

PERSONAL TRAITS, MOTIVATIONS, CAREER PATH AND EDUCATION OF EUROPEAN FOOD PROFESSIONALS



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INTRODUCTION

- The European food industry is losing attractiveness to younger generations; a problem felt by the food industry associations and already a focus of European food research agenda. To understand the current needs and provide support to policies related to the food professions, a pan-European, internet based, survey has been carried out within the FP7 TRACK_FAST project (www.trackfast.eu) on the motivational base, personal behavior, education, and career path of professionals working in food industry, research and governmental organizations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- More than 2000 responses have been collected in EU countries and Turkey, even though the sample can not be considered representative, as the countries with higher number of employees in the food industry sector are underrepresented, and professionals with age less than 40 year old contributed to almost 50% of the answers.



Table 1: Number of answers according to language.

Questionnaire Language	Respondents visited the survey	Respondents agreed to participate	Respondents ended the survey
English	5.7% (169)	4.8% (99)	4.9% (61)
French	2.8% (83)	2.9% (60)	2.3% (29)
German	1.0% (30)	1.0% (20)	1.4% (17)
Greek	6.9% (203)	7.9% (165)	9.0% (112)
Hungarian	7.9% (234)	8.5% (177)	8.3% (103)
Italian	8.0% (238)	8.3% (172)	9.3% (116)
Lithuanian	4.5% (134)	4.5% (94)	4.6% (58)
Portuguese	12.8% (380)	14.2% (295)	13.5% (169)
Romanian	7.9% (233)	7.9% (164)	7.6% (95)
Slovenian	1.5% (45)	1.3% (28)	2.0% (25)
Spanish	10.2% (303)	8.1% (169)	7.7% (96)
Swedish	3.4% (101)	3.9% (82)	4.0% (50)
Turkish	27.3% (808)	26.6% (554)	25.4% (317)
Total	99.9% (2961)	100.0% (2079)	100% (1148)

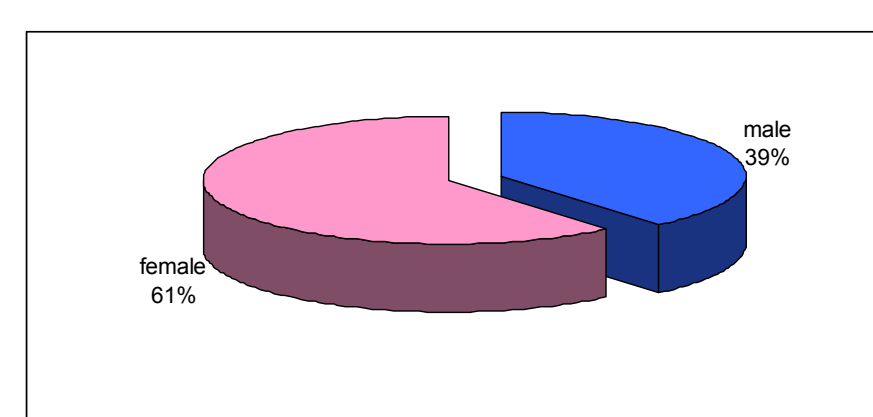


Figure 1: Gender distribution (in %) of the respondents.

Table 2: Age distribution of the respondents (overall).

Age (years)	%
<25	9,8
26-30	29,6
31-35	20,7
36-40	12,5
41-50	16,5
>50	10,9

CONCLUSIONS

- A second round of this survey in underrepresented countries (UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain) is needed.
- The results highlight the need for the improvement of the social role and image of the food professional to increase the attractiveness to the young generation; the continuous professional development has to be also implemented.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Based on the self-evaluation, food professionals are characterised by a high level of sense of responsibility, flexibility and challenge driven behaviour.

Table 3: Personality and character of the food professionals, based on the self-evaluation of respondents, ordered in decreasing averages (1-5 range scale).

Personal characteristics	Average	Standard deviation
Responsible	4,59	0,601
Flexible	4,11	0,793
I like to solve difficult technical/technological problems	4,11	0,895
I can enjoy life	4,04	0,948
The work is a field of creativity	3,98	0,830
Challenge driven	3,93	0,900
I like to manage people and systems	3,90	0,940
Ambitious	3,84	0,868
I like quiet life	3,43	1,013
To me work is for making money	2,91	1,012

- The secondary school has a relatively important role in orienting to Higher Education (HE) studies in the food area.
- HE qualification of food professionals at the 1st workplace is rather heterogeneous, food technology and engineering degree being the most frequent, and a continuous training occurs during the career path to achieve higher level positions.

Table 4: Qualifications of the respondents at the 1st workplace.

Field of qualification	No. of respondents, having a higher education (BSc, MSc, Ph.d.)	% of the respondents				
		BSc	MSc	Ph.D.	Company/ internal training	Other**
Agriculture	188	4,2	3,1	1,5	0,1	1,2
Chemical engineering	128	3,1	2,3	0,7	2	0,7
Chemistry	103	3,1	1,4	0,4	0,4	1
Economic Science	59	1,2	1,1	0	0,8	1
Environmental engineering	35	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,5	2,4
Food Science & Technology	867	12,3	3	3	1,6	2
Management	94	2,4	1,4	0,3	5,1	4
Marketing	51	1,4	0,6	0,1	2,6	1,6
Nutrition	112	3,3	1,1	0,5	2	2,5
Safety and hygiene	134	3,9	1,6	0,5	5,3	4,2
Sensory science	82	2,6	0,8	0,1	3	2,5
Other*	26	3,4	2,2	1,1	2,8	2,5
Sum	1879	41,3	19,1	8,7	26,2	25,6

*: food production, product design, supply, food policy, food microbiology
**: private schools, courses

- The mobility between the different spheres (production, public administration, R&D) is limited.
- Work placement reasons are mainly due to end of contract in first position and in other positions due to trying to reach a higher correspondence to personal skills, position improvement and gaining experience.

Table 5: Distribution of causes of change of job-position, in % of respondents.

Cause	Change workplace			
	1 st	2 nd	2 nd - 3 rd	3 rd - 4 th
Economic crisis	4,3	3,80	4,20	
Higher correspondence to personal skills	25,4	23,42	17,65	
Position improvement	10,1	21,52	27,73	
Salary	7,9	12,03	15,13	
Gaining experience	24	23,73	21,01	
End of contract	36,1	6,96	7,56	
Personal conflicts	12,4	3,48	4,20	
Dispreference (e.g. discrimination)	1,5	0,95	1,68	
Other	1,2	4,11	0,84	