



SEAD

Sustainable Employment in the Age of Digitalisation:
challenges, obstacles and opportunities

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Case reports for specific occupations: the case of recruiters

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Introduction

The scope of the WP3 is to **study changing occupations** (in connection with the introduction of digital tools) in established organisations. The changes are related to job content, skills, and quality of work. Those occupations were found according to two sources of recruitment: 1. individual workers from the selected occupations within the organization of the WP2 (made of 21 case studies); and 2. individual workers from the selected occupations outside the organization of the WP2. **The objective** of this work package is to realize in-depth qualitative case studies of technology-related change in specific occupations (*no matter what the organisational context they are embedded in*). The case study reports are structured according to the conceptual model that is used in this work package. This is discussed in the SEAD Chapter 1 “Induction paper”.

75 interviews of the five occupations depicted below were held, completed by 3 interviews of middle-managers and recruiters' representatives.

The five considered occupations are:

(Color below what is the analyzed occupation in your case)

Occupations	Assembly line workers	Customer advisors	Middle Managers	R&D Managers	Recruiters
Interviews number	N=11	N=13	N=21	N=13	N=17
Definition	Workstations wherein a product is assembled progressively by different workers or machines, each of them executing a subset of the needed assembly operation (Moreira et al., 2015)	Workers who interact with customers after the purchase of goods/services. Their main aim is usually to provide service and support to customers in order to increase customers' satisfaction (Jasmand, Blazevic, & De Ruyter, 2012).	Managers who typically head a function, team or office and supervise day-today operations (Chen, Berman, & Wang, 2017).	Managers responsible for the research, planning and implementation of new programs and protocols. They also supervise the development of new products from the initial planning phase to implementation or production (Study, 2020).	Workers in charge of recruitment (the act of building a pool of potential candidates for a vacancy) and selection (assessing the capabilities and fitting of those candidates for the said vacancy) (Stone et al., 2015)

1. Preliminary information

1. Overall profile of respondents

There were more women (10) than men (7) in the sample, though to a lesser extent. Most of them (11) were recruiters with between 3 and 10 years' seniority, or less (5). Only 1 person in our sample had been a recruiter for more than 10 years.

In terms of age, we do not have information for all the people interviewed. According to the information available, 6 of them are aged between 24 and 40, and 2 are between 41 and 55.

Type	Age	Seniority
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10 women 7 men	6 24-40 2 41-55 9 NA	5 of 0-3 years 11 of 3-10 years 1 of >10 years
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2. Contextual information

The sectors represented in our sample are as follows: 5 recruiters from the public sector, 4 from a recruitment agency. 2 from the banking sector, 1 from mass distribution, 1 from transport, 1 from the energy sector, 1 from a social secretariat and 1 from a training company.

Most of the organisations (8) have more than 250 employees, 2 are medium-sized (less than 250 employees) and 2 are small (less than 50 employees). We do not have this information for 6 recruiters interviewed.

Finally, 10 recruiters are from organisations in Flanders, 5 in Wallonia, and 2 in the Brussels region.

Sector†	Size	Region
5 public	2 small (<50)	2 Brussels
2 bank	2 averages (<250)	5 Wallonia
1 major retailer	8 large (>250)	10 Flanders
1 transport	6 NA	
1 energy		
2 social secretariat		
4 recruitment agency		
1 training course		

2. Type of technology(ies) used

The tools most frequently used by recruiters are, in decreasing order of importance, **interaction tools** (videoconferencing, chatbots), used both with candidates and customers and internally with colleagues, **data management** tools (such as ERP and CRM), enabling information to be accessed and updated for monitoring during the recruitment process, and finally **artificial intelligence**.

These tools are frequently combined to automate certain stages of the selection and recruitment process (for example, for the automatic generation of mailings). More specifically, AI is used to a lesser extent (according to the people interviewed in our sample) as a decision-making tool in the selection of candidates. However, the recruiters interviewed say that the human component remains important, for example in personalising the messages sent, and a fortiori in making decisions about recruiting a candidate.

The uses associated with these tools are detailed below.

Automatic generation of automatic documents or response messages

As soon as possible, recruiters use automation tools for certain repetitive tasks with little added value, according to their perception, such as generating administrative documents or acknowledgment or response emails, for example.

Online selection: online tests, videoconference interviews, skills assessment

Interaction tools (whether video-conferencing or online tests) are used with candidates to select them to fill the vacancy for which the recruiter is responsible. On the one hand, these tools make it possible to gather relevant information on the candidate's profile and enrich their application file. Secondly, they enable contact to be established between the candidate and the recruiter so that they can interact during selection interviews or exchange various information about the vacancy or the application. Some of these tools are used synchronously (for selection interviews) and asynchronously, while others are automated (in the case of tests carried out by the candidate). This proliferation of tools means that recruiters have access to richer and more comprehensive information about candidates, enabling them to base their recruitment decisions on a wider range of factors.

"It's fully automatic today. Our current process allows us to start gathering a lot of information about a candidate in one go. Where before you only had a CV and a short telephone interview with the candidate, you didn't get everything you wanted. Today, with our online platform, it's all there. There are assessments and motivation questionnaires. There are personality tests and video interviews. You have much more information about the candidate than just their CV, which considerably broadens the advice you can give to your recruitment manager or client. By having much more information about the candidate, you can make a fundamental decision". (RE17)

Another advantage of using these tools, explains Recruiter 16, is that it saves time which can be devoted to other operations in the selection process: attracting candidates (which will be discussed later in this report). It should be remembered that the current context is characterised by a tight labor market, with a shortage of labor in several sectors and for several functions. This means that recruiters need to devote more energy to proactively reaching out to potential candidates.

We carry out an online pre-selection with several tests. Candidates go through a platform and an online video interview that we have already put in place (...) the selection process is now largely automated (...). This gives us more time for the attraction phase (RE16)

Finally, it should be noted that the use of these tools *de facto* shifts some of the workload associated with the recruitment and selection process onto the candidates themselves, insofar as they enter various information about their profile on these platforms. Recruiter 20 points to one benefit for the company in this respect: *"Everything to do with automation and selection is a fairly repetitive task. And in fact, digitisation is a major productivity booster. Because in fact there is a whole series of costs and things that I no longer have to manage but which have to be managed by the participants: the fact of sending a test online means that I don't have to have a room, I don't have to have equipment, the electricity is not at my cost, the equipment is not at my cost, the Internet connection is not at my cost... All these productivity gains are made on the backs of the users in fact, if you're a bit cynical."* (RE20)

Job matching: online applications, selection (filtration) from databases

The use of tools to check the match between job offer and job demand (or *job matching*) can be broken down into different programs and operations: the use of online platforms enabling candidates to respond to an advert, the creation of databases of candidates, structured according to different descriptive dimensions (such as the candidate's region, age, degree and skills, for example), and the use of filters according to specific selection criteria to extract from the databases of candidates the profiles that are most relevant to the vacancy. This selection of CVs

is carried out either 'manually' by the recruiter or assisted by artificial intelligence. In this case, recruiters stress the fact that human-machine interaction is conceived as a collaboration, and not a substitution, between these two agents (human and technological). Indeed, recruiters insist that the human element must be maintained at this stage of the selection process, and state that they will never give primacy or decision-making power to the machine. By way of illustration, recruiter 17 details these operations:

"Our CV selection is based on artificial intelligence and is accompanied by advice. Good profiles are automatically forwarded. If they are rejected, we also ask why. Then we examine the CV. That's also the human story: as a recruiter, you can always overlook a reader. Because you can't make a decision based on artificial intelligence (...) A candidate can do relatively a lot of things automatically. But it's a lot warmer if you call them up and say: "We've received your application, and I'm going to admit you to the platform, what works like that with me, are there any questions? In the meantime, you've already established a relationship with this candidate and you're guiding them through the process. (...) The technology indicates that it automatically takes the candidate through a certain number of stages, but it doesn't do the work. You indicate the platform, the candidate can take the wheel themselves and decide when they will do their assessment, but the test is over. Again, this is a job for the recruiter, who needs to see what the candidate is doing. It's a question of yes or no because on the basis of the tests, a candidate can also be rejected. So it's work in return for the recruiter. The process won't do it. (...) You're in constant communication and dialogue with the people involved in the project". (RE17)

Multi-posting of job offers (via social networks or professional platforms)

One tool that is widely used by recruiters (it could even be said to be a widespread tool to date) is professional platforms (such as LinkedIn, for example) and those specialised in recruitment (for example, those of Forem or the VDAB). To advertise vacancies as widely as possible, and gain access to the largest pools of potential candidates, recruiters use these tools for multi-posting, which is much appreciated for the time they save and the wider access to the information they need. They also make a point of ensuring their presence on social networks. However, we will see later (in the section on skills) that using these tools requires a different approach and writing style.

Data management

According to the recruiters we interviewed, the use of databases is now essential for correctly managing the mass of data relating to candidates on the one hand and vacancies on the other. This tool, which is invaluable for monitoring ongoing recruitment processes and for sourcing (i.e. building up a portfolio of potential candidates for future recruitment processes), once again demonstrates the importance and value of data in this business.

Recruiter 17 explains: *"For example, on LinkedIn, you can also go to the recruitment platform, but you also have a platform where you can look at 'where a certain number of profiles are, what the competition is doing, where they work'. So you can base yourself on data - yes, data is the new electricity, they say. Data helps you to do many things correctly. So we have a lot of information for that purpose." (RE17)*

Activity statistics

Based on the data they have at their disposal and the various computer processes they carry out, recruiters also use database management tools to draw up various statistics describing their activity. These statistics can then be used as a means of communicating with customers, but

also internally, for organisational purposes (planning actions to be taken) and team management (anticipating peaks in activity), or as part of the managerial relationship (as a basis for discussion during the appraisal interview), as we will see in the section devoted to this.

Recruiter 6 explains, *"Yes, real analysis in terms of data... we still work with statistics, so to keep track of the number of links we have, what percentage is that related to, in terms of margin do we have on additional lessons - we also look at a kind of individual for the service rate of account managers. For example, they get 10 in their name, how many of those are passed on as a link."* (RE06)

Diversion of uses

In addition to these "prescribed" uses of digital tools, recruiters sometimes hijack certain tools, or at least certain functions, to gain additional flexibility in the selection and recruitment process itself. This involves 'bypassing' in one way or another the functions provided in the tool or the rules of use defined by the company, to be able to add certain headings or more information useful to the recruiter. To do this, some recruiters interviewed explain, for example, that they subdivide the target population into sub-samples to be able to stagger the groups in the recruitment schedule. Another method used by some recruiters is to add fields to the application form to include information not provided for by the system, such as photos of candidates or additional information gathered elsewhere. Recruiter 20 illustrates this type of approach in the example below:

"The tool that we have is not adapted and so what we do is, in inverted commas, well, I cheat (...) I divert the use of the software to make it work more or less and we have Excel files behind it, which allows us to balance the shot, i.e. in terms of recruitment volume this software time is designed for procedures that have a beginning and an end (...) we created sub-applications and we transfer the applications that come in (...) we found a whole system to divert the use of the software so that it more or less corresponds to our needs.) we created sub-applications and transferred the applications that came in (...) we found a whole system to divert the software so that it more or less corresponded to our needs. (...) You put some sort of fictitious end dates that allow you to cut the number of people applying per month so that you can manage them by session (...) for certain procedures and sometimes to increase your application for more complicated profiles (...) I cheat in fact, so I can't do anything about it.) I'm actually cheating, so I'll put FOREM on a line and instead of filling in the website I'll give an email address, and then I'll have a file where I manage the applications (...) in fact I'm led, in inverted commas, to cheat about the official rules to make it work" (RE20)

3. Changes/modifications of work

3.1 Changes in work content

As the uses described above suggest, it appears that the use of the technologies mentioned by recruiters is having an impact on the nature and, above all, the performance of their tasks throughout the selection and recruitment process. These changes are expressed in terms of the type of tasks, their complexity, the workload, and the pace of work. Here are the details:

The development of databases gives recruiters easier access to the information they are looking for but also makes it easier for them to pass on this information to their internal colleagues, clients, and candidates.

Recruiters 9 and 18 illustrate this simplification in this way, and highlight the **time saved**, which can be spent on the candidate, the company, or working more proactively:

"The workload used to consist mainly of receiving candidates based on application forms, which then had to be re-entered into a system. That has changed enormously in terms of workload. But of course, yes, the system still has to enter a lot of data into recruitment, and also to report, there are a lot more reporting options at the moment from the system (...). In the past, the reports were less accurate, I have the impression, but that was also because often a lot more entries were entered into the system, but as the possibilities increase, we will of course also have to enter a bit more into the system for reporting." (RE09)

"The development of the tool is there to serve our work. The tool's usefulness is really to simplify the things we were doing and to replace an old Excel file that wasn't very efficient. The aim, the interest of the tool is really to make things easier (...) It's really a tool that's put at the service of the department and that's put at the service of our work". (RE18)

Furthermore, the sharing of structured and formatted information in the same tool leads to **standardisation of both this information and the work processes** on which it is based. This reduction in the diversity of formats means that **recruiters need to adapt (or even conform) to the tools they use**, insofar as they have to pay attention to form, to the way they write ads or encode information according to the format imposed by the database or platform used. Recruiter 20 gives an example:

"We don't use the same method depending on the profile and the platform, as I was saying. Now, we can't ask Facebook to adapt the way they publish their advert for us, I'd say more to the limit on certain platforms that can do a bit at the customer's request, but it's still pretty rare and it's expensive in general, so it's more us who adapt to the way they encode and write adverts than us, afterwards we try to adapt to the person we're going to target. So if we're looking for students, or if we're looking for an employee, we're not going to write our post on Facebook or on other networks in the same way, but on the other hand, come on, the way of encoding, etc., from a technical point of view remains the same and that leaves us very little room for maneuver. I can't see myself contacting Facebook or LinkedIn, generally speaking, they already have their head office in Ireland, etc., so even from a billing point of view etc., it's always extremely complicated to get someone on the phone, and so, no, we have very little, we're really dependent on them". (RE20)

In addition, the proliferation of platforms and tools used by recruiters to widen the distribution of their advertisements and their access to as much information and as many candidates as possible is tantamount to a **scattering of information** that can be counter-productive and time-consuming, making it more difficult to find and update information. Recruiter 4 describes this phenomenon:

"When I arrived we were already working with the drive for everything, so we no longer worked with Word, Excel... we still had them but... it was a shared drive on Gmail. For example, I have access to two Drives, so I don't even know exactly what the difference is. I have BE Recruitment and I have TeamHR. It's not very clear which drive the information is on each shared drive, there's a multitude of things that almost certainly need to be cleaned up, but we don't worry too much about that. It's not easy". (RE04).

This dispersal of information across multiple tools results in a **multiplication of tasks**, which appear to be more **fragmented**. For example, recruiter 3 denounces the inflation of tasks in the following terms: *"They are more varied and there are more things to do because before we used to put, go back to the beginning of the consultant, he would put a poster in the window and then dot the line, and possibly a small ad in a newspaper, and now we have to do, put on our site, on all the job boards on the social networks, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. So in the end these tasks have multiplied, so in the end, it's doing the same task but on different platforms. Ultimately these tasks have multiplied, so ultimately it's doing the same task but on different platforms, and what's more the platforms aren't the same, so it takes a huge amount of time; For example, I published an advert internally, and it took me two hours to copy and paste it into different platforms, put it on the networks because you don't always write in the same way on Facebook as on LinkedIn, put in the little emoticons, so it's true that you have to adapt to the platform each time, and I'd say that takes a lot longer."* (RE03)

The result, according to some, is a **deterioration in follow-up and contact with candidates**. So the effect of technology is counter-productive here, in that the number of tasks taken on increases, but at the expense of important things like having more in-depth discussions with candidates:

We've got more things to publish, well we've got more platforms and tools, so it multiplies this task and so we're going to do other tasks less well or be less qualitative in following up with candidates for example, or in following up with clients, even though we still ask everyone to be good, to follow up clients and temps well, honestly now, as much as ten years ago we were careful to reply to candidates "you're suitable, you're not suitable, etc.", now we don't have the time at all to devote, so it's true that there are tasks that are, that we've had to drop. "Now we don't have the time to do that at all, so there are indeed some tasks that we've had to drop". (RE03)

Added to this is an **increase in interruptions and changing priorities**, making day-to-day tasks more complex. Recruiter 3 describes this phenomenon:

"And so the networks add another layer to the multitude of tasks. We're constantly interrupted in our work. Interviewer: "With other things to do or... ? " RE03: "Well, that's it. So you're constantly reviewing priorities, sometimes almost hour by hour. It's very complex in that respect." (RE03)

He adds: *"That's what's complicated now, is that to attract candidates we have to be present everywhere, use every conceivable media and be inventive. But then what's complicated sometimes is spreading ourselves too thin and doing one thing at a time, and we're still a small company, on a human scale"* (RE03).

Finally, some recruiters also point to another transformation of tasks directly linked to the growing use of social platforms and networks: **the need to adapt to their target audience**. Some low-skilled profiles are apparently less familiar with the use of such tools, or even do not have access to them. As a result, both the editorial style and how vacancies are advertised must take account of this **risk of a digital divide**, and not totally replace the means traditionally used (such as publishing vacancies in the written press or displaying them in the windows of temporary employment agencies).

As we have seen, the rise of recruitment platforms and social networks in particular is leading to a transformation of the recruiter's job, reflected in an **increase in remote tasks** (such as pre-screening CVs) and a tendency to pay more attention to **commercial** and communication **aspects to boost the attractiveness of** job offers aimed at a rarer, more demanding audience of candidates in a tight labour market.

These tasks are gradually replacing other, less value-added, more repetitive tasks, such as sending messages or documents, which are becoming increasingly automated. We are also seeing the **automation of recruitment schedules, and a reduction in multiple encoding**. Although this workload therefore seems to be decreasing, it is offset by more proactive work to attract candidates who are increasingly difficult to find, but this phenomenon is not directly linked to the use of technological tools. On the other hand, the **recruitment base is broader**, due to the use of databases and platforms covering a wider area, and therefore the **work involved in sorting and selecting applications in a proactive search for profiles is greater** than in the past. What's more, the automation of processes and the digitalisation of exchanges means that certain processes are being **speeded up**, such as setting up interviews by videoconference, which is now free of the constraints and travel time involved in physical travel.

WHAT SKILLS DO RECRUITERS USE, AND HOW ARE THEY CHANGING AS A RESULT OF DIGITALISATION?

The answers to this question were largely the same among the people we interviewed. First of all, let's look at **digital skills**: for the recruiter, it's all about getting to grips with the tools available to them. Understanding the tool, its purpose and how to use its main functions is at the top of the list of digital skills highlighted by recruiters... and is multiplied by the number and diversity of tools used. What's more, these skills need to be reactivated and updated fairly frequently, as the interview extracts below show:

"In terms of tool-related skills, we need to be more alert to new technologies that are changing all the time, social networks, rules (...) they change every six months, so we really need to be constantly on the lookout for new technologies. (RE03)

"Computer skills, I would say, to be able to juggle all the programs we have, job boards, etc. So that, because if you don't manage with the program, you'll never find candidates, you won't know how to send them, and so in the end, your work won't get done. So that, because if you don't manage with the program, you're never going to find candidates, you're not going to know how to send them out, and so in the end, your work won't get done." (RE14)

Finally, to a lesser extent given the relatively limited development of these tools, which are still not widely used, some recruiters also mentioned the skill of interpreting CVs using artificial intelligence. In our view, this skill lies at the intersection of digital skills (understanding the tool, its main foundations and how it works) and business skills (interpreting a CV).

Other **business skills** are very frequently cited by recruiters, indirectly linked to the use of digital tools: the ability to attract candidates ("commercial" approaches), or the ability to understand candidates' motivations and contextualise their experience. Another skill is data protection, which lies at the crossroads between digital skills - in terms of IT security - and business skills - in terms of the legal protection of data.)

Internally," adds recruiter 12, "it's also a question of being able to contextualise and explain the figures (descriptive data on the activity in the tool itself), which means a new skill in terms of data analysis:

"I do the report myself, so we bring it out every week, the HR platform, I bring out a report myself every week and then you can see "ok, someone has vacancies, that's it, they're open from this day approximately, from 1st March, and I put an extra column, calculate today minus the date made, that I tell you, "and you have this vacancy there, which has been open for 200 days anyway, tell me". That's always the context. You can't say "you've got these vacancies, we expect you to fill them within 3 months", it's never happened for all practical purposes, it won't happen either, it just won't happen. The job market always does eventually. But you can say "okay, you've got so many vacancies", but we have, sales, we don't have that. And then I'm told we need to increase sales by 50,000 units in the first quarter, that's not possible. You can't say "you must have closed 20 vacancies in the first quarter". It's simply not possible. We can't impose that today. Yes, there's always the context that comes into play, so it's not just the numbers that count." (RE12)

These skills are in addition to those traditionally used by recruiters, who see their profile becoming increasingly diversified and versatile. Recruiter 14, for example, develops this idea:

"There are also all the skills that have to do with CV analysis, seeing if a CV is relevant to what we're looking for, and interviews too, because you can't just improvise interviewing candidates, so there are all these skills that need to be developed, and which are, I think, essential for the job of recruiter. Now, there are quite a few skills that are also more related to administration, because we also draw up contracts for temps. It's a very multidisciplinary job, because you have to do the administration, you have to do the interviews, you have to manage the programs, you also have to do the sales, because there's a lot of sales in our job. So there's a huge range of skills involved in our job". (RE14)

Finally, in terms of **soft skills**, recruiters emphasize the importance of "compensating" or "counterbalancing" the digitalisation of their profession, by being able to show empathy, to establish quality interactions (human contact) with candidates, in other words, to have solid interpersonal skills. It is particularly through these interactions that they will also be able to deploy their skills of intuition, the recruiter's professional instinct capable of 'detecting' positive or negative points in the candidate's profile or experience that may have escaped the tool's initial analysis.

Finally, the use of a wide range of tools means that recruiters need to be agile, flexible and able to adapt to change.

The **learning opportunities** to which the use of these tools gives rise mainly involve exchanges between colleagues on the main functionalities of the tools, in particular 'tips and tricks' on searching for information and the use of metadata. In addition to informal exchanges, the adaptation of tools and adaptation to tools also takes place, in some cases, through *key users* who play the role of information transmission belts from and to developers on the one hand, and users on the other. We will go into more detail on this last aspect later, as this type of exchange is tending to be formalised as a training mechanism in its own right within certain organisations.

HOW DO USERS SEE THEIR TASKS CHANGING, AND HOW DO THEY SEE THEIR JOB EVOLVING AS A RESULT?

Generally speaking, and very widely shared, recruiters believe that the trend is towards greater automation of administrative and reporting tasks, both of which are perceived as repetitive and of little added value. As a result, this trend is rather positively received. It would allow them to devote more time to tasks likely to make a qualitative difference to candidates and customers. However, this is not the trend currently being observed (see above). It is nevertheless at this level, according to some, that the complementarity between human and machine could be best expressed, as explained, for example, by recruiter 17 :

"The difference, or what you do, is that on the one hand, your company gives you a lot more time to do things for your candidate... On the one hand, you don't have to deal with administrative tasks. As recruiters, we waste a lot of time on that. On the other hand, anyone can read a CV, because AI does it today. So you have more time to ask the candidate concrete questions. You have more time for your candidate and you also have more time for your company. (...) Anything that can be more efficient, that can be automated, a process in which you don't need to be an accountant or an administrative recruiter, yes if all that can be automated, which means that you have more time to make the difference and use your other skills, time for your candidate, time for your company, time to work more proactively, yes that's so much the better. For me, it's all positive. But as long as it's a good combination. Because I think that if you only have digital or only human... It's actually, yes, both, that I think will be the way to work. (RE17)

In the same vein, another trend mentioned by recruiters is to **devote more time to more "human" tasks**, as other tasks become automated. They stress the need to maintain interviews with candidates, ideally face-to-face, so that they can interact with them and detect non-verbal aspects that complement the information they gather from analysing CVs. These interactions make it possible to establish a more personalised connection with the candidate," explains recruiter 16:

"(...) you then have a lot of information, and you feel as if you already know this candidate even though you haven't spoken to them yet, which is great fun. It also makes it very real to start talking to the candidate. You can give them feedback or ask them how they experienced the process. After all, it's the first time you'll hear from them. For example, during the reasoning test, the candidate is a little late and finds it difficult, or he takes his time and sees that the result is not very good. It is then possible to better situate certain test results and explain them at the next stage. Based on these tests, you can already give them advice and tell them that you will be contacted by your recruitment manager. That's the human we've always put between us, whereas originally the process says that in principle there shouldn't be a recruiter between us because they can come in themselves, do online tests and I give them advice which I send to the hiring manager and the hiring manager is the first to contact that candidate, so they still haven't heard of recruitment, that's the scenario that theoretically applies to the situation. Then, if the hiring manager declares that the candidate is good, you move on to the final phase, the contracting phase, during which you'll have to contact your candidate as the recruiter anyway. For us, it's easier and the candidate likes the experience better than if you haven't heard from a candidate between the time they apply and the time they go for interview, that they've still had contact with the recruiter somewhere." (RE16)

The time saved in automating certain administrative tasks will also allow recruiters, according to their hypotheses for the development of the profession, to carry out **more commercial and proactive sourcing tasks, which are** becoming increasingly necessary in the current context

of a tight labour market and shortage of profiles. The recruiter's job is therefore tending to evolve, in part, towards marketing. Recruiters 11 and 16 report this trend:

"Our organisation will eventually have someone who is fully involved in recruitment marketing. I don't know how familiar you are with Facebook and social media marketing. (...) It's an ongoing process." (RE11)

"Your digitalisation means that your processes are going to be able to be automated and your 'human', that's where you're going to be able to make the difference. Business skills, like the ability to communicate persuasively, are going to be at a high level, and that's where you, as recruiters, are going to be able to make the difference." (RE16)

Finally, recruiters also foresee a growing use of artificial intelligence, which is still not very much integrated into practices at present (in the companies in our sample, and corroborated by the literature), particularly for filtering incoming CVs.

3.1.Changes in working conditions

Not least because of Covid, one of the major changes in recruiters' working conditions has been the introduction of **teleworking**, which was widespread during the health crisis but is still in use afterwards. On the whole, this system is welcomed by the people we interviewed, who see it as an opportunity to free themselves from certain time and travel constraints when planning remote interviews. However, not all the recruiters we interviewed see this as the ideal way of organising interviews, with some complaining that human contact has been lost and that non-verbal communication with candidates is not perceived as such. Others also highlighted the difficulties of setting up this type of interview with certain candidates who are not sufficiently equipped or familiar with videoconferencing technologies, particularly when recruiting lower-skilled profiles. Although they do not explicitly mention any bias against candidates who are not sufficiently equipped with technology, we may fear a negative preconception linked to the interview conditions. However, we have no information to confirm or contradict this risk. We can therefore conclude in this respect that teleworking presents both advantages and disadvantages for recruiters and probably also for candidates.

They also highlight various **ergonomic exposures** that they face in using the digitalisation of their profession. These risks relate in particular to office equipment when working remotely, as well as the sedentary nature of sitting for long working hours. Recruiters 4 and 9 testify to this:

"When we started having to telework, we weren't allowed to ask if we could take an office chair or a screen with us, even just for the time we were teleworking. We were even called trade unionists if we asked. In Belgium, you have to work ergonomically, so I bought myself a booster for my laptop, a second screen, an office chair, a keyboard and a mouse (...) you have to realise that we didn't win either, because we have fixed costs, and that's part of our contract, and everyone knows that these are disguised costs. So we don't get anything extra for teleworking. So we heat our house, we use our electricity, and God knows it's complicated these days. So people say to me: "you don't have to, you can go and work in a shop", great, but under what conditions?" (RE04)

"Physically, the most taxing, hey yes it's the constant sitting, well yes it's my fault, of course, we also have standing desks in the office and I try to take a break now and then to move around. I'm also consciously working on that just because you'll see that if I turn around like that, it's just when I feel like moving a few times, so it's a physically sedentary job." (RE09)

The increasing use of technologies for interacting with candidates, through remote meetings or publications on social networks, has the effect of **increasing the mental workload** for recruiters. As recruiter 3 explains, the possibility for candidates to publish their assessment of the exchanges leads to increased vigilance regarding the quality of communication with them, because of the potential impact that their assessment, whether positive or negative, could have on the company's image.

"It's not always positive because with everything that's happening on the networks, we're not very affected but we have been a little and that could come but from the point of view of negative "comments" from clients or candidates which could, for example, be inserted on an advert or our page etc. A bit like the reviews I'm going to say, well now they're public. It's a bit like evaluations, I'm going to say, well now they're public. Previously, a dissatisfied temp would usually only say so over the phone, but now there's this additional risk on social networks. After that, we're not very affected at the moment, because I think we're still small and not very well known, but, indeed, our competitors have already been lynched a bit on social networks, as have certain celebrities who are going to say something. So it's true that there's this aspect of 'visibility' that's much more transparent, and candidates' opinions, and we had a problem internally with someone we had to sack who had posted negative comments on our page, etc., and so yes, we had to react and intervene. But for the moment we're not, we're lucky..." (RE03)

If we consider the impact of digitalisation on the **quantity** and **complexity** of tasks, it appears that recruiters have positive opinions on certain aspects, such as the automation of processes, which has the effect of lightening part of the workload. However, the negative side of this reduction in low added value tasks, such as administrative tasks, is reflected in the increase in other tasks. The workload thus shifts to more complex tasks that require more concentration. Recruiters 12 and 15 share their experiences:

"At a certain point, certainly during the winter period and sitting at home, which was compulsory, of course, those rules, it became too much. If you're short on time, whether you're feeling well or not, with or without corona, my job is to see 4, maximum 8 people a day. It's just too mentally demanding. There's also a difference: am I doing this with the HR department, at the same time, I don't have that proof, it doesn't help me concentrate, compared to doing this on my own of course." (RE12)

"There will be systematised processes where we won't have to think about what we're doing. Because that too is a mental burden, now that you mention it. We are in the public sector, but there are lots of little processes like that, which take up a lot of time. So, for example, when there are interviews, and they call us a jury, we have to invite the managers, and then we have to invite the unions, make sure we have the document from the unions, and print out x CVs for so-and-so, well, that's a lot of things to think about, and for me, all that could be, could pass into an information flow with this software which will allow us to group everything together at once, and we stop fussing about with these documents that we have to print out in x copies, etc." (RE15)

Another negative effect of digitisation on recruiters is **the hyper-connectivity** they face. Their perception of remote working, in particular, is characterised by the omnipresence of technology in their daily lives, which leads to work overload, difficulties in disconnecting and impacts in terms of physical and mental health. Recruiter 10's testimony illustrates these difficulties, which arose in particular during the health crisis. His comments highlight the need to regulate the use

of technology in the workplace, with a view to containing the working conditions and availability of recruiters, in other words to guaranteeing a right to disconnect.

"It's now become twice as bad with Corona, but doing my job without a computer is impossible, so I'm constantly working all the time. I actually work on a screen and yes, it has an impact, I have to admit. (...) I wish I could be a bit more physically active for my job, that I could sometimes step away from that screen for a while, (...) screen time is really huge and also (...) with these social media or emails and teams and that, you're actually constantly available or you have to be constantly available, that's what's expected of you. (...) Now that you can receive 10 emails at the same time, 10 other chat messages via Teams, a chatbot call, a phone call, a lot of incentives arrive and (...) I sometimes have difficulties with this constant accessibility, sometimes you can no longer concentrate on your main tasks (...) it's also something that has an impact on mental health, I think. (...) maybe sometimes it takes away that personal connection and that's something I sometimes struggle with (...) if we worked less with technology and there was more room for a personal approach, then it would be easier to help these people, so to speak.(RE10)

3.2.Changes in employment conditions

While digitisation does not appear to have any specific effects on the employment contracts of recruiters, it does lead to a number of changes in employment conditions in terms of appraisal, pay, working hours and training.

The most marked trend can be seen in **evaluation**: data on the use of digital tools provides information on the amount of work carried out by recruiters, and within what timescales: how many candidates they have contacted or interviewed, which tools they use and their degree of mastery of them - all quantitative indicators that can be used to evaluate their performance. Data from digital tools thus increases the visibility of the tasks carried out by recruiters, and consequently the control of their activity. Recruiter 14 describes this aspect in detail:

"As a manager, this tool really allows me to see how many CVs each consultant has sent in relation to a vacancy, so we're no longer monitoring. Now, it's not monitoring so that we can go and slap our fingers and say "this week you didn't do as much, you didn't send out as many CVs", but more so that we can sit back during meetings and say "no CVs are being sent out for this particular vacancy, why is that? What happened? But it's true that if we want to be in control, we can clearly, thanks to the tools, all our telephony also goes through the PC, so if I want to check I can know per day how many minutes my consultants are on the phone, how many CVs they send, how many candidates they see, if they're using H Interview properly, how many times they've used it, how long, how many videos they've recorded, so these are all things we can monitor (...).) the tools are going to be used more if there's an activity that isn't necessarily optimal (...) we're going to try to trace the causes step by step, to see with the consultant where we can work. And unfortunately, when we have to let someone go because their work isn't optimal, well, we're only going to base ourselves on figures and results, and that's when we're going to use this tool to find reasons to let someone go". (RE14)

In some cases, the **skills profile** now includes the use of tools and, indirectly, the more 'commercial' communication components of their job. In other words, recruiters' role expectations are changing about the use of digital tools. In a small proportion of our sample, this change is also reflected in **remuneration**. This extract from the interview with recruiter 6 is an interesting illustration:

(interviewer) *Are these statistics also used as a basis for appraisal interviews, for determining salaries? (recruiter 6): In a way, yes, in the sense that they start at a certain salary, depending on experience, etc., and then the statistics contribute in the event of a salary increase. Our salary negotiations often take place in December. It's not actually the intention that anyone should be at a bad level in terms of statistics by December, because then I won't have done my job properly. If these statistics aren't accurate, I have to intervene. It's not the intention that they miss out on their pay rise because their stats are wrong, so I haven't done my job properly. So, in principle, those stats are important for that, but it hasn't happened yet that someone is at a bad level in December so they miss out on a pay rise. So it's related. It just has to be good for everyone in general, we think that's really important.(...) everything that goes into these statistics is automatically extracted from our systems. It's roughly the number of intake conversations they have with new (recruited candidates) on a monthly basis, ... We use these statistics to see how a colleague is doing and how they are doing within the organisation. It's not true that these are very strict KPIs. I also worked elsewhere before that and it was very fierce there. With us, the aim of these statistics is that we can monitor progress and that everyone performs at a good level. And our idea is rather that if that's not the case, then it's up to us, or more specifically me, to do something about it."* (RE06)

Training opportunities

In most organisations, the introduction of digital tools has provided an opportunity to **train** staff in their use. The investment in time and training methods is most often in the form of video tutorials or user manuals, making each individual responsible for training at the time he or she deems most appropriate, in an individual relationship with the tool. Some organisations have also introduced more collective forms of skills development, such as user sessions or working groups. In most cases, these training courses are organised based on key users, who are then responsible for helping their colleagues discover the tool and answering their questions in their capacity as "super-users" or "key users". However, on a day-to-day basis, this role is not always carried out in the best possible way, and users sometimes find themselves a little at a loss when it comes to using the tools. Two recruiters share their experiences with us:

"There are short explanatory videos and manuals. (...) When they set up this system, several people were part of the working group. But the problem, I find, is that nobody in the company knows how to explain to you from A to Z how...come on, because before you have the job, there's a position that' sbeen created with a job offer linked...well, a text. And I can assure you that when you have to understand and know how to make changes, it's very complicated. And so, at the beginning, the manager and a colleague who has now left were really involved in the project and so we knew more or less at our level how to do things. Then, at some point, that person left and my manager passed on a whole raft of things to another colleague, who wasn't involved in the project at all at the outset, who wasn't given any explanation and who also finds herself a bit at a loss to understand". (RE04)

"I know that it was very complicated, and that it was these people who were responsible, who were seen as the source of the change. In fact, one person left at that point, because he felt we were going against him, whereas he wasn't responsible for the choice, he was there to help. (RE14)

Finally, in terms of **working hours**, the majority trend is towards greater flexibility, made possible by the use of remote communication and videoconferencing tools. This flexibility of working time (and place) does not seem to have been imposed by the recruiters interviewed,

who instead point to greater control over their working hours in line with their personal constraints. In other words, the flexibility offered by digital tools is materialised in terms of flexibility, but not necessarily in terms of additional services or atypical working hours.

3.3.Changes in employment relations

As mentioned *above* in the section on training methods, the introduction of digital tools has often resulted in recruiters becoming involved in working groups or taking on the role of *key users*. The role of key users is to relay to the developers the difficulties and requests of users in their interactions with the tool, and to provide answers in their day-to-day use.

Furthermore, collaborative practices within the teams are marked by more and more informal meetings at a distance. However, these meetings remain relatively infrequent in absolute terms, insofar as many recruiters work relatively alone with their respective portfolios of clients and candidates. Broadly speaking, the degree of collaboration and teamwork depends above all on the type of structure in which these recruiters work, and the coordination arrangements in place, already prior to the introduction of the tools. Generally speaking, the recruiters interviewed emphasised the reduction in face-to-face working or coordination time and perceived a negative effect of remote working on conviviality and team spirit.

3.4.Changes in the work organisation

The main effect noted by the recruiters we interviewed focus around the **increased visibility** that digital tools bring to work processes. Both internally (for colleagues and superiors) and externally (for clients), the selection and recruitment process is more transparent in terms of the various stages and the time taken to complete them. Colleagues can now consult the information relating to each candidate's file (profile, tests, etc.), which facilitates a degree of interchangeability between recruiters when it comes to taking over a process in progress, in the event of absence, for example.

In this respect, the effect of data management tools on exchanges is seen as positive, insofar as sharing information simplifies the joint handling of certain cases within the team, and optimises the allocation of human resources to processes, depending on the workload.

"In general, afterwards 'it',s several people who tell us "we're in the thick of it", so it's more the field that gives us the information, and so they give us the information, telling us that they can't do that any more, and so at that point we get round the table with management, and there we analyse the job descriptions, and we see how to organise things better, either we hire an extra person to do that task, or we redispach it to another department. So, in general, it's via feedback from the field that this happens to us, and we sit down with the various managers and see how we can redispach certain tasks so that it's more qualitative for the recruiter". (RE03) Conversely, as far as customers are concerned, this visibility means a reduction in the number of exchanges and coordination moments, insofar as customers have direct access to certain information on current recruitment processes. As a corollary, this saves time for both parties.

"Previously, it was really constant coordination and now the customer also has an overview of the whole process. Customers can, as soon as there's an application, customers can see that in the system. The customers also have the right to see certain things in the system, so if they want

to see the applications, they can see that at any time, they are no longer dependent on the recruiter, so that's it, it's a very big gain that this system has provided that yes it's safe." (RE09)

In terms of work organisation and the way administrative tasks are handled, we are seeing a shift towards the machine itself, through the automation of certain stages in the selection and recruitment process. In other cases, recruiters are relieved of these tasks, which are now entrusted to administrative support staff. They have to concentrate on more complex tasks with higher added value. The interview extracts below illustrate this trend:

"(interviewer) Do you think that, in general, this makes your job easier? (recruiter): In itself, yes. Because these tests are also there. It's really just 1 page that you have to look at and where you can consult everything. And that makes things easier. Companies can also see everything on this page. Now, with the other tool, we receive the report via the external assessors. We then link this report to the Extra Step system. We then pass it on to the companies. So linking and redirecting are 2 steps that disappear. (...) There is an automatic sending at different stages. (...) Among other things, if they start doing business, this comes to us after the interview, we then call them to discuss the contract and we put it into the system. And then they also receive a congratulatory e-mail, yes a positive e-mail. But even if they are rejected, they also receive an e-mail (...) And here, you just press the cross and you receive an e-mail. He himself disappears from our list of active candidates, and then he's also disappeared and received feedback." (RE19)

"it's a bit of a change in workload because we did this exercise during the implementation and I think there's little difference in workload for the recruiters themselves, but for example for the administrative support staff in the process who then do more administration, The state forms are entered directly into the system and we have thousands of applications in a year. There used to be one person and then sometimes, at certain times, two people working full time on the applications to be put into the system. That's 1 to 2 FTEs, so we call it heu which is freed up to do other tasks with more value" (RE09)

"Or an internal reorganisation, "Well, now the recruiter won't be doing this administrative file any more, because he doesn't have the time" and it will be transferred to another department. So it's true that tasks have to be readjusted a little bit, year by year, because the job of recruiter is becoming more complex with these new tools. (...) it would be more administrative tasks, more related to payroll or contract management, because with us the recruiter looks for the candidate, puts him or her to work, and then we have an administrative consultant who will manage the payroll, the contract and the social documents. So there's always a bit of administrative work for the recruiting consultant, because he's going to put his candidate to work, but we ask for a whole series of documents to be completed and signed, and it's true that a quality job placement, if it's quick, if it's half an hour, but if it's a slightly more complex job, So we've shifted some of these tasks back to the administrative consultant to give the recruiter more time to really source and find candidates, rather than spending time filling out paperwork. Even though they still do some paperwork, obviously, but a lot less than before". (RE03)

As we mentioned earlier, the use of digital tools increases collaboration and interchangeability between recruiters. This is possible mainly because of the centralisation and greater standardisation of the information contained in the files, and at the various stages of the selection and recruitment process, that the use of digital tools implies. Recruiter 18 describes these developments:

"The fact that everything is in the ERP means that everyone's notes are centralised; the candidate is facing me, I put in my notes, when HR2 sees him, we don't need to see each other again, she takes my notes, she picks up where I left off, in terms of continuity, it's really better, it saves us more time and it centralises everything and we're sure that we don't lose anything because a note in a notebook, you lose it quickly. Where I also see a big advantage over other working methods other than ERP is that everyone is forced to play the game of using the same tool. (...) It puts everyone at the same pace and on the same tool, and it really does centralise everything. (...) The tool helps us to achieve this interchangeability in that, as it standardises both processes and practices, it smoothes out everyone's methods, directing them towards the same practice, which is dictated and decided thanks to the system, and as a result it's much easier to be interchangeable. (...) So the discussions are still there, the comments and sharing of ideas, they're still there but based on the same tool." (RE18)

4. Digital tools perceptions

Recruiters' perceptions of the digital tools they use are reflected in the various comments they made in the previous sections of this report. These perceptions are both positive in some respects and negative in others. We summarise them as follows:

On the one hand, the use of digital tools **simplifies** and **improves the sharing of information** between colleagues, as well as with external stakeholders (social secretariats, customers, candidates). Internally, this sharing of information means that recruiters are more interchangeable and can help each other out in the event of absence or work overload.

What's more, centralising candidate information **saves time when it** comes to searching for, managing and updating data. Recruiter 17 sums up this added value as follows:

"It's something that's fully automatic today. Our current process allows us to start gathering a lot of information about a candidate in one go. Whereas before, all you had was a CV and a brief telephone interview with the candidate, and you didn't get everything you wanted. Today, with our online platform, it's all there. There are assessments and motivation questionnaires. There are personality tests and video interviews. You have much more information about the candidate than just their CV, which considerably broadens the advice you can give to your recruitment manager or client. By having much more information about the candidate, you can make a fundamental decision". (RE17)

The more negative side of recruiters' perceptions of digital tools relates firstly to their **lack of flexibility**, in other words the technical limitations of the tool in their day-to-day use, for processing less standard or more specific cases. This means, for example, that certain encoding actions (in different platforms, for example) or information processing actions (to conform to the format imposed by the tool) have to be repeated. This can also hamper the recruiter's effectiveness in dealing with these difficulties. To a certain extent, this lack of flexibility can be likened to a counter-productive effect of the standardization of information within the system, as described elsewhere, and perceived as an adjuvant to interchangeability. The following interview extracts provide a concrete illustration of these limitations:

"For example, a candidate who has applied for 4 different positions because he lives in the Liège region. So I see it when I open his file. I don't have the option with a little tick, for example, of clicking on all 4 to disqualify him at once. Each time I have to open each file, disqualify it, save it, close it... that's a waste of time. The problem we have is that I have colleagues who don't think about it and the candidate, at some point, when he's hired, receives a negative email. And they send all the applicants a negative email. That's because they don't think about

systematically closing each vacancy. It's a waste of time, because if the system were really fast, you know, like any system, it takes time, it works... so you're there, waiting for the little dots that go from left to right (laughs), you say to yourself: "gosh, he's applied 4 or 5 times, I've got to do it 4 or 5 times". As we were also saying at one point, we could almost put on a blacklist, I'm not going to say blacklist, candidates who when they apply, automatically get a negative response without us dealing with them. Because the problem is that we have people who apply and who apply... we know, yes, it's for Forem, we've called them, we've already tried to call and they don't answer. Or really special cases, we'll never do anything with them! That would save us time too, for example. (RE04)

"For example, if you say yes, I want to publish on a certain channel, but that channel isn't within the range of the tool you're working with, it simply won't work. For example, if you say yes, I want to publish on a certain channel, but that channel isn't within the range of the tool you're working with, it simply won't work (...) what it lacks a bit, is that you can't work very bespoke, but everything is pretty tight, pretty automatic and there's less room for flexibility and a more personal approach." (RE10)

Another disadvantage pointed out by the recruiters interviewed is the strong **dependence** they develop over time on the system, insofar as it contains all the information they need to carry out their work processes. When there are technical obstacles to accessing this information, or when the system seizes up for network-related reasons during stages of the online process, for example, the whole process comes to a standstill. The potential consequences can have repercussions for the candidate themselves. Recruiter 14 illustrates these difficulties with the following examples from the health crisis:

*"So if there's a bug in our programme, which may happen from time to time, or a problem with the wifi or whatever, well that inevitably complicates the conversation. If the network isn't good, you can lose patience too, because you have to repeat yourself and you're often cut off too, so those are the main disadvantages I see. There's also the fact that some people aren't always, are perhaps also more lax during the interview, in relation to, well, the environment, if there are children around, etc., They're perhaps less likely to isolate themselves and say to themselves "this is a real interview, I'm isolating myself and I'm doing my interview properly", or to have a more detached attitude than when you had to come **to** the agency where there was always this little notion of stress, of the interview, of the wait, etc. (...) I've had situations that didn't lend themselves at all to an interview and which worked to the applicant's disadvantage. We also try to adapt, of course, if the person doesn't have a computer, he does it with his mobile phone, (...), if the children come round from time to time, we'll say to ourselves 'well, we're all teleworking, we're not always alone either, and it's not always easy to tell the children not to come for an hour', so we'll adapt, but there are limits, I'd say at that level." (RE14)*

Finally, a last negative element linked to the use of digital tools is the perception of a relative **dehumanisation of contacts** between the recruiter and the candidate, in videoconference exchanges, characterised by a loss of the non-verbal aspects of the interview, which provide valuable information for the recruiter. These limitations, often mentioned in the literature, are corroborated by our interviews.

5. Quality of working life

The use of digital tools undeniably has an impact on quality of life. The advantages and disadvantages highlighted by recruiters do not seem to be specific to their profession, and unsurprisingly focus on remote working.

On the positive side, the ability to work remotely means that **private and professional time can be better reconciled, with** shorter commutes and more flexible working. It also provides a calmer **working environment that is more conducive to concentration**. Recruiters 16 and 7, for example, attest to this:

"I'm a single mother with 2 children, so I think it's important to be here.... I don't want to spend 2 hours in traffic jams every day, I can't do that with my children, it's not feasible for me either. So I'm making a conscious choice to do it, and I'm perfectly capable of working on my own. I can do it very well. I'm not enthusiastic, I'm very sensitive, I hear a lot, I see a lot and in an office it's sometimes too hectic for me. Let me do what I have to do and that's what's best for me. I can function perfectly well on my own. Do I need colleagues? Yes, but for me it's perfectly possible, even on the phone, or during a networking moment, or during team building, I think it's perfect for me too. I don't need to see my colleagues every day". (RE16)

"It's great in the sense that they give me a lot of responsibility, but I'm also extremely helpful to them. I'll never let them down, I don't hesitate to open my laptop at 11 o'clock at night if it's really necessary, but on the other hand, if I have to go to the dentist, if I have to go to the doctor, I feel bad, I don't need to take time off for that. It's a give and take, but you shouldn't expect that at the start of your career, because once you've been in the profession for a few years, it comes and it's really pleasant." (RE07)

On the other hand, as already suggested in the interview excerpt above, this flexibility in working hours may prove problematic and have a **negative impact on the work-life balance**. Technology provides greater flexibility, particularly in the setting up of remote interviews, which seems to open the way, implicitly, to the possibility of being contactable at all hours. This leads to a form of pressure to be more available, which has repercussions on working hours.

"We used to work by appointment. If we received CVs or if we had a candidate we'd spotted through a search, there was always a telephone interview first, then an appointment. But it was also often - I've always been flexible - it was often after working hours, certainly people who were looking for work and still working, it was often after working hours. So it was often work in the evenings or on Saturday mornings, that was also very often the case, yes, I think it was mainly by appointment. (...) This was in fact the case with the talents". (RE16)

In addition to the problems of balancing private life and work, and the hyper-connection that is a corollary of using digital tools, this also leads to **physical health problems**, particularly in terms of ergonomics.

"Private life, well of course we have all the networks on our phone and so on Sundays, weekends, H24 we look to see if our posts have been seen, liked, if we've received any applications, etc., So it does have an impact, but I don't think it's the same for the rest of the staff, but it's more at management level, it's also because of the job, we work a bit harder, so obviously, for management jobs I'd say, and otherwise in terms of health it's certainly not great to have blue light in the evening, it certainly has an impact. (...) It's true that trying to stay awake without using your phone isn't easy. So it's true that it must have an impact, and sometimes it's good to try and disconnect, but at our job levels it's extremely complicated. Even

being able to take time off and not look at your phone is extremely complicated. (...) After that, I like my work and I'm involved in it, so I'd say that I'm not too bothered by it, but it's true that it has an impact from a family point of view, holidays, time off, etc. And that I think, even if it's not a problem for me, is a problem for my family. And I think that even if it hadn't been for the networks, I'd have been doing other things. (RE03)

"Just my eyes, because sometimes I feel like my head really hurts from sitting in front of the screen, that's why I want us to go back to the allee old normal it's never going to be, that we're allowed to have more physical conversations with people again because I'm really tired of constantly having to sit like this (referring to sitting in front of the screen) eventually and we have desks where we can stand up, we have 2 screens that we can move around but it's still different seeing people physically I think" (RE07)

Finally, various factors, such as the acceleration of processes or the technical difficulties encountered when using the tools, can generate **stress** and **frustration** for some recruiters.

"When you're very frustrated with such an online tool, it doesn't work and you want to get on with your work, the stupid technology doesn't allow that, it can sometimes cause frustration (...) there are times when it's frustrating that if you want to do something, for example, an adjustment and it's not possible because the system doesn't allow it, these are things that can sometimes cause frustration." (RE10)

6. Covid effects

The health crisis affected recruitment in two ways: directly and indirectly.

The most obvious direct effect of the Covid crisis is the sharp increase in **remote working**, which has naturally led to greater use of interaction technologies, in particular through the intensive use of videoconferencing and remote working. The impact of this situation is, for some, perceived negatively, as one of the main perceived disadvantages is the loss of quality in certain interactions, through the disappearance of the non-verbal that these technologies entail. In response, recruiters say they have to pay more attention to remote interactions, and be vigilant in trying to capture the information they need to assess candidates.

In addition, according to a small proportion of our sample, they are detrimental to integration within the team, a phenomenon that is also frequently reported in the literature.

More indirectly, recruiters are also observing **changes in the labour market** during and since the health crisis. Candidates seem to be in shorter supply for certain skilled profiles, and this shortage is resulting in more demanding candidates who are harder to attract, and a smaller proportion of them sending unsolicited applications. As a result, recruiters need to put more effort into "commercial" communication, and take particular care to establish quality interactions with candidates to counter any perception of dehumanisation. There is also talk of using teleworking as an argument to attract candidates, who are now more attentive to this aspect of work.

7. Conclusions

Across the board, the digitalisation of the recruitment occupation is characterised first and foremost by an increase in remote working. In practical terms, this means more meetings at a distance (in-house with colleagues, or during videoconference interviews with candidates). This

massive increase in remote working has the advantages and disadvantages traditionally found in the literature: management of the work/life balance is welcomed, but there are problems of hyperconnection and ergonomics, in particular.

In terms of technologies mobilised and most frequent uses, we can see that it is first and foremost process automation and data management technologies that are most frequently mobilised. To a lesser extent, some companies mention the use of artificial intelligence, but only marginally. The use of this technology is clearly not yet firmly rooted in recruiters' professional practices.

Generally speaking, recruiters see their human/machine interactions as collaborative rather than substitutive, with the exception of low added-value administrative tasks. This last observation brings us to the specifics of the evolution of the recruitment profession, which relies heavily on the human component of the job. It is crucial for recruiters to prevent any dehumanisation and to maintain the quality of interactions with candidates. This human component of the job is also strongly expressed in the soft components (intuition, empathy, etc.) that they demonstrate and in their analysis of non-verbal aspects, standing out strongly from the automation of certain stages in the selection and recruitment process. Business skills, moreover, take on particular importance, with the recruiter's expertise lying in putting candidates' experience into context, decoding CVs, matching atypical profiles or detecting (talent, lies, etc.) things that the machine could not do.

What's more, the nature of the current job market, which is not directly linked to digitalisation, is now calling on recruiters to deploy more commercial skills, particularly through communication on social networks and professional platforms.

Finally, the work is more complex (recruiters are refocused on their core business, administrative workload is reduced), processes are faster and tasks are more fragmented.

Information is crucial, and data management - accessing, sharing and updating it - is a central aspect of this business. In this respect, the use of digital tools leads to greater standardisation of data and the processes based on it. The result is better teamwork and greater interchangeability between recruiters, but also a loss of flexibility. Another factor is that the activity data collected through the tools also serves as a basis for a form of objectification of the recruiter's performance, used as part of their appraisal, remuneration and even career development. However, these HR practices are still not widespread in the profession.

In conclusion, most of the impacts of digitisation and the changes it brings are perceived both positively (in terms of efficiency) and negatively (in terms of quality of life at work) .