



MONTHLY BULLETIN OF ECONOMIC TRENDS

2026

FEBRUARY

ON THE LATEST ANALYSIS FROM THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC AND ENTERPRISE RESEARCH

- » Part-time employment
- » Employment of foreign nationals
- » International trends



Prepared by

Kása Richárd, analyst
Zsibók Zsuzsanna, analyst
Szenderák János, analyst
Szennay Áron, analyst

Research Manager
Molnár Endre Mihály,
research director

16 March 2026.

CONTENT

02 PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

Stable part-time employment

05 EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS

A slight increase in foreign employment

07 INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Fragile economic stabilization



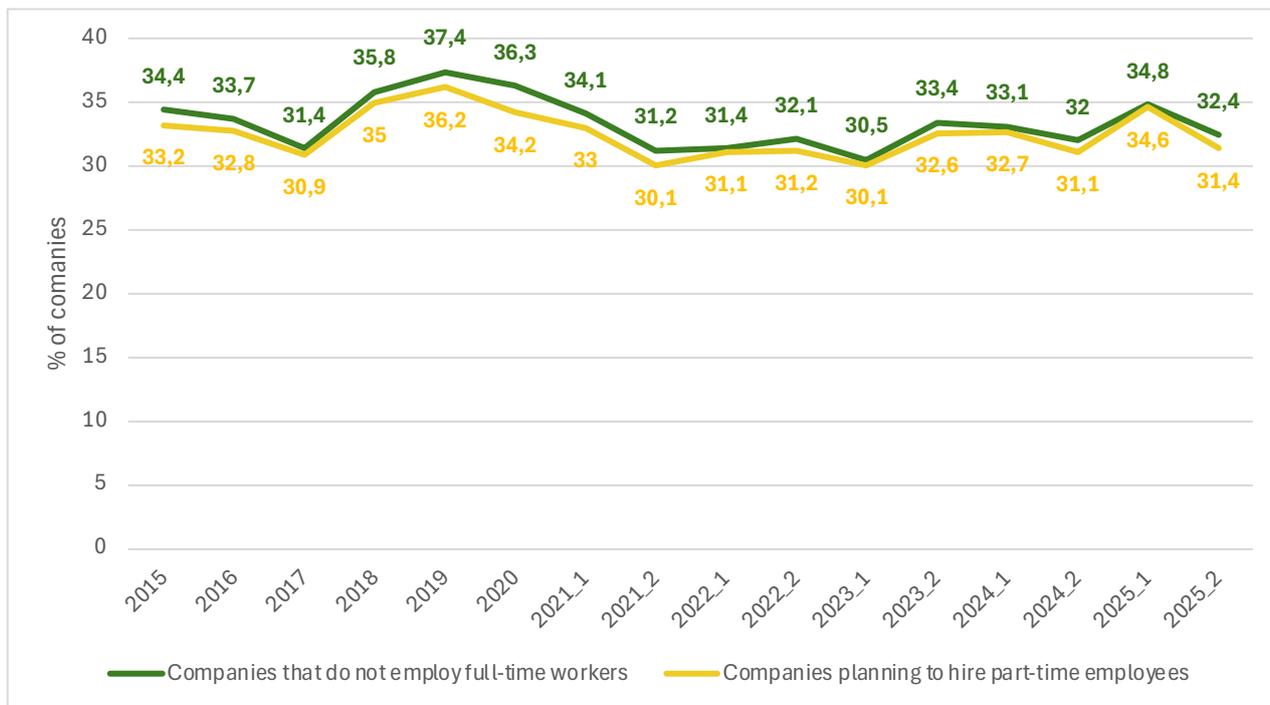
PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT



2026. FEBRUARY

About one-third (31.4%)
of Hungarian companies
employ part-time
workers.

Part-time employment is a stable but relatively minor form of employment among Hungarian companies: over the past decade, approximately 30–35% of companies have employed such workers. The proportion has fluctuated cyclically, but no lasting trend change is observable, and corporate plans generally closely follow the current employment level. Significant regional differences exist; in some counties, nearly half of companies are open to part-time employment, while in others, only one-fifth are.



The prevalence of part-time employment in the corporate sector has remained relatively stable over the past decade, though it has exhibited cyclical patterns. The share of companies—that is, those that actually employed part-time workers—which stood at 34.4% in 2015, declined to 31.4% by 2017, after which a gradual increase was observed. In the 2018–2019 period, the proportion rose to between 35% and 37%, which can be explained by labor market tightness and growing corporate demand for flexible forms of employment.

In 2020—when the pandemic significantly reshaped employment structures—part-time employment declined slightly (36.3%), and then corrected further downward in 2021: both the spring (34.1%) and fall (31.2%) surveys showed lower figures. Data from 2022 and 2023 indicate that this form of employment has still not become dominant among companies: the figures fluctuated slightly, mostly ranging between 30% and 33%. The trend continued in 2024, although a moderate uptick was again observed in the first half of the year (33.1%), followed by a slight decline at year-end (32%).

Data from 2025 show a further increase: in the spring survey, the proportion of companies employing part-time workers rose to 34.8%, followed by a decline in the fall

Fig. 1
Indicators describing part-time employment

Source: GVI

(32.4%). This cyclical pattern therefore remains characteristic, explained partly by economic uncertainties and partly by changes in companies’ seasonal labor needs.

Employment plans for the coming year essentially mirror actual employment trends. The proportion of companies planning to hire part-time workers has closely tracked the current employment level every year: the difference remained within 0.5–1.5 percentage points throughout. This suggests

that, in the case of this form of employment, companies make relatively short-term, rapidly adjusted decisions, and long-term, forward-looking strategic planning is less common.

Based on the time series from 2015 to 2025, it can be said overall that part-time work remains a stable but moderately significant form of employment among Hungarian companies. Its share rarely deviates significantly from the 30–35% range, indicating that a significant but not overwhelming proportion of companies utilize this flexible employment option. This stability, however, is an important indicator for labor market interventions: part-time positions continue to appear primarily in those sectors and corporate groups where the nature of the activity, the flexibility of work organization, and the divisibility of job roles allow for or require this.

Plans for part-time employment show significant regional differences, which clearly indicates that this form of employment has been integrated into the economic structure and corporate practices of the counties to varying degrees. On a national average, 31.4% of companies plan to employ part-time workers, while county-level data show a much wider variation.

The highest rates are observed in Heves County (49.0%), as well as in Baranya (45.1%) and Bács-Kiskun (41.2%). In these regions, nearly half of the companies planning to hire are open to part-time employment, which may indicate that services, commerce, and labor-intensive sectors—where more flexible work schedules are typical—play a larger role in the economic structure of these regions. In the case of Bács-Kiskun and Baranya, the seasonal nature of labor demand in the agricultural sector may also contribute to the high rates indicating plans for part-time work.

In contrast, the projected rate of part-time employment is significantly lower in Győr-Moson-Sopron (20.0%), Veszprém (11.4%), and Vas (21.1%) counties. These regions have a strong industrial base, where most jobs are less divisible, and production processes generally require full-time presence. The persistent tightness of the labor market may also result in companies pri-

marily considering full-time employment to ensure consistent capacity.

In the case of Budapest, the projected share of part-time employment (25.3%) remains below the national average, although in absolute terms, the capital city has the highest number of such companies. Alongside the dominance of the modern service sector, this may suggest that companies in the capital prefer other flexible forms of employment (e.g., project-based tasks, remote work, flexible working hours) over traditional part-time work.

The 39.8% figure characteristic of Pest County is significantly higher than the national average, which may stem from the region's unique duality: it simultaneously reflects the service-oriented, flexible employment needs of the Budapest metropolitan area and the seasonal labor market structure of rural regions.

The figures for the other counties, ranging from 29% to 35%, show moderate differences, which stem primarily from sectoral composition, corporate size structure, and the flexibility of the local labor market. It is particularly noteworthy that Nógrád (34.6%) and Zala (35.0%) show relatively high values despite the fact that their economic structures are less labor-intensive. This may suggest that in these regions, smaller, family-run, and micro-enterprises more frequently utilize part-time arrangements for wage and cost optimization purposes.

EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS



2026. FEBRUARY

Only about 2% of Hungarian companies employ foreign workers.

The employment of foreign workers among Hungarian companies remains low, although a slight increase has been observed over the past decade. The proportion of companies employing foreign workers typically hovered around 2% between 2015 and 2025, and rose only moderately as labor shortages intensified. Significant regional differences can be observed: it is more common in some industrial regions, while it continues to play a marginal role in most of the country.

The employment of foreign workers among Hungarian companies remains low, but has shown a slight upward trend over the past ten years. While 2.0% of companies employed foreign workers in 2015, this proportion rose to 2.5% by 2024, and the figure for 2025 was around 2.1–2.2%. The growth is therefore moderate but clearly noticeable, especially in the period after 2022.

Between 2015 and 2019, the employment of foreign workers remained very stable, fluctuating within a narrow range: the proportion stayed between 1.8% and 2.1% throughout. This suggests that the domestic corporate sector was still only open to foreign labor to a limited extent at that time and relied primarily on the domestic workforce. During the pandemic period (2020–2021), a slight decline was observed: 1.8% in 2020, and in the spring of 2021, the proportion of companies employing foreign workers was just 1.5%. This can be attributed to a temporary decline in international mobility and economic uncertainty.

However, growth resumed in the period beginning in 2022: figures for 2022–2024 rose to between 2.0% and 2.5%, reaching a peak for the period (2.5%) in the second half of 2023. This clearly reflects the intensifying labor shortage and the fact that, following the depletion of domestic labor reserves, companies are increasingly open to hiring foreign workers—even if the proportion remains relatively low.

The proportion of companies planning to hire foreign workers almost entirely mirrors the trend in actual employment. The difference between the two indicators is only 0.1–0.2 percentage points each year, suggesting that companies' decisions in this area are extremely stable and cautious. Large fluctuations or long-term strategic shifts are uncommon; rather, gradual responses to the current labor market situation are observed.

The proportion of companies planning to hire foreign workers remains extremely low at the national level: only 2.2% of companies indicated that they intend to hire foreign workers in the coming year. Although the employment of foreign workers has shown a slight upward trend in recent years, a regional breakdown clearly shows that this form of employment is significant only in a few regions, while remain-

ing marginal in most of the country.

The highest rate is observed in Komárom-Esztergom County, where 6.1% of companies plan to hire foreign workers. This significantly exceeds the national average and aligns well with the region's strong industrial structure, where large companies and supply chains have long relied on foreign labor to alleviate labor shortages. Tolna County (3.5%) and, to a lesser extent, Baranya County (4.1%) also show above-average figures; these counties similarly have sectoral structures where the involvement of foreign labor may be of greater significance—partly due to labor-intensive activities and partly due to the limited availability of skilled local labor.

In the majority of the country, however, the proportion of companies planning to hire foreign workers ranges between 1% and 2%. These include, among others, Bács-Kiskun (1.6%), Békés (0.7%), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (1.3%), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (1.3%), and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (1.0%). In these counties, the corporate sector typically relies on the local workforce, relying less on international labor market mobility. The extremely low figures suggest that companies either do not feel the need to hire foreign workers, or that administrative, language, and integration difficulties act as deterrents.

In the case of Budapest (2.7%) and Pest County (2.2%), the planned proportion is slightly above the national average, which may be due to the structural characteristics of the service sector and the large enterprise sector. For companies in the capital, the employment of foreign nationals is more of a supplementary nature, based on the need for specific skills or language proficiency rather than a mass influx of labor.

In the Győr-Moson-Sopron (1.9%), Vas (1.9%), and Veszprém (2.2%) regions, the projected proportion is also around the average. Although these counties have a strong industrial presence, due to high wages and efforts to retain the workforce, companies often prefer a stable, local workforce, and foreign employment plays only a supplementary role.

03



INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

2026. FEBRUARY

		Actual data	Expectations	Previous period*
Germany	Unemployment Rate	6,3	6,4%	6,3
	Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index	50,9	50	49,1
	IFO Business Climate Index ¹	88,6	89	87,6
France	INSEE Business Climate Index ²	97	97	98,1
EU	Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) ³	98,3	98,5	99,2
USA	Unemployment Rate	4,1%	4,2	4,3%
	CB Consumer Confidence Index	91,2	87,4	89
	Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index	51,6	51	52,4
China	Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index	49,1	49	50,3

¹ <https://www.ifo.de/en/survey/ifo-business-climate-index-germany>

² <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques?debut=0&theme=30&conjoncture=23>

³ https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-forecast-and-surveys/business-and-consumer-surveys/latest-business-and-consumer-surveys_en

Other sources: <https://www.bloomberg.com/markets/economic-calendar>

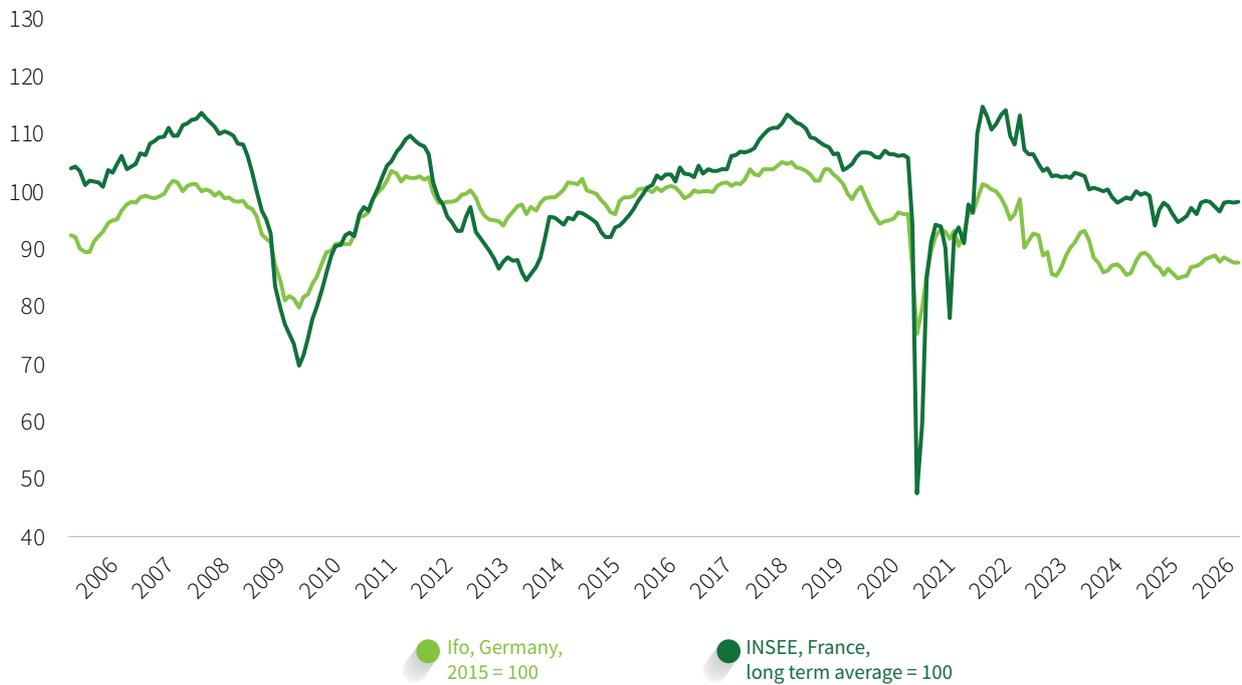


Fig. 2:
Business confidence in Germany and France, based on the Ifo and INSEE business climate survey, January 2005 – February 2026

Source: www.ifo.de,
www.insee.fr

In February 2026, the global economic outlook remains mixed, though several indicators point to stabilization. In Germany, the unemployment rate stood at 6.3%, slightly better than the expected 6.4%. The manufacturing purchasing managers' index rose to 50.9 points from 49.1, returning to the range indicating expansion. The IFO business climate index improved to 88.6 points from 87.6 the previous month, though it still fell short of the market expectation of 89 points, indicating a moderate but still fragile improvement in corporate sentiment.

In France, the INSEE business confidence index fell to 97 points from 98.1, indicating a slight deterioration in economic sentiment, though it met market expectations. The European Union's Economic Sentiment Index (ESI) stood at 98.3 points, down from 99.2 the previous month and slightly below expectations, meaning the EU's economic outlook remains subdued.

In the United States, the unemployment rate fell to 4.1% from 4.3% the previous month, which is better than the 4.2% forecast, indicating sustained stability in the labor market. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index rose to 91.2 points, exceeding both expectations and the previous month's figure, reflecting an improvement in household sentiment. Meanwhile, the manufacturing PMI fell to 51.6 points from 52.4, though it remained in expansionary territory.

In China, the manufacturing PMI fell to 49.1 points from 50.3 in January, returning to contraction territory, though it was broadly in line with expectations.

Overall, February 2026 showed a picture of stabilization in the global economy: the U.S. economy continued to prove resilient, while Europe saw moderate improvement and subdued sentiment, and industrial activity in China showed signs of weakening once again.



CONTACT

MKIK GVI
1122 Budapest, Pethényi köz 10.
Tel: +36 30 367 4677
e-mail: gvi@gvi.hu
Internet: <http://www.gvi.hu>

In case of publication please cite as follow:
HCCI IEER: *Monthly Bulletin of Economic Trends*,
15. March, 2026., Budapest