global talent mobility survey 2026

emea: trends summary

Our biannual **Global Talent Mobility Survey Report 2026** is a comprehensive exploration into the dynamic intersection of macroeconomic challenges, employee experience, and the ever-evolving landscape of mobility strategies.

With the **final report out now**, we've taken a deep dive into specific industries, program sizes, and regions—including Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA)—to see what the data tells us.

FOLLOWING ARE KEY FINDINGS FROM 52 RESPONDENTS WITH EMEA VOLUME, INCLUDING BOTH INTER- AND INTRA-REGIONAL MOBILITY PROGRAMS.

why it matters

Whether you're managing challenging relocations, attracting key talent, or future-proofing operations, these insights give you a pulse on trends and opportunities for improvements to talent mobility in the EMEA region.

NOTE: Throughout this report, the terms "intra-region" or "EMEA-only" refer to programs within the EMEA region. The terms "inter-regional" or "companies with multi-regional programs" refers to companies with any EMEA volume (in addition to volume in APAC and/or Americas).

speed bumps and green lights

what's driving mobility trends?

Similar to the parent report, EMEA survey participants with inter-regional programs saw an evenly distributed mobility volume spread during the last 2 years. 31% saw an increase, 37% cited a decrease, and for 33%, activity stayed the same. Intra-regional programs showed rather different results, with 46% of companies seeing an increase, 36% seeing a decrease, and 18% seeing no change.

top reasons for mobility increasing over the past 2 years: emea

intra-regional programs

- 80% expansion into different markets
- 60% company growth/talent not available locally (tied)

multi-region programs (including emea)

- 81% expansion into different markets
- 75% company growth

declining volume

In cases where mobility decreased, companies were aligned across programs: 100% of participants with intra-regional programs and 95% with inter-regional programs listed cost containment strategy as the primary reason for a decrease in mobility volume.

mobility matters

"Expansion into different markets" tops the list for both intra- and inter-regional programs, indicating that when EMEA organizations are expanding, they're using mobility as a lever for market access and business development, not just talent placement. While inter-regional volume trends are somewhat equally split, the stronger rise in intra-regional moves suggests companies are prioritizing growth in nearby markets where mobility is easier to execute and more cost-predictable.

Secondary drivers (including company growth, a lack of available talent, and career development) reinforce a dual mandate: supporting expansion while developing and redistributing talent across a diverse and uneven skills landscape.

where in the world

Based on Cartus' data, here's where our top EMEA destinations rank amongst our global top 10:

1. United States of America
2. India
3. **United Kingdom**
4. Singapore
5. **Ireland**
6. Canada
7. **Switzerland**
8. China
9. **United Arab Emirates**
10. **Germany**

top emea destinations by city

EMEA cities also made a strong showing on our global inbound list, with London ranking 6th and Dublin following closely in 7th place.

Other key destinations in the region include Abu Dhabi and Dubai, UAE; and Basel, Switzerland.*

* Based on proprietary Cartus data.

mobility priorities vs. challenges

Companies with EMEA volume continue to balance operational priorities with a mix of regional and cross-border challenges. With mobility activity split across rising, declining, and static volume, teams are focusing on strengthening core processes, improving the employee experience, and managing rising compliance and immigration demands. These themes reflect the most common areas of focus and pressure points reported across inter-regional programs.

key global mobility priorities	key global mobility challenges
1 improve in-house mobility processes and optimization	1 immigration
2 improve the employee experience	2 extended business travelers or remote workers
3 compliance	3 rising mobility costs

what's rising, what's holding steady

In EMEA, core operational priorities remain steady across programs. Those with programs in EMEA continue to prioritize process optimization and employee experience. It is also no surprise that compliance made the top 3 priorities, while immigration was the number 1 challenge, given the number of cross-border moves in EMEA.

business on the go: which moves will rule 2026?

A note on business travel:

Business travel was also highlighted as the leading move type in the parent report, mentioned by 73% of respondents from all segments. This percentage is slightly lower than that of the EMEA region, possibly because cross-border collaboration is increasing there, facilitated by European Union (EU) citizens' ability to live, work, and travel freely across member states and regional geographic proximity.

most anticipated moves for 2026

business traveler	85%
international short-term assignments	77%
international long-term assignments	73%

Often managed as a standalone mobility stream, it's typically expected to be a cost-effective alternative to long-term moves. It's important to note, however, that less expensive doesn't mean "complication free." Businesses will still need to keep a close eye on the soft-cost drivers that can erode ROI, especially the administrative time required to manage traveler-related activities and obligations across:

- Tracking and duty of care
- Cross-border tax and immigration compliance
- Oversight of remote work and extended business travel (EBT), often managed under the umbrella of mobility

measuring the move: what makes a relocation shine?

This year, our survey focused on answering a new question that aligns with both program optimization and employee satisfaction, both top priorities for this segment:

Which metrics most effectively define your relocation program's success?

- 90% operational efficiency
- 87% business impact
- 81% employee satisfaction
- 58% talent outcomes

what it all means

Companies with EMEA volume are defining relocation success primarily through operational efficiency, followed by business impact and employee satisfaction. Given the region's highly varied regulatory environments and the fragmented nature of mobility activity, these metrics signal a need for stability and predictability across diverse markets. By grounding success in efficiency and impact, organizations can better navigate fluctuating volumes, cost pressures, and the cross-border complexity that characterizes mobility in the region.

driven to adapt: what's fueling mobility policy overhauls?

The majority of respondents in this segment are planning a policy review this year: 69% of companies with inter-regional programs and 64% with intra-regional programs expect to revisit their strategies.

key factors influencing review decisions were:

intra-region programs

- **71%** employee experience
- **43%** cost/flexibility (tied)

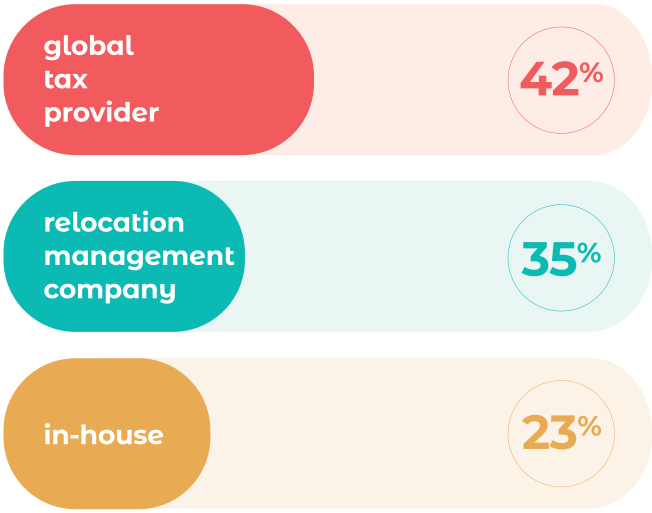
multi-region programs (including emea)

- **67%** cost
- **64%** employee experience

The through-line: Companies with EMEA volume (whether managing in-region or multi-region mobility) are recalibrating their programs to strike a sharper balance between cost control, employee experience, and flexibility to navigate the region's diverse operating environments.

international assignment compensation: who's running the show?

Much like the parent report (where 75% of respondents handed off their expat compensation duties to a global tax provider or relocation company), the majority of EMEA participants with multi-regional programs do the same:



42% outsource to a global tax provider, 35% to a relocation management company, and 23% manage this function in-house. In companies with intra-regional programs, an even greater majority outsource to global tax providers or relocation management companies (46% each).

The trend is clear: As mobility grows more complex across borders, companies in EMEA are leaning on specialist expertise to manage risk, ensure compliance, and stabilize costs.

flex appeal: have it your way

When asked if they were planning to include flexible mobility policies in their relocation programs, participants shared that they would be (52%) or might be (25%).

In companies specifically using a core/flex policy, the relocating employee was identified as the person most likely to select flex benefits (42%). In single-region programs for EMEA, a whopping 64% said they would not be considering a core/flex policy at all, which may be due to the misconception that these types of policies increase cost.

However, in Cartus' experience, core/flex can often lead to cost savings and provide companies with more control over their programs. Companies not considering core/flex for intra-regional moves may be missing an opportunity to better match support to employee needs while avoiding unnecessary spend.

top 3 drivers for greater flexibility in multi-regional programs

inclusive mobility

how relo programs are keeping up with employee needs

strategy sync

12% of companies with multi-regional programs have formally tied their mobility programs to their talent strategies, and another 58% have reported informal connections. This presents a significant opportunity for companies to formalize mobility's alignment with talent this year and bolster their reputation as a strategic business partner.

One-third of respondents reported addressing emerging employee needs, and another 23% are currently considering changes to better reflect those needs.

global moves, local grooves

helping families thrive abroad

cross-cultural coaching

The majority of participants in this segment (77%) offer cross-cultural coaching to relocating employees and their families.

Policy power-up: 58% of organizations recommend cross-cultural coaching or bake it into policy. Another 10% make it mandatory, acknowledging how crucial it is for employee/assignment success. Mandatory support is often seen in organizations with mature talent mobility strategies and/or client-driven assignment needs.

language-learning solutions

Most companies in this segment (87%) provide language training. This is even higher than in our **parent report**, where 78% reported doing the same.

Talk the talk: More than half (53%) of respondents say their companies recommend language training or include it in their policy, although only 4% require it. For others, it depends on business needs or host country requirements, or it's offered as a flex choice (20%) or at the organization's discretion (16%).

humans + high-tech:
the ultimate mobility dream team

As companies lean more heavily on digital tools to support employees through a relocation, they're prioritizing flexibility and choice while still aiming for a top-tier experience.

- Most organizations strike a balance, combining personal attention and smart tech (67%)
- Many rely only on a human-centered approach (33%)
- Zero respondents said they had a technology-only solution (a clear sign that most aren't ready to ditch traditional support for the latest tech trends)

These results closely mimic the parent report, where 42% of respondents reported currently using AI for business and process tasks. EMEA's slight uptick in AI adoption may reflect the region's unique mobility pressures: complex cross-border compliance and a strong push toward process optimization make automation especially relevant to how mobility teams operate in this region.

50% don't use ai technology

46% use ai technology

4% remain undecided

repatriation done right: mobility roi

How do businesses measure international assignment success?

1. Completing the assignment **(52%)**
2. Employee experience **(48%)**
3. Meeting assignment objectives **(42%)**
4. Career path progression, post repatriation / Retention post-repatriation (tied) **(29%)**

42% don't formally measure assignment success.

It is also important to note that assignments do not always result in repatriation. Instead, the relocating employee could be offered another assignment or be localized.

ROI roadblocks: Measuring mobility ROI is crucial to earning mobility's seat at the table, but it will be a monumental challenge for almost half of businesses in this segment that don't measure assignment success.

Repatriation coaching: While 23% of companies offer repatriation coaching (training and formal debriefs) for globe-trotting employees and their families, 77% don't. This represents a missed opportunity to support career transitions, talent pipelines, and employee retention.

EMEA mobility teams are operating in one of the most complex regulatory environments in the world, all while balancing cost pressures and evolving employee needs. 2026 offers a chance to recalibrate, streamline, and elevate mobility's impact across the region.

Ready to pressure-test your playbook? Contact your Cartus representative or email cartussolutions@cartus.com.