



EUROPE EDITION

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER TURNOVER STUDY

2025



WWW.CASA-PARTNERS.COM

ABOUT CASA

CASA (the Corporate Affairs Search Alliance) is the group of like-minded Corporate Affairs search firms which comes together in support of clients and candidates. Each CASA member is the number one or number two Corporate Affairs and Communications specialist search firm in their home market. We have very similar values, ethics and high professional standards, and we are friends who enjoy working together.

CASA members have businesses which are structured in different ways and are independent. What brings us together is our commitment to excellence in Corporate Affairs search, and the great outcomes we provide for those we work with.

All CASA member firms are dedicated to the promise of **'Making Corporate Affairs Better'** and as the name suggests, our vision is for CASA to be **'the home of Corporate Affairs'** for leaders of the profession, wherever in the world they are.

CASA MEMBERS

addison

Addison (Ireland)
addison.ie

EXETER
SEARCH

Exeter Search (France)
exetersearch.com

 **HERMAN
RUTGERS**

Herman Rutgers Executive &
Interim Search (Netherlands)
hermanrutgers.nl

ITHACA

PARTNERS

Ithaca Partners (UK)
ithacapartners.co.uk

 **Patino
Associates**

Patino Associates (US)
patinoassociates.com

 **PRCC**

PRCC (Germany & the
Dach region)
prcc-personal.de

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the inaugural CASA annual study of turnover amongst the Communications and Corporate Affairs leadership in Europe's top companies.

Communications and Corporate Affairs functions have changed faster than any other corporate function in recent years. Developments in technology and communication practices among audiences and stakeholder groups show no signs of stabilising. Stakeholder activism has become more intrusive as news cycles have accelerated. Now, with little or no warning, any company can become a sudden focus of unexpected, and often unwanted attention.

Alongside that of the Chief Executive, no corporate role has been more affected than that of the top communications professional: Chief Communications Officer (CCO) or Corporate Affairs Director. This research report is the start of a long-term effort to assess the impacts of these changes on the individuals appointed to these roles in continental Europe and the UK.

WHY A CCO TURNOVER STUDY?

The Corporate Affairs Search Alliance (CASA) is a multi-national group of like-minded Corporate Affairs search firms in Europe and the USA. Each CASA member is the number one or number two Corporate Affairs specialist search firm in its home market.

As such, our members are closer than anyone to trends in the market for Corporate Affairs / CCO talent. We are continually engaged in 'market-mapping' for our corporate clients. Every search brief increases our understanding of our clients' evolving needs, the factors driving their recruitment decisions. Similarly every conversation with director-level practitioners tells us more about the factors which attract the rising stars and the established talent.

One year ago our US member, Patino Associates, launched a study of annual changes in the market for Chief Communications Officers in the USA. The response was overwhelmingly favourable, with clients and candidates alike appreciating information on their own professional field, complementing widely-available surveys covering the CEO and CFO markets.

SCOPE

Building on last year's learning from the US market, we are now able to start monitoring the European market. Our members gathered information from a total of 219 companies: the whole of the FTSE-100 in the UK, the CAC 40 in France, the DAX 40 in Germany, 19 of the ISEQ 20 companies in Ireland, and 17 of the AEX 25 companies in The Netherlands.

SNAPSHOT OF 2024

UK CCO TURNOVER OUTSTRIPS EUROPEAN AVERAGE

Amongst the top 219 European companies, the rate of CCO turnover reached 17% in 2024, with 37 companies making changes in their line-up.

However, there were strong variations between national markets. The UK saw the highest turnover rate with changes at nearly one in four CCO positions, twice the rate of many other national markets. While The Netherlands is, on the face of it, the second most volatile country

with an 18% turnover rate, the small absolute number of job moves there makes the figure somewhat statistically unreliable, and it is more representative to consider the non-UK countries together as providing 12% turnover as a group.

European and Global Turnover

EUROZONE

Turnover rate 12%

UK

Turnover rate 23%

NETHERLANDS

Turnover rate 18%

FRANCE

Turnover rate 12.5%

IRELAND

Turnover rate 10.5%

GERMANY

Turnover rate 10%

GLOBAL

Turnover rate 11.7%

FACTORS DRIVING TURNOVER

A change in the overall leadership of a company is a classic catalyst for change in communications leadership. A high rate of CEO replacement in the UK market is therefore likely to be one factor driving volatility for CCOs, though their UK average tenure of 3.3 years is still higher than the tenure of FTSE 100 CEOs, who have recently been moving on after an average of 2.4 years.

Changes in the political climate may also drive turnover, especially in cases where Public Affairs skills and relationships are embedded in the Corporate Affairs role. This was prominent in the UK where, in the summer 2024 election, a Labour landslide ended a 15-year sequence of Conservative-dominated governments. Some impact from that change may be still to play out in the 2025 job market, and it will be interesting to see whether the February 2025 election in Germany becomes a catalyst for change there too.

WHO IS BEING HIRED?

The balance of successful external versus internal candidates was near-equilibrium, with 17 CCOs being appointed from outside the hiring company and 16 promoted from within. Where appointments were made from outside the company, all but two were also from a different sector of the economy, demonstrating the perceived portability of skills and experience across industrial boundaries.

However, previous experience at the top level of corporate communication was seen as much more important. 12 of those 17 external appointees (71%)

“ *The UK stakeholder universe is one of the toughest and most aggressive, making the UK home to some of the most capable Corporate Affairs and Communications talent in the world. Media and political attitudes to business can be cynical, and relationships with unions and NGOs are often fractious. The buoyancy of the Corporate Affairs / CCO market in 2024 reflects CEOs’ very real appetite to upgrade their top talent in this area – it’s tough out there and they need expert judgement within easy reach. Interestingly, Communications teams are under the same budget pressure as everyone else, but the number one role is usually too crucial for CEOs to think of doing without it.*

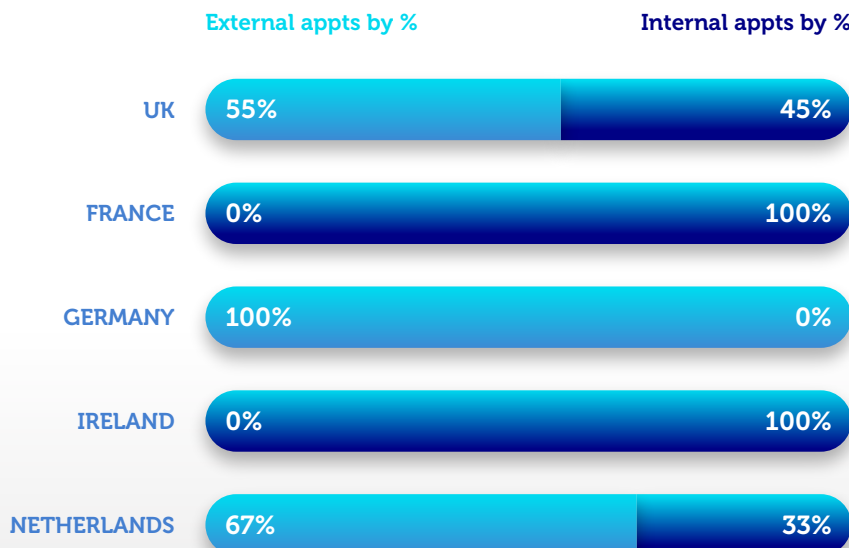
Alex Gordon Shute
Ithaca Partners, UK



had previous CCO experience before joining their new company.

Most (12 of 17) vacancies filled were existing CCO roles at the hiring company, with only five being newly-created roles. Among the internal hires, seven of 16 were being promoted into filling newly-created CCO roles and the same proportion (seven of 16) had previous CCO experience. Under the circumstances it is unsurprising that previous CCO experience was more prevalent among external candidates than internal candidates.

European Hiring of Internal vs. External Candidates



By comparison, in the USA, 66% of hires during the year were external, which we see as a rising trend. As the CCO post has become elevated in seniority in the USA, many companies have had to look outside, finding it more difficult to bridge the capability gap between the person leaving and their leading deputy. We have also observed an increase in companies seeking to short-list both internal and external candidates, using the recruitment process to assess the capability gap between their internal talent and communications leaders at other companies.

VARIATIONS IN TENURE BROADLY REFLECT TURNOVER RATES

The average tenure for a CCO in a top European company stood at 4.3 years, slightly behind the tenure seen in the USA (4.6 years). However, if the notably turbulent UK market is taken out of the picture then European tenure exceeds that seen in the USA.

High turnover in the UK’s FTSE 100 has reduced its average CCO tenure rate, which is more than two years lower than the highest-tenured incumbents, who work for Germany’s DAX 40 companies.



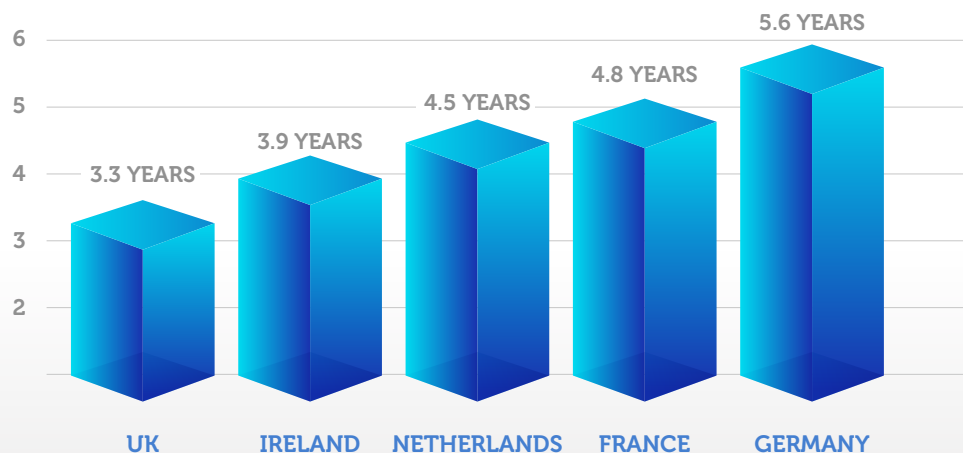
What struck me was the drive for internal mobility across 2024 with only one of the open CAC 40 CCO roles becoming an external hire. This alongside lengthier tenure comparative to other countries tells us that long term investment in talent within the function is currently strong, the flip side being that we had fewer external mobility opportunities for CCOs across the year. Gender parity remains a key topic within the function, with women tending to move roles at a faster rate than men, reflecting the continued demand for women in C-suite positions.

Kim Johnson
Exeter Search, France



In the largest 20 FTSE-listed companies by revenue, tenure was worse still, averaging just 2.4 years, so from the CCO perspective “bigger” is not necessarily “better” when it comes to ‘stickability’ at companies. At the more stable end of the spectrum, German communicators enjoy much longer tenure than other countries, nearly a year more on average, than in France and The Netherlands, and almost two years longer than in Ireland.

European Tenure



When we look at the DAX40-companies, we see a quite stable market with relatively low turnover of CCOs. The average tenure is well above the international average, especially for male post-holders. This is probably one of the main reasons why - despite all efforts - Germany

is still a long way from achieving an equal distribution of men and women in top communications positions.

Philip Müller
PRCC Germany



COMMS OUTSOURCING IN IRELAND AND THE UK

One step beyond bringing in CCO candidates from other industries is outsourcing the whole role to an external supplier. Outsourcing the communications leadership role to consultancies, and insourcing it to an adjacent specialist in-house department, are fairly common, but the practice is unevenly distributed by country. More common in Ireland and the UK, it is not widely seen in France, Germany, or the Netherlands.

Ireland has a higher percentage of outsourced Communications leadership roles than any other country.

Six of the 19 companies assessed (32%) have outsourced their communications to private consulting firms. In the UK, 13 companies (13%) outsource their communications function to private consulting firms (though these tend to be low-profile organisations with low engagement needs, such as investment trusts).

We found a small number of companies insourcing their communications leadership to Investor Relations teams - four in Ireland, and one in the UK.

THE ZERO OPTION

A different approach taken by a minority of companies in three European countries is not to have a CCO at all, distributing the traditional responsibilities among more junior communications staff reporting into commercial management, or in some cases going without specialised communications roles altogether.

UK



IRELAND



FRANCE



The Irish market presents an interesting contrast. On one hand, we see stability in CCO tenure and a higher reliance on internal promotions compared to other European markets. On the other, Ireland leads Europe in outsourcing its communications leadership, with 32% of companies opting for external consultants. Interestingly, outsourcing has given Irish companies the flexibility to access specialist expertise without the commitment of a permanent hire. Part of the outsourcing is due to the

significant number of international holding companies in the ISEQ 20 who place their main communications efforts in places where they have more customers. But with a thriving economy and strong labour market, the interplay between outsourcing and the in-house development of talent will also be a dynamic to watch in 2025, especially as Irish companies navigate the complex post-election policy environment.

Susie Farrell
Addison, Ireland



GENDER BALANCE IN EVIDENCE

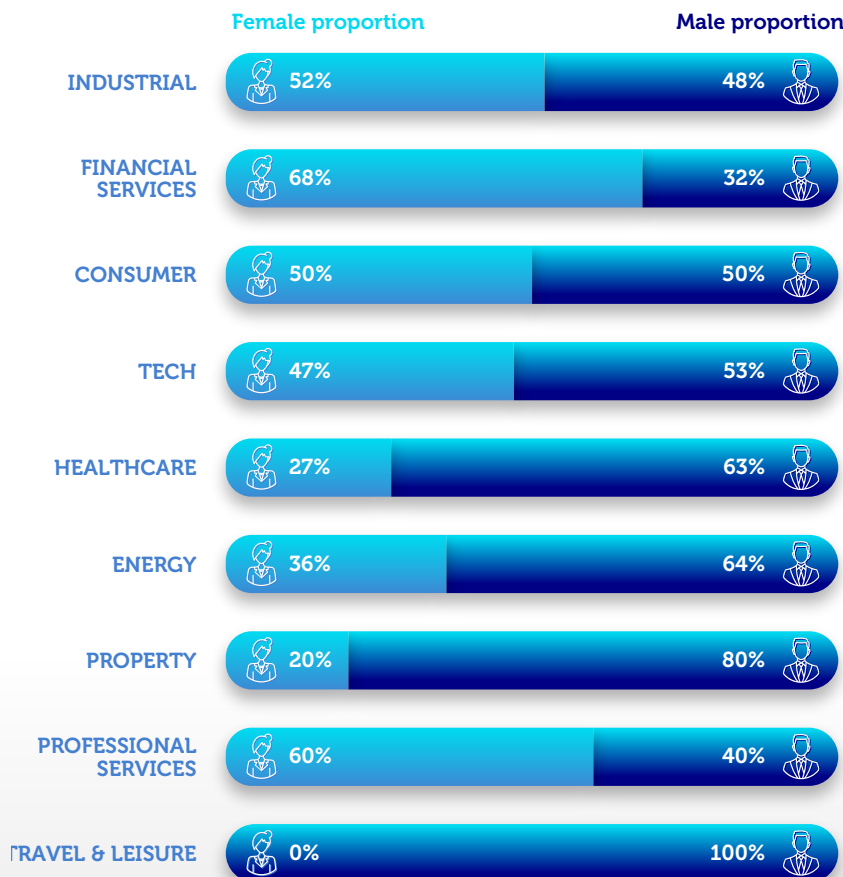
The communications industry has been at the forefront of seeking diversity in its ranks at all levels, and the effects are noticeable in Europe’s most senior positions. Women narrowly lead men in their occupancy of Europe’s CCO roles as a whole. Of the 177 occupied European CCO positions, 53% of them are held by women (93) and 47% of them are occupied by men (84). Interestingly, in 2024 men were installed in the CCO role at a higher rate than women despite women occupying more CCO roles, but it remains to be seen whether this is a one-year outlier and we will monitor it during 2025.

The European gender picture is more evenly balanced than that of the USA, where women occupy or 68% of CCOs positions.

When it comes to tenure, in Europe male CCOs held an advantage over their female counterparts, with 4.6 years on the job against 3.9 years. This has been boosted by women winning the majority of newly-created CCO positions, in turn likely to have been influenced by quotas that some European countries have instituted to encourage gender parity. It is also statistically influenced by a handful of very long-tenured male CCOs.

We found marked sectoral differences between male and female occupancy of the CCO roles across Europe, with women strongly dominating in financial services firms, while male CCOs were strongly ahead in the travel, healthcare and property categories.

Gender Distribution of CCO roles by Sector



We have noted a very even male-female gender balance amongst communications leaders in the Netherlands, and hope to see this balance continue as we gather further data during 2025. While we must be cautious about conclusions drawn from just 17 major

companies, these are some of the most influential organisations in the Netherlands, so overall the picture is encouraging.

Petra Herman
Herman Rutgers, Netherlands



PRESENTATION AND POSITIONING OF THE CCO ROLE

We found some disparity in the job titles assigned to female CCOs in Europe. Women were more likely to have titles tightly focused on Communications, while male CCOs tended to have a more expansive “CCO-plus” title. In more detail:

- A narrow majority of female CCOs had a Communications-only title than a CCO+ title, like Chief Communications Officer, or VP, Communications (39 to 36)
- A strong majority of men had titles that included Communications and another area of focus, like SVP Communications, Government Affairs, CSR, or a title that didn’t specify Communications at all in the title, like Chief Corporate Affairs Officer (66 vs. 36)

Taking men and women together, more than 60% of European CCO titles only focused on Communications, with just over one-third of titles suggesting broader responsibilities.

- 62% of European CCOs had a Communications-only title
- 38% had a “CCO+” title, with the most frequent additional areas of focus being named as Corporate Affairs (29), Sustainability (10), Public Affairs (6), Brand (5), Investor Relations (5), and Marketing (5)

CONCLUSION

The stature of the CCO / Corporate Affairs role in the organization is being maintained at the high level it has achieved over the last five years.

Amidst a company's top management this is the role most connected to the responsibility for understanding the impact of changes in the outside environment and helping the company stay in touch. As economic, politics and public attitudes influence the commercial context for business, CCO practitioners keep having to lead adaptation and the acquisition of new skills.

It is clear that Europe's overall figures tend to conceal significant differences amongst nations, particularly in the volatility of the UK job market for CCOs in comparison to relative stability in mainland European countries. When we revisit the research at the end of 2025 for next year's report we will be interested to see if the recent unpopularity of incumbent governments has continued, and if so whether the timing of elections is becoming a driver of CCO turnover.

With the world arguably in period of reduced geopolitical stability we expect companies to continue to seek to refresh the balances of skills and experience in their corporate affairs leadership.

METHODOLOGY

The 2025 European CCO Turnover Study measures the turnover of the senior-most Communications and Corporate Affairs executives while also evaluating the types of candidates coming to occupy these increasingly critical roles within a corporation's executive team.

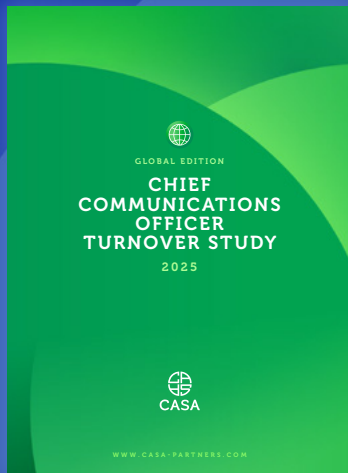
The member firms of the Corporate Affairs Search Alliance (CASA) examined 217 companies in France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, noting personnel and organizational changes within the Communications/Corporate Affairs roles and structures.

Leveraging the proprietary databases of CASA-member firms, as well as publicly available information, we sought to quantitatively ascertain the following:

- Whether a company had changed its CCO during the calendar year of 2024. In each case, a change meant that a new individual occupied the most senior role. "Internal Hires" as discussed in the report are not the same person being promoted (e.g. VP, Communications to SVP, Communications)
- Whether the incoming CCO was an internal promotion or an external hire

- If the current role was either newly created or substantially different structurally (with either greater or lesser responsibility) than that of the predecessor
- If the incoming CCO had previously served in a comparable CCO role as the head of corporate communications or corporate affairs for either a publicly traded or private company
- Whether the incoming CCO previously worked in the industry of his/ her current employer
- Rates of change amongst the above criteria by industry

This data was then discussed among CASA member company principals, clients, and various industry executives. These conversations informed our qualitative commentary and insight included throughout the study. The 2025 CCO Turnover Study contains data through December 31, 2024.



CCO TURNOVER STUDY
2025
Global Edition

A Global Report that looks at the full set of data.



CCO TURNOVER STUDY
2025
US Edition

A US Report that builds on last year's research, with richer insights due to the increased number of companies.

To request a copy of either the Global or US edition of these reports, contact CASA at info@casapartners.com



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