

2025's

Great Expectations Gap: Salaries & Benefits

in Romania, Moldova, Greece, Bulgaria & Hungary

A dual-perspective study capturing what
employees expect and what employers offer.



About wherewework

wherewework is a global network of platforms that connects employees and employers through transparency, real-time insights, and open dialogue about the workplace.

Our mission is to support fairer, more inclusive work cultures grounded in trust, equity, and authenticity.

We operate across **14 countries on 3 continents: Romania, Republic of Moldova, Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria, Greece, Ukraine, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco**, and we're still growing.

More than a review platform, wherewework provides HR professionals with actionable insights and tools across the full employee lifecycle, from employer branding and recruitment marketing to engagement and retention strategies.

The regional survey “Salaries and Benefits: Balancing Expectations and Offers” supports our mission to create fairer, more transparent workplaces by revealing how closely employee expectations align with employer offerings, offering HR leaders cross-cultural insights to better adapt compensation and benefits in a rapidly changing labor market.



Foreword: Economic Pressure & Human Expectations

In today's volatile global landscape, marked by inflationary pressures, geopolitical tensions, and economic slowdowns, companies across Europe face complex challenges in attracting and retaining talent within tight budgets. **Employees increasingly demand fair pay, flexible work arrangements, and personalized benefits**, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where inflation rates (e.g., Romania at 4.9%, Hungary with double-digit inflation into 2023) outpace the 6% average gross salary growth, leaving workers financially strained.

Countries like **Moldova, Greece, and Bulgaria** experience similar gaps between earnings and rising living costs, exacerbating economic pressures.

Labor mobility is growing, driven by economic aspirations, quality-of-life goals, and regional instability, with workers open to cross-border and cross-sector transitions. Low unemployment rates (**e.g., Romania ~5.5%**) coexist with persistent labor shortages in strategic and digital roles, empowering talent with more choices.

Employers face pressure to remain competitive, meet evolving employee needs, and foster trust in markets marked by economic anxiety.

The “Salaries and Benefits: Balancing Expectations and Offers” survey, covering five countries (Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary), provides a regional perspective on earnings, employee expectations, and the strategic importance of benefits. By capturing qualitative and quantitative data, it highlights gaps between employer perceptions and employee realities, offering HR leaders actionable insights to develop sustainable compensation strategies that retain talent in a competitive, uncertain labor market.

General Study

This study highlights the key regional dynamics shaping compensation and expectations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Based on **9,888 responses** (8,898 employees and 990 employers) collected between **April 15** and **June 1** across **Romania**, **Moldova**, **Hungary**, **Greece**, and **Bulgaria**, the research combines closed and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative trends and individual perspectives.

Respondents work in companies spanning a wide range of industries, including **Banking, Consulting, Insurance & NFIs, Engineering, Healthcare & Pharma, Telecom, BPO & Services, Retail** (food and non-food), **Restaurants & Cafés, Manufacturing, Industrial Manufacturing**, and **IT&C**.

download the 
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Candidates' Perspective



Profile of Respondents



The survey respondents represent a wide range of professional backgrounds, with country-specific patterns shaped by the composition of those who chose to participate. In Romania, most respondents came from the **Banking** (7.8%) and **Engineering** (8.5%) sectors, with **IT&C** also showing strong presence.

In **Hungary**, the largest group of participants work in **Banking** (19.7%) and **Engineering** (12%), while **Moldova's** sample is notably concentrated in **Banking** (14.7%) and **Health & Pharma** (8.1%). In Bulgaria and Greece, the respondent distribution is more evenly spread across Retail, Healthcare, and Telecommunications.

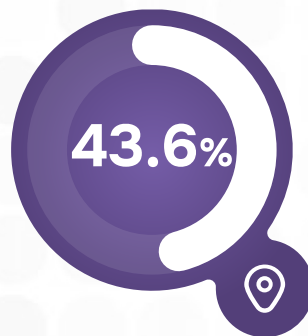
In terms of experience, the survey pool is dominated by **Senior professionals**, making up nearly half the respondents in countries like **Romania (45.7%)**, **Bulgaria (43.2%)**, and **Hungary (47.4%)**. **Entry-level professionals** are fewer but still notable, particularly in **Moldova**, where they account for **15.6%** of participants.

When it comes to contract types, the vast majority of surveyed individuals, **over 85% in all countries** are employed under **permanent contracts**. Alternative work arrangements such as **freelancing** or **project-based collaborations** remain marginal among respondents, consistently below the 5% threshold.

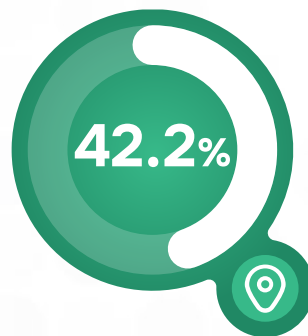
Intention to Change Job

We asked employees whether they are planning to change their job in the near future. Our question aimed to uncover not just career mobility, but also employee sentiment and perceived alignment with their current roles.

In a Nutshell:



43.6% in Romania & **42.2% in Moldova** would change jobs if a very good opportunity arises.



Around **27%** in most countries are already actively looking.



Only about **10–13%** describe themselves as fully satisfied and unwilling to change.

The responses reveal a strong trend toward mobility across all five countries surveyed. In **Moldova**, a striking **78.9%** of respondents are open to a job change, **36.7%** actively looking and **42.2%** open to switching if a great opportunity arises. **Romania** follows closely, with **71.3%** expressing openness to change (**27.7%** actively looking and **43.6%** passively open). **Bulgaria** and **Greece** exhibit similar dynamics: **74.4%** and **72.6%** respectively say they are open to change, with around **26–29%** actively searching. Even in **Hungary**, where sentiment appears slightly more stable, **68.4%** are still open to a new job, including **27.6%** in active search.

In contrast, the share of respondents who said they are satisfied with their current job and not considering any changes is consistently low: **13.5% in Romania**, **11.2% in Hungary**, and as little as **8.9% in Moldova**. These figures indicate that full commitment to current employers is the exception, not the rule.

HR Takeaway:

For **HR professionals**, this is more than a red flag, it's a strategic warning. When more than two-thirds of the workforce is mentally out the door, retention initiatives must go beyond surface-level fixes.

Employees today are more opportunistic and less anchored by traditional loyalty. The concept of job stability has become conditional: employees stay as long as they feel valued, well-compensated, and growing. Without continuous engagement, even satisfied employees may be passively scanning the market.

This means HR must evolve from asking “How do we retain?” to “How do we continuously re-earn trust and commitment?”

Main Driver for Job Change

In a Nutshell:

70% Moldova



63% Romania



65% elsewhere



A clear regional consensus: salary and benefits come first:

A more attractive salary and benefits package is the top motivator in all countries, chosen by **70% of respondents in Moldova**, **63% in Romania**, and over **65% elsewhere**.

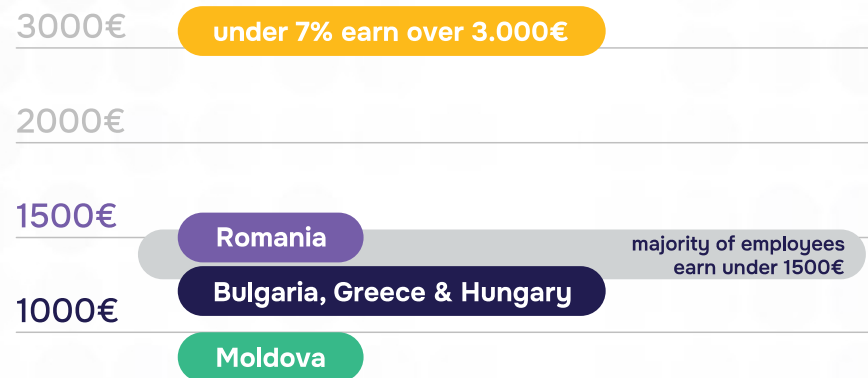
The second layer of motivators revolves around **flexibility**. Between **10–15%** of employees highlight remote work and flexible scheduling as key factors, especially relevant in **Romania** and **Moldova**, where commuting or rigid hours remain common friction points. More qualitative drivers, like professional development or a healthier work culture, are visible in smaller but consistent percentages. In **Greece** and **Hungary**, over **15%** of employees place significant weight on the relationship with their manager or the overall atmosphere at work. These figures suggest that, particularly for experienced talent, **culture** and **leadership** are becoming critical differentiators.

HR Takeaway:

Better pay gets attention, but remote options, leadership style, and development potential help close the deal. Build offers that lead with value and follow through with purpose

Salary Realities

In a Nutshell:



A regional reality: low-to-mid incomes define the salary landscape:

The majority of employees in the region earn under **1500 EUR net/month**.

Romania's estimated average net salary is around **1,500 EUR**, while **Moldova's** is significantly lower, at **approx. 960 EUR**.

In **Bulgaria, Greece, and Hungary**, the average ranges between **1,200–1,400 EUR**.

A small elite, **under 7%** in most countries, earns over **3,000 EUR/month**.

We wanted to discover what **employees' net monthly salary** is in order to better understand how fairly they feel compensated within their local labor markets.

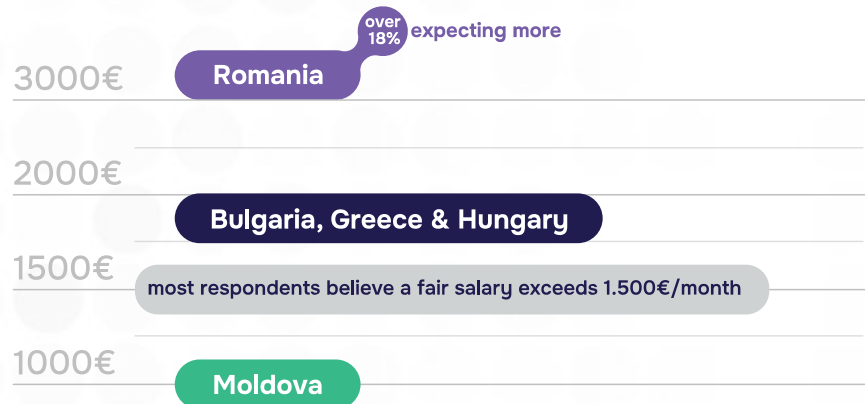
Across the five countries surveyed, the majority of respondents reported monthly earnings below 1,500 EUR. In **Moldova**, a striking **70%** earn under **1,000 EUR**, while in **Romania**, the distribution is more balanced, with **33.5%** earning below that threshold and another **27%** falling in the **1,000–1,500 EUR** range. In **Bulgaria**, nearly **50%** are still in the sub-**1,000 EUR** bracket, confirming a regional pattern of modest net incomes.

HR Takeaway:

In most countries, more than **60% of employees** earn under **1,500 EUR net per month** (many of them mid- and senior-level professionals). This signals a market where salary growth may lag behind experience, HR teams should explore complementary retention tools such as bonuses, recognition, and career development to balance perceived value.

Perceived Fair Salary

In a Nutshell:



A regional mindset shift: fair pay is seen well above current earnings:

Most respondents believe a fair salary exceeds 1,500 EUR/month.

Romania stands out, with over 18% expecting more than 3,000 EUR/month, double the share in Moldova. In countries like Hungary and Bulgaria, nearly 60% see 1,500–2,500 EUR as a reasonable range.

At this point we wanted to understand what employees consider a fair salary for their position and level of experience. Their responses show that, for most professionals, fairness begins well above their current earnings.

In all five countries, the majority of respondents placed their expectations in the **1,500–2,500 EUR net/month** bracket. In Hungary, this range accounts for over **63%** of answers, while in Bulgaria it reaches almost **55%**.

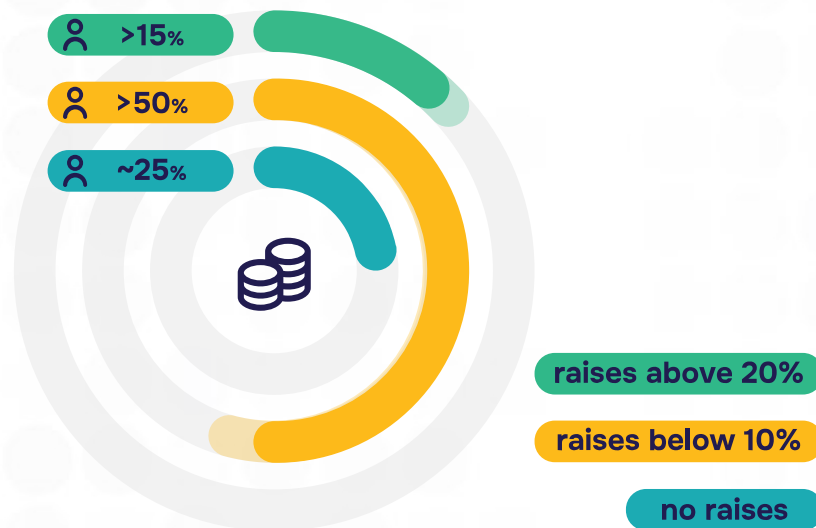
In contrast, only **6% of Romanians** and **4% of Moldovans** believe a fair salary is under **1,000 EUR**, despite many currently earning in that range. This mismatch reveals more than numbers, it reflects perceived value, self-assessment, and rising salary consciousness across the region.

HR Takeaway:

When the gap between current and fair salary perception is this wide, **HR should prioritize transparency**, clear pay banding, and communication around growth potential, not just compensation levels.

Salary Evolution in the Last Two Years

In a Nutshell:



A slow-moving reality: salary growth remains limited and modest across the region.

More than a quarter of employees in most countries report no salary increase in the last two years.

Over **50% of respondents** received salary **raises below 10%**, often perceived as insufficient given inflation rates.

Significant raises (**above 20%**) were reported by **less than 15%** of employees in every country.

The data shows a region where salary evolution is inconsistent, modest, and often symbolic. In **Romania**, **26%** of respondents received no raise at all, while another **52.9%** saw increases of less than **10%**. **Moldova** shows a similar pattern: **28.9%** reported no salary growth, and just under **50%** received under **10%**. In **Hungary**, while **19.7%** had no raise, the majority (**66%**) received minimal increases, with just **4.6%** enjoying a raise above **20%**.

Meanwhile, **Greece** stands out with the highest stagnation rate: **43.7%** of employees reported no salary growth. **Bulgaria** shows a comparable trend, with **26.9%** experiencing no increase and most respondents clustered under the **10%** threshold.

In all countries, the reality points to a system where compensation adjustments lag behind inflation, performance, and rising expectations. Symbolic raises dominate, while structural revisions to salary strategies remain rare.

Insight:

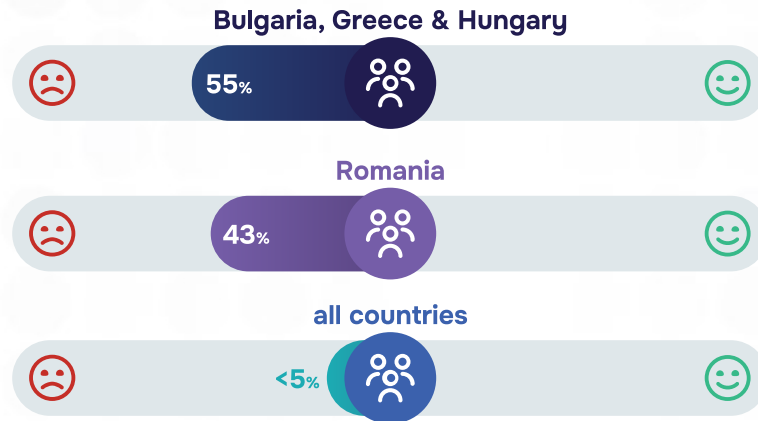
These numbers suggest that for many, salary evolution is not performance-driven nor aligned with cost-of-living pressures. Instead, it appears fragmented, reactive, and inconsistently applied, contributing to employee dissatisfaction and disengagement.

HR Takeaway:

When **salary growth is unpredictable or disconnected** from effort, **employees lose trust** in the reward system. Even modest raises can reinforce motivation if they are transparent, consistent, and clearly tied to performance or professional development. It's **time for compensation** to become part of the strategic dialogue, not just an operational afterthought.

Satisfaction with Current Salary

In a Nutshell:



A region-wide signal: salary dissatisfaction runs deep.

In **Hungary** and **Bulgaria**, over **55%** of employees are dissatisfied with their pay.

Romania fares slightly better but still sees over **43%** negative sentiment.

Very few employees (under **5%**) say they are very satisfied **across all countries**.

In **Hungary**, **59%** of respondents declared themselves unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their pay. **Bulgaria** and **Greece** follow closely, with **56%** and **48%** respectively expressing discontent. **Romania** sits at **43.3%**, indicating slightly higher tolerance but still below healthy engagement thresholds.

Positive responses, those who said they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied”, rarely pass **30%** in any market. This underlines a crucial point: employees are not just underpaid, they know it, and it affects how they perceive their employer’s fairness and credibility.

HR Takeaway:

Salary satisfaction isn’t just a number, it’s a perception that shapes trust. Even if increases aren’t always possible, how transparently and respectfully compensation is handled makes all the difference.

Which Countries Pay Fair or Fall Short?

In a Nutshell:

A widening gap between pay and expectations is visible across the region:

In **Romania**, **Hungary**, and **Moldova**, over **60–70%** of salaries fall below **1,500 EUR**, while a large share of employees believe fair pay starts at **2,000 EUR** or more.

Fewer than 50% of respondents received any meaningful salary increase or bonus in the last two years, with Hungary reporting just 34% experiencing performance-based rewards.

Salary dissatisfaction exceeds 55% in **Hungary** and **Bulgaria**, confirming that employees don't just want more, they expect better alignment between pay, growth, and recognition.

Current Salary vs. Perceived Fair Salary

Across all five countries, a consistent gap emerges between what employees **actually earn** and what they **believe they should earn**. The contrast becomes even more striking when we compare employee responses with those of employers.

In **Romania**, employees estimate their average net salary around **1,500 EUR**, and **63%** of employers confirm this bracket (under 1,500 EUR). However, **over 45% of employees** believe a fair salary starts at **2,000 EUR** or more. Similarly, in **Moldova**, while **79% of employers** state they pay under **1,500 EUR**, nearly **40% of employees** expect more than that, and **12%** believe they deserve over **2,000 EUR**.

The most striking gap is in **Hungary**, where **78% of employers** place salaries below **1,500 EUR**, while nearly **44% of employees** feel they should earn over **2,000 EUR**. This tension between current earning and perceived fairness is echoed across **Bulgaria** and **Greece**, where the majority of salaries are concentrated under 1,500 EUR, yet expectations rise well beyond.

Insight:

Employers are largely aware of their salary positioning, yet **employee expectations exceed employer offerings** across the board, especially in higher cost or more competitive markets like Hungary and Romania.



Any recent salary or benefits increases that have taken place

Employees across the region report **limited salary progression**. Less than **50%** mention any performance-based bonus or measurable financial growth.

Even though **Greek (57%)** and **Moldovan (54%)** employees reported some development-linked improvements, in countries like **Hungary**, only **34%** experienced performance bonuses, despite widespread dissatisfaction. Employers, on the other hand, often highlight **benefits or internal mobility** as part of compensation strategy, which employees do not perceive as meaningful salary evolution.

Additionally, **non-monetary benefits** such as medical coverage or flexible schedules were noted by fewer than **30–35%** of respondents, suggesting that **total compensation lacks both personalization and perceived impact**.

Insight:

There is a dissonance between how employers frame compensation evolution and how employees experience it. Raises often feel disconnected from performance or effort.

HR Takeaway:

To improve retention and engagement, employers must recalibrate how compensation is structured, communicated, and delivered. Performance-based raises should be transparent, predictable, and linked to clear contribution metrics. At the same time, non-monetary benefits need to move beyond generic offerings and reflect individual needs, through flexibility, well-being support, or career growth tools. In short, compensation should not only be competitive, but also coherent and meaningful in the eyes of those receiving it.

Benefits: Have vs. Want

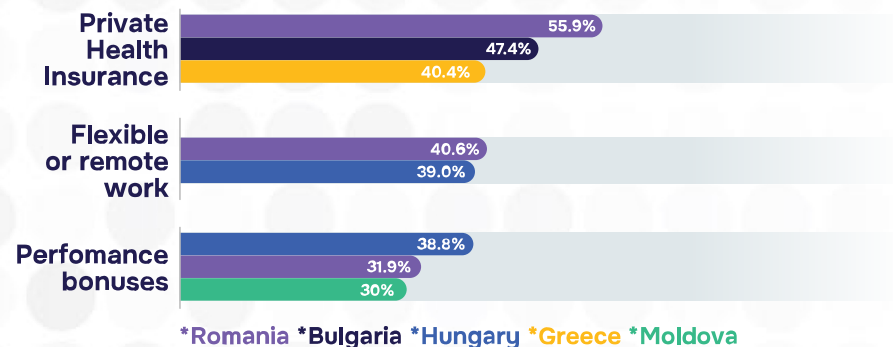
In a Nutshell:

A region-wide mismatch: what companies offer isn't necessarily what employees value most:

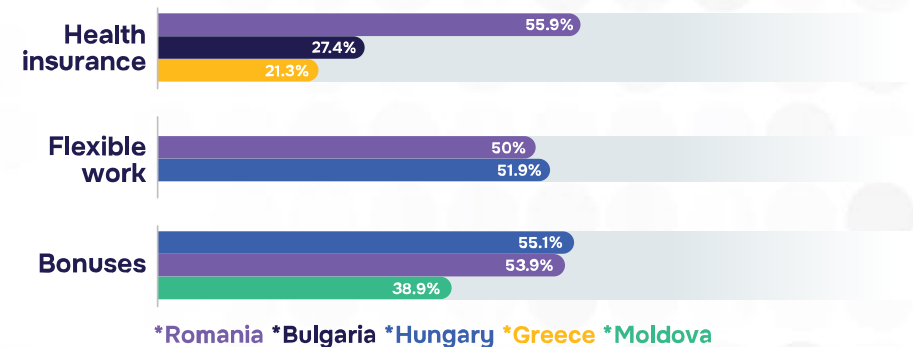
In all countries, the most common benefits provided are practical and easy to scale, like health insurance and meal vouchers. Yet employees prioritize flexibility, wellbeing, and time off. This disconnect grows sharper when analyzing retention drivers and emotional value.

Current Benefits What People Actually Receive vs. What Employers Offer

Across **Romania**, **Moldova**, **Bulgaria**, **Greece**, and **Hungary**, employees most often report receiving the **following benefits**:



Employers confirm these offerings with slightly **higher declared rates**:



However, gaps appear when benefits become more personal:

Health insurance for family is reported by only **10% of employees in Romania**, though **17% of employers** claim to offer it.

Friday early-leave programs and **mental health support** are nearly absent from both sides, though highly requested in qualitative responses.

What Benefits Actually Retain People

When asked what benefits would genuinely make them stay, employees across the region pointed to:

Real flexibility (freedom over schedule and location)

Additional vacation or rest days

Mental health & emotional wellbeing programs

These are benefits rooted in **autonomy, rest, and psychological safety**, and often missing from formal employer packages. Meanwhile, employers tend to focus on what's tangible and budgetable: **meal vouchers, phone/transport stipends, and insurance**.

Insight:

This signals a deeper divide: employees seek **experience-based benefits**, while companies continue to offer **logistical ones**.



Benefits: What employees say they **HAVE**, what they **WANT**, and what employers say they **OFFER**



Would You Accept 20% More Salary with Fewer Benefits?



Money tempts, but benefits matter more than expected.

In every country, many employees hesitate to trade their benefits for higher pay, especially when the benefits offer flexibility, mental health support, or stability.

The Salary vs. Benefits Dilemma

When employees across the region were asked, “Would you accept a 20% salary increase in exchange for fewer benefits?”, their answers revealed a clear divide in priorities and caution around trade-offs.

Respondents in **Hungary**, **Greece**, **Romania**, **Moldova**, and **Bulgaria** all showed this split in different proportions, but the overarching insight is consistent: while salary matters, benefits carry increasing emotional and strategic weight. Employees are no longer willing to trade wellbeing and security for cash unless the terms are clear and meaningful.

Three main response patterns emerged:

Roughly one-third of respondents across most countries answered “**Yes**”, showing a clear preference for immediate financial gain.

On average, **20% firmly said “No”**, signaling the perceived value of non-financial compensation such as flexibility, insurance, or wellbeing support.

The largest group, **around 45%** in nearly every country, chose “It depends on which benefits”, reflecting a nuanced and conditional mindset.



Which Benefits Are “Non-Negotiable”?

From open comments and follow-up responses, employees are most unwilling to give up:

Flexible work schedule & remote work

Extra paid time off

Support for mental health and emotional wellbeing

These are seen as “qualitative salary” components, benefits that sustain well-being, not just compensation.

On the other hand:

Meal vouchers, transport reimbursement, or social events are more frequently seen as optional.

Perception of Future Salary & Benefits Evolution

To understand expectations, we asked: “How do you see your salary and benefits evolving in the next two years?”

Responses show:

Only 35–45% of employees across all countries expect actual improvement.

45–50% believe things will stay the same.

Up to 15% expect stagnation or even decline, especially in Moldova and Bulgaria.

Cross-analysis: Employees who are already skeptical about future improvements are less likely to trade benefits for salary, fearing the higher salary won’t be sustainable or fair in the long run.



Today’s workforce weighs compensation as a full package, where emotional security matters as much as euros. Before reshaping benefits or shifting budgets, HR should map **what employees truly consider untouchable**. Not all salary increases are worth the hidden cost of disengagement.

Looking Ahead

As companies across Central and Eastern Europe plan for the future, employees are demanding more than promises, they want structural, visible changes that go beyond pay: into culture, wellbeing, and career clarity.

Perceived Salary Evolution

When asked about the next two years, **only 35–45%** of respondents expect real improvement in pay or benefits. Around **45–50% anticipate no change**, while in lower-income markets like **Moldova** and **Bulgaria**, **up to 15% expect stagnation or decline**. Skepticism is especially strong where past raises were irregular or unlinked to performance. Without transparent, structured pay systems, employee trust remains low.

What Employees Want

Across all countries, workers call for more than bonuses or health insurance.

Top demands include:



Transparent salary progression



Greater flexibility (in time, place, and autonomy)



Extended paid leave



Mental health support



Career development through budgets, coaching, and certifications



These are no longer seen as “extras,” but **baseline expectations**, especially among mid-level and younger professionals. Meanwhile, traditional perks like gym discounts or meal vouchers are appreciated, but carry less strategic or emotional value. Without a shift in benefits philosophy, companies risk losing top talent.

Key Trends That Matter

Three trends stand out across the region:



Flexibility is now expected, not exceptional.



Mental health support is increasingly urgent and underdelivered.



Growth opportunities, through learning and advancement, are essential.

The shift is clear: from stability to significance. Employees want to work where they are valued not just for what they do, but for who they are and who they could become.

Employers' Perspective



Profile of the Companies

The organizations represented in this survey span a broad range of industries across Central and Eastern Europe, reflecting a dynamic and varied employer landscape.

In **Romania**, employers responding to the survey were predominantly from **IT&C (19.2%)**, **Retail (non-food) (11.1%)**, and **Engineering (10.5%)**, followed by **Manufacturing Production (7.8%)**, and **Health & Pharma (6.3%)**.

Moldova shows a more even distribution, with representation from **Retail (food) (18.3%)**, **Banking (1.7%)**, **Health & Pharma (5.0%)**, and **Production/Manufacturing sectors (combined over 15%)**.

In **Hungary**, the **IT&C** sector leads again with **17.7%**, followed by **Industrial Production (13.9%)**, **Consulting (8.9%)**, and **Engineering (7.6%)**.

Bulgaria presents strong participation from **BPO & Services (14.3%)**, **IT&C (13.7%)**, and **Retail (food) (7.7%)**, while other sectors such as **Consulting**, **Telecom**, and **Production** are also well represented.

Finally, **Greece** displays a more distributed profile, with a noticeable presence in **Retail (food) (16%)**, **IT&C (9.3%)**, **Health & Pharma (8%)**, and **Consulting (7.3%)**.

While the specific distribution varies by country, a common trend emerges: **IT&C**, **Retail**, and **Consulting** consistently appear as top-represented sectors across the region. This mix of industries, combined with responses from both service-driven and production-based organizations, offers a well-rounded snapshot of employer perspectives.

Looking Ahead

In a Nutshell:

A mixed picture across the region:

In **Romania**, the proportion is notably lower, at just under **40%**. Similar patterns are seen in **Bulgaria (54.8%)**, Greece **(48.7%)**, and **Hungary (43%)**.

In Moldova, over **57%** of employers report average total compensation packages (salary + benefits) under the equivalent of **1,500 EUR net/month**.

The most common monthly benefit value is between **100–200 EUR** in **Romania**, while in **Moldova** and **Bulgaria** it typically remains below **100 EUR**.

Performance bonuses and **flexible work** are the most widely offered non-salary benefits. For example, in **Hungary**, **55%** of employers offer bonuses and **52%** offer **flexible work** options; in **Romania**, these figures are **54%** and **50.0%**, respectively.

High-emotional-value benefits such as **mental health support** are still rare, reported by only **7–18%** of companies across the region.

The data highlights significant disparities in how companies across Central and Eastern Europe structure their compensation and benefits. While salary-based offers dominate, benefit packages remain modest in scope and unevenly distributed. Strategic benefits tied to wellbeing, flexibility, or personal growth are emerging slowly and not yet consistently prioritized.

Average Net Salary in Company

Most employers in **Moldova (57.8%)** and **Bulgaria (54.8%)** report that the average net monthly compensation package in their organizations is below **1,500 EUR**. In **Greece**, **48.7%** of companies fall into this range, followed by **Hungary (43.0%)** and **Romania (39.5%)**.

This suggests that while modest compensation is common across the region, the proportion of companies offering salaries above 1,500 EUR varies notably by country. At the same time, high salary brackets (over 2,000 EUR net) remain relatively uncommon, as no country shows a majority of employers in that range.

Overall, the data points to a region where mid-range salary levels dominate, and high-net compensation continues to be the exception rather than the norm.

Monthly Value of Benefits

Regarding the monthly monetary value of benefits, the most commonly cited bracket among employers is between 100 and 300 EUR. In **Romania**, nearly **40%** of employers report benefits within this range. **Moldova** and **Bulgaria** tend to offer lower-value benefits, most often **under 100 EUR** per month. **Hungarian** employers display more variation, with **over 20% offering** benefits valued above **300 EUR monthly**.

Types of Benefits Offered

Across the region, employers prioritize basic and tangible benefits.

Private health insurance is offered by **56% of employers in Romania** and by around **20 to 30% of employers** in other countries.

Performance bonuses are widely provided, especially in **Hungary (55%)**, **Romania (54%)**, and **Bulgaria (46%)**.

Flexible or remote work options are prevalent in **Hungary (52%)**, **Romania (50.0%)**, and **Bulgaria (39%)**.

However, benefits with strong emotional value, such as mental health support, remain uncommon. These are **offered by only 7 to 18% of employers**, depending on the country. Family-oriented benefits such as health insurance for dependents or extended parental support are even less frequently reported, often by fewer than 10% of employers.

This overall structure suggests that while companies have started to integrate modern benefit offerings, many still focus on traditional, cost-driven packages. There remains significant room to align these offerings with the evolving needs and expectations voiced by employees.



The compensation and benefits structure across the region reveals both opportunity and urgency for HR leaders. While most companies cover the basics such as health insurance, bonuses, and remote work, the emotional and family-oriented benefits that employees increasingly value are still scarce. This imbalance suggests a need to move beyond transactional perks and focus on more human-centered packages. **To stay competitive, HR teams must think beyond cost-efficiency** and embrace benefits that reflect care, flexibility, and a long-term investment in employees' well-being.

How Compensation Influences Employer Choice?

Across Central and Eastern Europe, compensation continues to play a **central role in employer** attractiveness.

Most companies report **net monthly salaries below 1,500 EUR**, with the highest concentrations in **Bulgaria (83.2%)**, **Moldova (78.9%)**, and **Hungary (77%)**. In **Romania**, the figure reaches **61.7%**, while **Greece** reports the lowest proportion at **55.3%**.

Regarding monthly benefit value, employers in **Romania** more frequently report packages in the **100–200 EUR (34.4%)** and **200–400 EUR (23.1%)** ranges. In contrast, in **Moldova** and **Bulgaria**, benefit levels are more constrained:

56.7% of Moldovan employers and **42.9% in Bulgaria** offer benefits **below 100 EUR** per month.

In **Hungary**, the majority of companies (**38.6%**) fall into the **100–200 EUR** range, while **only 5.7% report values above 200 EUR**.

Employers primarily offer standard, tangible benefits. According to the data:

Performance bonuses are provided by **53.9%** of employers in **Romania** and **55.1%** in **Hungary**.

Flexible or remote work arrangements are reported by **50.0%** of employers in **Romania** and **51.9%** in **Hungary**.

These figures indicate that both benefits are relatively widespread individually, though the data does not show whether they are offered in combination.

In summary, compensation strategies across the region remain grounded in conventional elements. While financial and operational benefits are widely adopted, more personalized or high-emotional-value offerings remain underutilized. As workforce expectations evolve, this gap may become more difficult to sustain.

Talent Retention & Compensation

In a Nutshell:

Employer focus on retention varies, but compensation remains a key pillar across the region.

New benefits are being considered by **33.2% of Romanian** employers, **20% in Moldova**, **13.3% in Hungary**, and **14% in Greece**.

Increases to benefits budgets are planned by **12.6% in Romania**, **16.7% in Moldova**, **10.1% in Hungary**, and **14.7% in Greece**. Annual engagement surveys are the main tool for collecting feedback, but more dynamic methods like pulse surveys and 1:1s remain underused.

55.2% of Hungarian employers plan to review salary policies, while **41.2% of Greek** employers are adjusting their benefits package.

Retention Drivers and Pay Strategies

Across Central and Eastern Europe, companies are increasingly aware that retaining talent requires more than competitive pay, it demands alignment with employee values, clear growth opportunities, and a culture of listening.

What Keeps Employees Loyal?

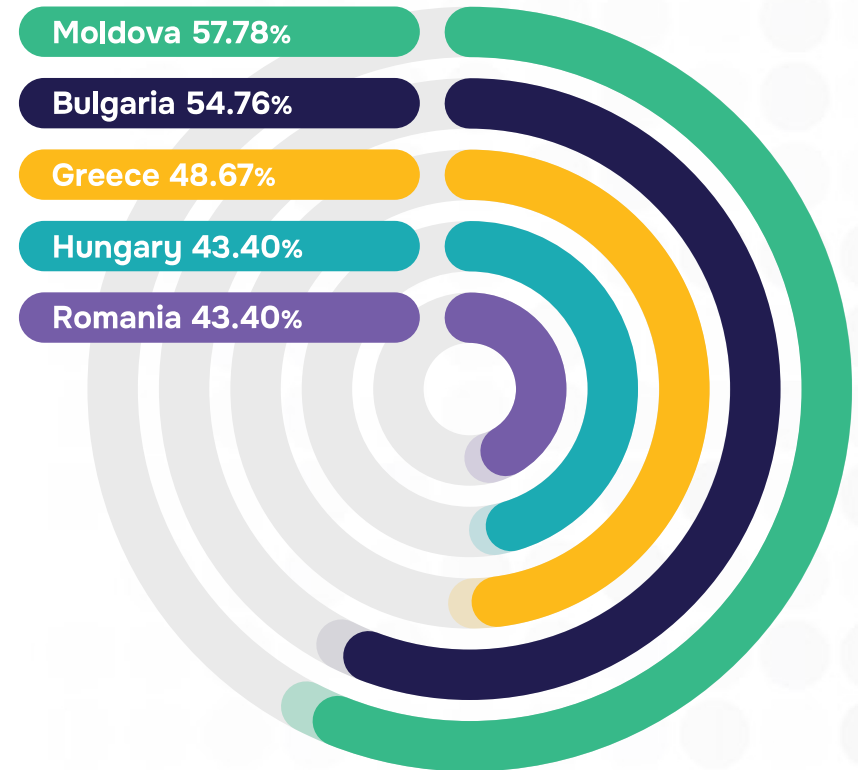
When asked what they believe motivates employees to stay, employers overwhelmingly chose salary and benefits as the leading driver of retention. This was followed by a healthy work environment and team culture, as well as opportunities for development and promotion.

What do employers believe keeps people loyal?

While salary remains the top factor across most countries, Hungary shows a clear shift: more and more employers (44.94%) believe that work-life balance is the key to retention.

A perception gap remains.

Even though employers across the region recognize a mix of financial and non-financial drivers, the broader survey reveals a disconnect between what employers believe matters and what employees actually value, especially when it comes to emotional support, flexibility, and purpose at work.

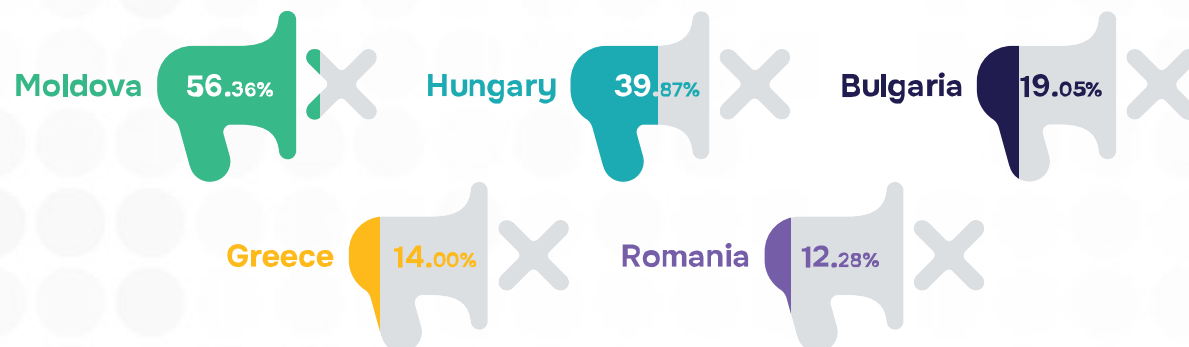


The Importance of Feedback

When it comes to gathering employee feedback, the most common method reported is **the annual engagement survey**. This is the top tool in countries like **Bulgaria (70%)**, **Hungary (66%)**, and **Greece (61%)**.

Are employers really listening?

In some countries, many companies **don't collect** any feedback from employees about salaries and benefits:



Moldova and **Hungary** stand out: **over 1 in 3 companies** in Hungary and more than half in Moldova say they don't actively collect feedback on salaries and benefits.

This data reveals a tendency to gather feedback, but not necessarily in a dynamic or continuous way.

Companies may be **“listening”**, but not always in real time, and not always acting on the insights they gather.



Salary Reviews and Benefits Adjustments

Are employers planning to review their compensation policies in the next 12 months?

Faced with changing expectations, are employers adapting their compensation strategies? The survey says: partially.

In **Hungary**, only **22.78%** of companies plan to review their salary policies in the near future.

In **Greece**, **61.3%** of employers say they intend to make changes to their benefits packages.

In **Romania**, intentions are more balanced: **57.19%** of companies plan to adjust both salaries and benefits.

Notably, **Hungary** also reports the highest share of employers not planning any changes—**50.63%** say they have no intention of adjusting their salary policies at all.

Despite growing pressure to align with employee needs, a significant share of employers across all countries do not plan to make changes to salaries or benefits. This could signal either confidence in their current offerings—or a possible underestimation of employee sentiment.



Retention begins with relevance. Employers across the region understand that pay, culture, and growth are essential, but must move faster to match employee expectations. Listening tools must evolve beyond annual surveys, and reward strategies should be updated to reflect what truly motivates today's workforce: fairness, purpose, and emotional value. By shifting from reactive to proactive compensation and feedback models, HR leaders can create workplaces that employees won't want to leave.

Comparison & Analysis: Regional Fingerprint of Salary Expectations vs. Company Reality

In a Nutshell:

A persistent gap between expectations and reality:

In **Romania**, **63%** of employees earn under **1,500 EUR**, yet over **45%** believe fair pay starts at **2,000 EUR**.

In **Moldova**, **70%+** earn under **1,000 EUR**, while **12%** expect over **2,000 EUR**, but **58%** of employers plan no change.

Hungary shows the sharpest mismatch: **78%** of salaries are under **1,500 EUR**, while **44%** of employees expect more than **2,000 EUR**.

In **Bulgaria** and **Greece**, expectations have shifted to **1,500–2,500 EUR**, yet fewer than half of employers plan adjustments. Employees value **flexibility**, **mental health support**, and **extra time off**, but companies mostly offer **meal vouchers** and **health insurance**.

Mental health and **family benefits** remain rare, despite growing demand across all countries.

How do employee expectations align with company offerings?

The survey data reveals a persistent gap between what employees expect in terms of compensation and benefits and what companies actually provide. This misalignment is visible across salary levels, types of benefits, and the perceived value of total rewards.

In **Romania**, **63%** of employees report earning under **1,500 EUR** per month, while over **45%** believe a fair salary should begin at **2,000 EUR**. Employers confirm this range, with more than **60%** stating that average salaries fall below the **1,500 EUR** threshold. Still, only **35%** of employers plan to review their salary policy, highlighting a potential stagnation in addressing expectations.

Moldova shows a similar pattern: over **70%** of employees earn under **1,000 EUR**, yet a growing proportion (**12%**) expect salaries to surpass **2,000 EUR**. Meanwhile, only **18.88%** of companies report plans to significantly revise their compensation packages in the near future.

In **Hungary**, the expectation gap is most visible. **78%** of employers report average salaries below **1,500 EUR**, while nearly **44%** of employees believe they should be earning over **2,000 EUR**. Despite this, only **55%** of **Hungarian** employers say they intend to review salary policies.

In **Bulgaria** and **Greece**, expectations are also growing. Although over **50%** of employees fall into the **sub-1,500 EUR** category, many now expect **1,500 to 2,500 EUR** to be a fair range. Still, fewer than half of employers in these countries plan any significant adjustment.

Benefits: Employee Desires vs. Employer Offers

When asked which benefits matter most, employees across all countries prioritize **flexibility, mental health support, and additional time off**. These are benefits that reflect emotional security and work-life balance. However, employers continue to offer more practical, budgetable perks such as **meal vouchers** and **health insurance**.

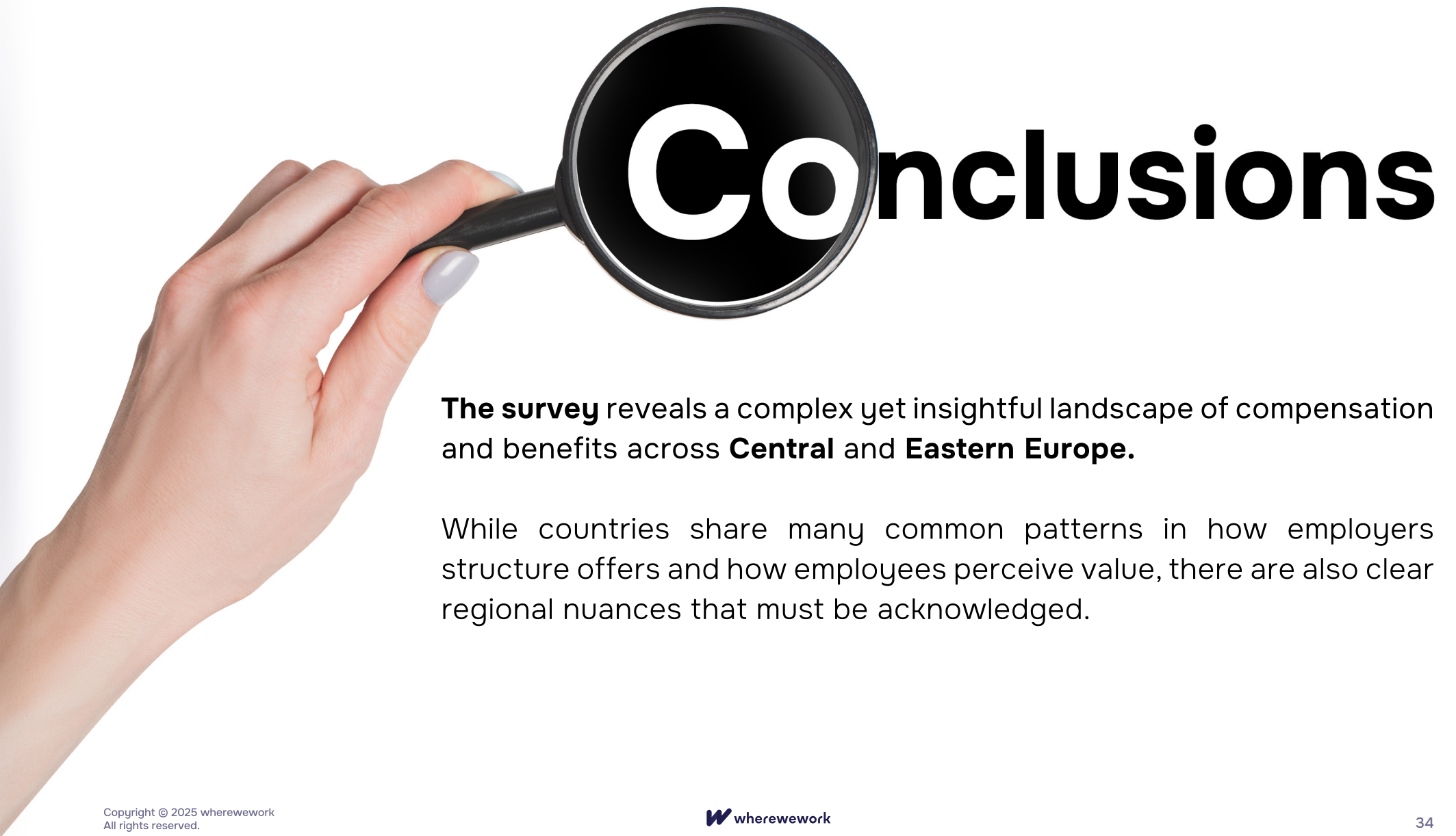
For example, **mental health support** is requested by over **20%** of employees in **Romania** and **Hungary**, yet offered by fewer than **18%** of companies.

Flexible or remote work is highly valued and offered by about half the employers in **Romania** and **Hungary**, but still lacking in other regions.

Family-related benefits (like health insurance for family members or childcare aid) are among the least common, reported by fewer than **10% of employers**, despite increasing demand.

This mismatch suggests that while companies may believe they are covering essential needs, they often miss out on benefits with the highest emotional or retention impact.

By aligning compensation strategies with employee expectations, not just in terms of pay but also perceived value and relevance, employers can bridge the growing expectations gap and foster long-term loyalty in a competitive talent market.



The survey reveals a complex yet insightful landscape of compensation and benefits across **Central** and **Eastern Europe**.

While countries share many common patterns in how employers structure offers and how employees perceive value, there are also clear regional nuances that must be acknowledged.

Key Similarities and Differences Across Countries

Across all five countries surveyed, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Greece, the most commonly reported net salary range remains below 1,500 EUR. Despite this, employee expectations consistently push toward the 2,000 EUR threshold or beyond, particularly among mid-level and senior professionals.

In terms of benefits, most employers focus on classic packages: private health insurance, performance bonuses, and, in some countries, flexible work options. However, the degree of adoption varies. Romania and Hungary report the highest presence of flexible or remote work, while Moldova and Bulgaria lag behind in both benefit value and diversity.

Mental health support, family-related benefits, and personal development budgets remain underutilized across the region, although employee responses show growing demand for precisely these high-emotional-impact benefits.

Regional Nuances

While overarching trends are consistent across the region, each country exhibits unique characteristics that shape its compensation and benefits dynamics.

Bulgaria, for instance, reports one of the lowest average benefits budgets in the region. A significant number of employers offer benefits valued at under 100 EUR per month, and family-oriented or emotional well-being perks are still rare. However, there is a relatively strong emphasis on performance bonuses and steady adoption of flexible work options, which may serve as a foundation for future improvements.

Hungary stands out for its relatively high levels of employer transparency regarding compensation policies. Over 55% of companies report an intention to review their salary structure, and flexible or remote work is already integrated in more than half of the organizations. Still, gaps remain in emotional benefits, such as mental health support and personalized career development.

In **Moldova**, where salaries are generally lower, companies tend to compensate with a stronger focus on team culture and internal growth opportunities. Even so, the overall benefits value remains minimal, with most employers offering packages under 100 EUR.

Romania and Greece reflect a middle ground: moderate salaries, practical benefits, and growing employee expectations. Both countries have seen an increase in demand for emotional and lifestyle-based benefits, which are only partially met by employers.

Where the Biggest Potential Lies to Bridge the Gap

Key areas offer high impact for aligning employer offerings with employee expectations:

1. Emotional and high-impact benefits

Flexibility, mental health support, and personal time are highly valued yet still uncommon. Broader integration could improve retention and satisfaction.

2. Transparency and communication

Clear, consistent messaging around pay, promotions, and career paths builds trust. Some countries, like Hungary, show progress, but the region as a whole has room to grow.

3. Dynamic feedback mechanisms

Annual surveys dominate, but agile tools like pulse checks and 1:1s are underused. More frequent feedback helps track shifting needs.

4. Balanced compensation packages

Beyond salary, a mix of pay, growth opportunities, and well-being support signals a people-centered culture. These gaps also represent strategic opportunities for employers to differentiate in a fast-evolving labor market.

A hand with light-colored nail polish holds a black magnifying glass. The lens of the magnifying glass is positioned over the letter 'R' of the word 'Recommendations', which is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. The 'R' is significantly enlarged and appears white due to the high contrast with the black lens.

Recommendations

As the gap between employee expectations and employer offerings continues to widen, both sides have a role to play in improving alignment and building more sustainable work environments.

Based on insights from the regional survey, here are some actionable recommendations for both companies and employees.

For Companies

Listen actively and frequently: Go beyond annual engagement surveys. Use pulse surveys, informal feedback sessions, and one-on-one conversations to capture evolving employee needs in real time.

Invest in emotional and lifestyle-based benefits: Flexibility, mental health support, and extra time off are no longer optional. These benefits are seen as signs of respect and trust, and they contribute significantly to retention and engagement.

Communicate transparently about compensation: Clearly outline how salaries are structured, how growth is rewarded, and what employees can expect over time. Transparency builds trust and reduces dissatisfaction.

For Employees

Express needs clearly: Be vocal about what truly matters to you, whether it's flexibility, growth, recognition, or stability. Employers cannot meet expectations that remain unspoken.

Research compensation benchmarks: Understand your market value and come prepared to salary conversations with informed, realistic expectations.

Evaluate total rewards, not just pay: Consider the full picture when assessing an offer, growth potential, benefits, culture, and flexibility all matter alongside salary.

Let's Talk About Building Better Workplaces

Whether you're looking to attract the right talent, improve retention, or align your compensation strategy with what employees truly value, we're here to help.

Let's get in touch to explore data-driven solutions tailored to our market:

contact@wherewework.com



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