

# Writing applications that impress

Producing a carefully tailored country-specific CV or application will ensure you make it through the initial application stages.

**I**n the highly competitive European job market first impressions are all-important. A badly pitched CV or application will fail to convince employers that you'd be an asset to their organisation. However, a CV or application that is brimming with relevant experience as well as a targeted covering letter that showcases your interest in the organisation and your suitability for the position will help you get your foot on the first rung of the international career ladder.

## All-round appeal

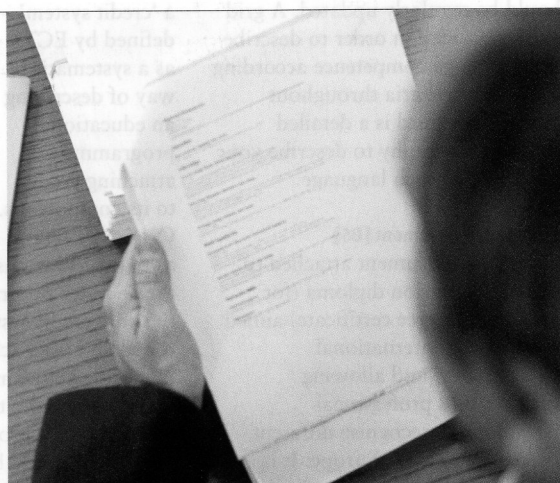
As the concept of working abroad becomes ever more popular, so recruiters' expectations of applicants get higher. Hannah Longden, graduate recruitment and marketing associate at the Financial Services Authority, explains, 'As a recruiter I'm looking for European applicants to demonstrate their commitment to living and working in this country. We see our graduate programme as the beginning of their career with us, not just a short-term proposition.' When applying for a position abroad it is important to convey your interest and commitment to an international career and multicultural working environment. Recruiters will assess what steps you have taken to understand their organisation and country culture, as well as how your personality is likely to fit in. This is in addition to their recognition of your technical competence and suitability for the position.

## CV essentials

Smaller organisations will often ask you to send a CV and covering letter. Different countries look for different content – for example, in Italy they consider information on hobbies irrelevant as the CV is merely a tool to get you to interview. Thorough research is the only way to ensure your CV or application form ticks all of the country-specific application rules. Keep the information clear and concise – employers need to be able to pick out the details they are most interested in. A short personal objective at the beginning of the CV can be useful for outlining a particular aim. You can then go on to elaborate on your goals in your covering letter.

## Quality covering letters

A covering letter is the first point of contact between you and an employer. First impressions count, so show them that you have thought about the position, know about the organisation and that you are serious about the



position. 'A good covering letter will highlight why a candidate wants to work for us as well as demonstrating knowledge of our organisation,' confirms Hannah. 'Recruiters expect all candidates to understand the nature of our business and how we operate.'

In the UK covering letters tend to be word processed and several paragraphs in length. In France they are often handwritten and in Italy employers only want to see one or two brief sentences. Again research is crucial to enable you to pitch yours effectively.

## Applying online

Large employers often prefer you to fill out an application form (designed to extract the exact information they are looking for) rather than submit a CV. Online applications are increasingly common across all sectors and are likely to form a large proportion of your applications. Find out as much as you can about the organisation and its recruitment criteria to help you present yourself in the right way. With e-applications it is important to exercise caution: spelling and grammatical mistakes are easily made if you rush. Make sure you keep your responses relevant and succinct and do not rely on spellcheck – it is vital to take as much care with an online application as you would on paper. □

Want to know more about the application procedures for specific countries? Turn to pages 55 to 71 for top-notch applications advice for 18 European countries.