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PRESS RELEASE UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL DECEMBER 08 2020 (012.01 ET)

Cautious hiring plans among Norwegian employers

ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey 1Q 2021

NORWAY (December 08, 2020) – Norwegian employers report cautious hiring plans for the coming quarter, according to the ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey. Half of the employers do not expect to ever return to pre-Covid hiring levels.

Job seekers in Norway can expect a soft hiring climate during the first quarter of 2021. Employers are reporting a seasonally adjusted Net Employment Outlook of +2%, according to the ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey. Hiring sentiment strengthens by 2 percentage points compared to the previous quarter, but dips by 9 percentage points when compared with the same period last year.

Employers were also asked when they expect to return to pre-Covid hiring levels. Only 4% expect a return within the next 3 months, 10% within the next 9 months, and 16% within the next year. 13% say this could take more than a year, while as many as 49% do not expect that they will ever return to pre-Covid hiring levels.

“Norwegian employers are more optimistic now than they have been since the outbreak of the pandemic, but the crisis is far from over. Half of the employers surveyed do not expect hiring rates to ever return to pre-crisis levels, which indicates that some of the jobs lost during the crisis may never return,” says Maalfrid Brath, Managing Director of ManpowerGroup Norway.

Construction sector still the strongest

Workforce gains are anticipated in five of Norway’s seven industry sectors during the next quarter. Compared with the previous quarter, outlooks strengthen in three sectors, but weaken in four. When compared with this time last year, however, hiring prospects decline in all seven sectors.

As was the case in the previous ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, employers in the Construction sector expect the largest increase in payrolls, reporting an outlook of +8%. However, hiring plans in the sector decline by 11 percentage points quarter-over-quarter, and by 6 percentage points year-over-year.

The outlook for the Finance & Business Services sector is also +8%, decreasing by 3 percentage points when compared with the previous quarter, but remaining relatively stable in comparison with 1Q 2020.

Employers in Norway’s Restaurants & Hotels sector report the weakest hiring intentions for the third consecutive quarter with an outlook of -7% as the hiring slump continues, improving



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by 4 percentage points quarter-over-quarter, but declining by a steep margin of 21 percentage points year-over-year.

A sluggish hiring pace is also expected in the Other Services sector, where the outlook of -5% declines by 8 and 13 percentage points from 4Q 2020 and 1Q 2020, respectively.

Optimism returns to Northern Norway

Job gains are forecast in three of Norway's five regions during the first quarter of 2021, while employers in the other two expect to trim payrolls. Hiring intentions strengthen in three regions quarter-over-quarter, but weaken in all five when compared to this time one year ago.

The strongest regional outlook of +6% is reported in the Northern region, improving by 3 percentage points quarter-over-quarter, but declining by 7 percentage points when compared with this time one year ago.

Employers in the Greater Oslo area report muted hiring plans of -3%, matching the record low forecast reported in 2009. Hiring sentiment in the region weakens by 3 and 10 percentage points from 4Q 2020 and 1Q 2020, respectively.

Payroll gains are anticipated in two of the four organization size categories during the coming quarter, most notably for medium employers, with an outlook of +3%. Meanwhile, flat hiring activity is forecast with outlooks of 0% in both the Micro- and Large-size categories.

The ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey for the first quarter of 2021 was conducted in October 2020 by interviewing a representative sample of 419 employers in Norway. Interviewing was carried out during the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak. All survey participants were asked, "How do you anticipate total employment at your location to change in the three months to the end of March 2021 as compared to the current quarter?" Participants were also asked, "When do you expect your company to return to pre-COVID-19 hiring levels?"

The Net Employment Outlook figure is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating total employment to increase and subtracting from this the percentage expecting to see a decrease in employment at their location in the next quarter.

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