunities across the region, but it has also increased regulatory complexity. Trade compliance teams are navigating a growing web of export controls, sanctions requirements, customs regulations and product-specific restrictions, particularly within technology, semiconductor, defence, life sciences and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Organisations operating across multiple APAC jurisdictions must also manage varying regulatory expectations, enforcement

approaches and reporting obligations, often balancing local requirements against the demands of US, UK and European compliance frameworks.

At the same time, governments across the region are investing heavily in strategic industries and strengthening oversight of critical technologies, supply chain security and cross-border trade flows. Increased focus on forced labour, supplier transparency, ESG reporting and responsible sourcing is placing additional pressure on businesses to demonstrate greater visibility across increasingly complex supply networks.

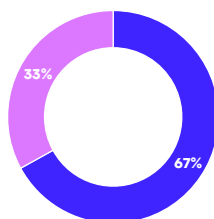
As a result, demand for trade compliance professionals continues to grow across the region. Employers are seeking candidates who can operate confidently across jurisdictions, interpret rapidly evolving regulations and partner effectively with stakeholders in legal, procurement, logistics and commercial teams. Beyond technical expertise, the most sought-after professionals bring strong cultural awareness, regional market knowledge and the ability to influence decision-making within complex multinational environments.

APAC TALENT INTELLIGENCE DATA

In addition to recruitment, Leonid also offers ‘**Talent Intelligence**’ — data-driven insights to guide our clients’ decisions around hiring, retention, and workforce planning. Here’s a snapshot of what our data is telling us about the current trade compliance APAC hiring market.



Hiring demand in Trade Compliance in APAC is
Moderate



Gender Diversity Split
33% Female 67% Male

2.4 YEARS

Median Tenture of Candidates

3.7%

% of professionals who moved jobs in the last year

What are the top locations for this talent? (highest number of professionals)

1. Singapore
2. Hong Kong
3. Tokyo, Japan
4. Shanghai/Shenzhen, China
5. Mumbai, India

Top 3 industries employing this talent



Technology



Electronics/Industrial Manufacturing



Logistics/Freight Forwarding & Trading Companies

Hiring Hotspots



CHINA

China boasts the largest population of any country in the world, with over 1.4 billion people and is home to a highly talented and educated workforce. The job market is thriving and companies operating in China often seek individuals with specialised skills such as Mandarin proficiency, experience in the local market, and adaptability in the rapidly evolving trade environment.

Employment laws in China are designed to protect Chinese workers' rights, but there are also strict regulations on hiring and firing employees. The business climate in China is generally favourable for foreign investment, but there are still some challenges, such as intellectual property rights protection and regulatory compliance.

Ease of doing business ranking = 32

CAPITAL	Beijing
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Standard Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, English, Mongolian, Korean, Tibetan, Uyghur, Zhuang, Kazakh, Yi
POPULATION	1.453 billion
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Renminbi (RMB)
VAT	Most goods and some services – 13% Real estate, transportation, postal and agriculture – 9% Services – 6% Small-scale taxpayers – 3% Exports – 0%



Hiring Considerations

- China typically has short notice periods — one month is standard.
- Annual bonuses are usually paid in March–April time, so April–May is a good time to hire people in China.
- Employees who have been with a company for less than 12 months do not have any entitlement to holiday pay. For tenures of between one and ten years, the standard holiday allowance is five days per year.
- Payroll and taxes in China are regulated by the State Administration of Taxation (SAT) and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS). Employers are responsible for withholding and paying taxes on their employees' behalf and making social security contributions.
- WeChat is the most popular social media network and is used far more widely than LinkedIn.

Cultural Considerations

- Hierarchy is an important feature of Chinese workplaces and employees will rarely question any direction they are given, out of respect.

- ‘Guanxi’ is an important concept in Chinese business; it essentially requires a personal bond to form, before any business relationship can develop.
- Co-workers typically socialise together and exchange gifts — anyone who doesn't join in risks being viewed as too self-centred.
- China is renowned for its ‘overtime culture’ where employees work well beyond their contractual hours, out of a sense of duty
- Napping at work is acceptable – and in some cases, encouraged!

“In 2026, on the ground talent in China is more essential than ever. Hiring remains difficult due to restrictions on global platforms like LinkedIn, so we rely heavily on trusted networks and local search channels. Tighter export controls, cybersecurity regulations, and geopolitical risk continue to create complexity. But demand is strong – especially for senior customs, sanctions, and government liaison expertise.”

Jamie Browne
Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist

SALARY GUIDE CHINA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (RMB)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	¥150,000 – ¥300,000
Trade Compliance Manager	¥250,000 – ¥600,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	¥500,000 – ¥900,000
Head of Trade Compliance	¥800,000 – ¥1,400,000

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. Communication tends to be polite, indirect and harmonious, with an emphasis on maintaining positive relationships.

“Singapore remains the strategic epicenter for APAC trade compliance. Companies want leaders with multi jurisdictional expertise who can navigate diverse regulatory environments from Korea to Australia. The community is collaborative and highly networked, making Singapore an effective hub, but competition for top talent remains intense.”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

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SALARY GUIDE SINGAPORE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SGD)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	S\$70,000 – S\$110,000
Trade Compliance Manager	S\$90,000 – S\$160,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	S\$150,000 – S\$250,000
Head of Trade Compliance	S\$220,000 – S\$350,000

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

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“Recruiting in Japan requires patience, cultural understanding and long established networks. Cold outreach rarely works: recommendations and word of mouth are essential. Japan’s regulatory environment is becoming more demanding, especially around export controls and supply chain transparency, making senior compliance professionals extremely valuable.”

Jamie Browne

Managing Director
& Trade Compliance Specialist
Leonid Group

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



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 is rooted in a system that rewards behaviour demonstrating team effort, as well as individual accomplishments.
- Non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions and body language, is heavily relied upon in Japanese workplaces.

SALARY GUIDE JAPAN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (JPY)
Trade Compliance Analyst/Specialist	¥6,000,000 – ¥8,500,000
Trade Compliance Manager	¥9,000,000 – ¥12,500,000
Trade Compliance Director/Regional Head	¥16,500,000 – ¥25,600,000
Head of Trade Compliance	¥24,000,000 – ¥34,000,000



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CONCLUSION

If the last few years have demonstrated anything, it is that trade compliance has become one of the most strategically important functions within a global business.

What was once viewed largely as a regulatory requirement now sits at the centre of decisions around supply chains, market access, sourcing strategies and geopolitical risk.

As tariffs, sanctions, export controls and customs requirements continue to evolve, organisations can no longer afford to treat trade compliance as a back-office function. It has become a critical enabler of business resilience and growth.

For many employers, the challenge is no longer understanding the importance of trade compliance. It is finding professionals capable of navigating an environment that grows more complex each year. The most sought-after candidates combine deep technical expertise with commercial awareness, strong stakeholder management skills and the confidence to influence decisions at the highest levels of an organisation. Increasingly, businesses are looking for leaders who can translate regulatory change into practical business strategy.

Technology will undoubtedly continue to transform the profession. Automation, AI-powered screening tools and digital trade

platforms are helping teams improve efficiency and manage growing regulatory demands. Yet technology alone is not a substitute for expertise. Organisations still need experienced professionals who can interpret changing regulations, assess risk, exercise judgement and guide businesses through uncertainty.

The reality is that volatility has become a permanent feature of the global trading landscape. Political tensions, shifting trade alliances, economic nationalism and more aggressive regulatory enforcement are unlikely to disappear any time soon. Businesses that thrive will be those that invest ahead of the curve, building robust compliance frameworks, modernising their systems and securing the talent needed to respond quickly to change.

Trade compliance is no longer simply about protecting organisations from risk. In 2026 and beyond, it is increasingly becoming a source of competitive advantage. Those that can adapt faster, make informed decisions and move confidently through an increasingly fragmented regulatory environment will be best positioned to seize opportunities in a rapidly changing world.

This makes one thing clear: the organisations investing in trade compliance talent today are not just preparing for tomorrow's challenges. They are building the foundations for long-term success.



leonid

Ready to get in touch with us?

Leonid is a leading, international recruiter in trade compliance 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 Managing Director Jamie Browne, please email him directly:

jamie@leonid-group.com

You can also reach out via the following methods:

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