



Short here, surplus there

The Netherlands lists 195 shortage occupations and just 8 surplus occupations, the most lopsided ratio in Europe. The continent counts 2,617 shortages against 2,177 surpluses.

Summary

Europe officially counts 2,617 reported shortage occupations and 2,177 surplus occupations, and the same occupations regularly appear on a shortage list in one country and a surplus list in another. The Netherlands is an extreme: 195 shortage occupations, second only to Italy, against 8 surplus occupations, nearly the fewest in Europe. There is almost nothing left to reallocate domestically. Around 53 million European workers, about a quarter of employment, sit in an occupation with widespread shortages or surpluses.

Scarcity is usually discussed per country, as if each country had its own private problem. The official European shortage lists show something else: the same occupations are scarce in one country and abundant in another. This paper reads the 2025 map and looks for the Dutch position on it.

The map: 2,617 shortages, 2,177 surpluses

The European labour authority bundles, every year, the shortage and surplus occupations that 28 countries report through the EURES network. The 2025 edition, published in June 2026, counts 2,617 reported shortage occupations against 2,177 surplus occupations. Nearly every occupation, 97% of occupation groups at the finest level, is scarce somewhere in Europe.

Shortages concentrate among professionals, trades and machine operators, and weigh heaviest and most persistently in health and care, a sector of some 25 million workers where doctors, nurses and care workers appear on nearly every country's list. In total, around 53 million Europeans, about a quarter of employment, work in an occupation with widespread shortages or surpluses.

The Netherlands: many shortages, almost no surplus

195 occupations stand on the Dutch shortage list for 2025



Number of reported shortage occupations per country, 2025. ELA, Labour shortages and surpluses in Europe 2025, retrieved 1 September 2026.

The Netherlands reports 195 shortage occupations, the highest count in Europe after Italy. The five largest reporters together account for 38% of all reported shortages.

The other list is shorter. The Netherlands reports 8 surplus occupations; only Malta reports fewer, with 2. The report also observes that among the large shortage reporters, the Netherlands combines the highest job vacancy rates with lower unemployment. That sharpens the diagnosis beyond a long shortage list: in

the Netherlands there is almost nothing standing on the other side. Countries such as Austria and Finland report hundreds of surplus occupations and therefore have a domestic reallocation task; the Netherlands has a supply problem.

The asymmetry is the opportunity

Many occupations stand on the shortage list in one country and on the surplus list elsewhere. The report calls that untapped potential for cross-border matching, and for the Dutch market it is not an abstraction. Whoever seeks a shortage occupation here will sometimes find the same occupation in surplus in another EURES country, with an official list as the evidence.

That makes these lists commercially usable. An agency recruiting internationally can point out, per occupation, where the surplus sits, on the authority of the national reports themselves rather than a vendor with an interest.

What the lists do not say

- The lists are national reports with national methods and thresholds. A country that reports thoroughly counts more occupations than one that reports sparingly. Counts speak to presence on lists, not to the depth of a shortage.
- An occupation on a list is not a number of people. How many people are missing per shortage occupation, this report does not measure.
- Cross-border matching runs, in practice, into language, recognition of qualifications and housing. The map shows where supply sits, not how easily it moves.

What this means

- **The quotable number.** The Netherlands stands second in Europe with 195 shortage occupations and reports nearly the shortest surplus list, with 8. Reallocation is barely possible here; recruitment is the route.
- **Care is scarce everywhere.** Whoever recruits for care occupations competes at European scale; nearly every country holds the same list. Fishing the neighbours empty is not a strategy there.
- **Use the lists as evidence.** The official shortage list is a defensible argument in a client conversation, and other countries' surplus lists point out where international recruitment is promising.
- **A quarter of the market is out of balance.** Around 53 million European workers sit in an occupation with widespread shortages or surpluses. This is the structural state, not a cyclical episode.

Method and sources

All figures come from Labour shortages and surpluses in Europe 2025 by the European labour authority, published on 8 June 2026 within the EURES network and retrieved on 1 September 2026. The publication is under the authority's copyright and is summarised and rewritten here, not reproduced.

The chain belongs in this note: the report bundles shortage and surplus notifications from the national EURES coordination offices of 28 countries, at the four-digit level of the 2008 ISCO occupation classification. Those national lists apply their own definitions and thresholds, which limits comparability of

counts between countries; the report says so itself and this paper adopts that limit. The 53 million figure and the care numbers are the report's estimates, not ours.

Europe, Shortage, All markets

Sources

- ELA, Labour shortages and surpluses in Europe 2025, EURES, 8 juni 2026