



HR Search

Salary and Market
Trends Report 2026

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SALARY SURVEY 2026 OVERVIEW



Kerri, Evelyn and Tanya

2025 has been an interesting and exciting year for HR Search, despite ongoing uncertainty across the Irish, wider European and global markets. Each day, we connect with HR professionals at every stage of their careers, from graduates just starting out to C-suite leaders shaping the future of work. These conversations give us a unique, real-time view of how the HR landscape is evolving and what the road ahead may hold.

Here are some of the key themes and trends we've seen emerging this year:

AI and the HR Function

Many organisations are now integrating AI into their HR operations, which is reshaping traditional administrative roles. In our experience, this shift is also creating opportunities for HR administrators to upskill and move into more analytical or strategic positions. While some tasks are being automated, the ability to use AI effectively is becoming a valuable career differentiator.

SALARY SURVEY 2026 OVERVIEW

DE&I Momentum Leveling Off

After several years of rapid growth, demand for DE&I professionals has stabilised. We've observed that many organisations are consolidating and embedding existing initiatives, rather than expanding new ones. Broader market conditions and shifting business priorities are likely to keep this trend steady into 2026.

Geopolitical and Market Pressures

Challenging economic and geopolitical conditions across global markets have resulted in restructuring, outsourcing and in some cases, redundancies. These changes have had an impact at the senior end of the HR market. In some sectors, we're seeing a greater supply of experienced HR professionals with 20+ years of experience, leading to longer job search cycles as they wait for the right next opportunity.

The HR Business Partner: Still the "Jewel in the Crown"

The HRBP role continues to sit at the heart of the HR function, bridging strategy and people. While many HRBPs are technically capable, those who can balance data literacy with strong interpersonal and commercial skills will remain the most sought after and influential.

High Demand for Technical HR Expertise

Sourcing skilled professionals in areas such as Rewards, HRIS and HR Operations continues to be challenging. With evolving EU legislation, regulatory changes, new systems and shifting work patterns, these roles now demand agility, strong technical competence and an appetite for continuous learning.

As we look ahead to 2026, we're optimistic about the continued evolution of the HR profession. Change will remain a constant, but it's clear that HR professionals who embrace technology, lead with empathy and remain adaptable will continue to thrive.

Warmest regards

Tanya, Kerri and Evelyn
HR Search

SENIOR HR PROFESSIONALS

Senior HR Leaders are executive-level professionals responsible for shaping and executing an organisation's people strategy to drive business performance. They oversee the full spectrum of HR functions including talent acquisition, development, rewards, organisational design and culture and act as strategic partners to the executive team. Their goal is to ensure that workforce capability, engagement and organisational effectiveness align closely with business objectives.

Context and Key Challenges

- Geopolitical instability, trade and tariff uncertainty and the rapid adoption of AI are all placing increased pressure on senior HR leadership.
- Across many organisations there is a growing emphasis on resilience, agility and growth mindset. As a result strategic HR business partnering and real-time workforce planning are in greater demand than ever.
- LTIPs, equity and total rewards remain critical levers in attracting and retaining senior HR talent particularly in competitive multinational environments.
- At the same time cost control pressures in certain sectors are prompting some organisations to re-evaluate priorities potentially placing greater focus on efficiency and ROI and in some cases slowing expansion of DE&I and engagement initiatives.
- Transformation skills especially those linked to digitalisation, AI integration and hybrid work models continue to be highly valued and frequently cited as differentiators among senior candidates.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- Growing demand for HR roles that bridge strategy and execution such as HR Business Partnering, People Analytics and Change and Transformation.
- Upward pressure on compensation in high-performing sectors like technology, pharmaceuticals and global financial services.

SENIOR HR PROFESSIONALS

- Increased scrutiny of total rewards, LTIPs and equity packages as organisations balance competitiveness with governance.
- Outsourcing and automation of transactional HR work allowing senior in-house leaders to focus more on strategic impact and culture.
- Succession and retention of senior HR leaders are increasingly becoming board-level discussions in mature organisations reflecting the strategic importance of the HR function.

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Global CHRO / Global CPO	€ 200,000	€ 250,000	€ 280,000+
Irish CHRO / CPO	€ 150,000	€ 170,000	€ 190,000+
HR Director (large domestic)	€ 140,000	€ 160,000	€ 180,000+
Head of HR (SME / Divisional)	€ 100,000	€ 120,000	€ 130,000+

Key Notes

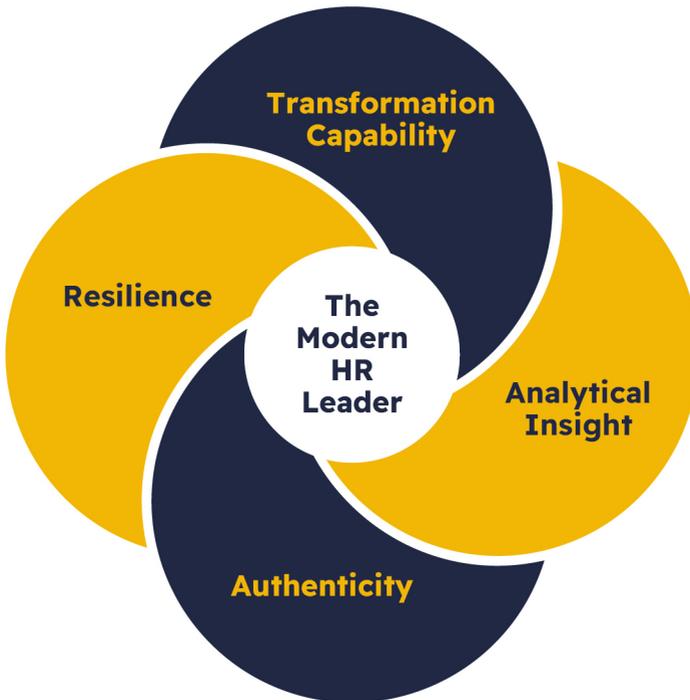
- Typical total compensation adds 20–35% through bonus, LTIPs and/ or equity particularly for C-suite roles.
- Tech, pharma and Financial Services trend higher with the public sector remaining banded with modest increases.

SENIOR HR PROFESSIONALS

Takeaway

HR remains a critical C-suite function. Demand is rising for leaders who combine transformation capability, analytical insight and resilience with compensation continuing to trend upwards though strongly sector-dependent. The divide between transactional HR and strategic HR continues to widen underscoring the need for adaptable forward-looking HR leadership.

The Modern HR Leader



HR STRATEGY, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

HR Strategy, Organisational Development and Change collectively align people, culture and capability with business goals. They shape the organisation's design, leadership and workforce to deliver strategic outcomes. They enable transformation by ensuring structure, behaviour and performance evolve in step with ambition.

Context and Key Challenges

- Pace of digital, AI and hybrid work demands HR leaders who can blend strategy and execution.
- Demand for data-driven decision making and measurable ROI on OD and culture initiatives.
- Even mid-sized firms face hybrid work, compliance and reskilling challenges.
- Talent shortages in analytics, change management and OD design are acute.
- Risk of initiative fatigue if leaders cannot manage expectations and delivery.
- Consultants and advisors must prove impact on performance outcomes not just outputs

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- People analytics increasingly guides OD and strategy.
- AI and HR tech adoption accelerates automation in workforce planning and skills frameworks.
- Hybrid and distributed models create need for new designs and leadership behaviours.
- Mergers and acquisitions drive demand for due diligence, integration and transformation HR expertise.
- Internal mobility, reskilling and career pathways are central to business priorities.
- Demand is highest for HR leaders who combine analytics, transformation and execution.



Did you know:

In Ireland, the number one topic of interest for HR Organisational Development (OD) professionals in 2025 and 2026 is:

Employee Engagement and Experience.

HR STRATEGY, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Global HR Strategy Director	€ 140,000	€ 180,000	€ 200,000
Director – Organisational Development	€ 140,000	€ 160,000	€ 180,000
Head of Change and Transformation	€ 140,000	€ 160,000	€ 180,000
HR Change / Transformation Manager	€ 75,000	€ 90,000	€ 100,000
HR Advisory / Consultant	€ 60,000	€ 70,000	€ 80,000

Key Notes

- Bonus and equity are more common at Director level 10–25%.
- Change roles vary depending on programme size and complexity.
- Consulting range reflects junior through to experienced advisors.

Takeaway

Strategy, OD and Change are central to resilience and tech-driven transformation. Salaries are rising fastest in tech, pharma and multinational organisations. The value gap between transactional HR and strategic HR leadership continues to widen. Demand is highest for leaders with advanced analytics, transformation and global change expertise reflecting a growing skills premium.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

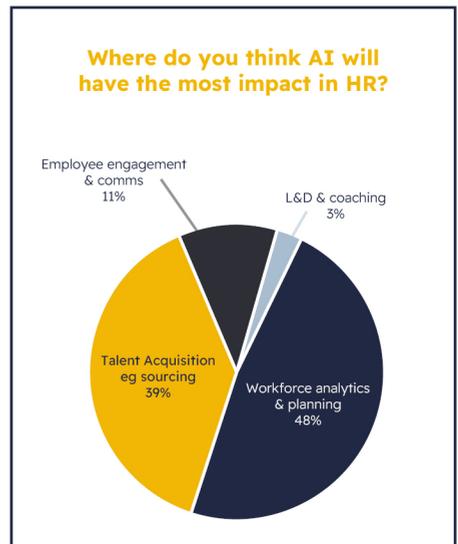
Learning and Development (L&D) and Talent Management encompass leadership and specialist roles responsible for driving organisational capability, leadership development and career growth through learning, succession and performance strategies.

Context and Key Challenges

- Organisations are under pressure to identify and close critical skill gaps driven by digitalisation, AI and new work models.
- L&D is being reframed as a retention lever as employees seek visible growth pathways and internal mobility.
- Many firms report thinning succession pipelines with urgent focus on building leadership depth and readiness.
- Widespread adoption of LMS, learning experience platforms (LXP) and AI-based tools requires new skillsets among L&D teams.
- Proving return on investment and linking learning outcomes to performance and retention remains a persistent challenge.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- AI and data analytics are informing capability mapping, succession and workforce design.
- Adaptive and AI-driven learning experiences are enhancing self-directed development.
- Growing emphasis on human-centred leadership, resilience and collaboration.
- Learning and talent are now directly linked to internal mobility and talent marketplace platforms.
- Investment in learning is increasingly tied to engagement, retention and employer brand.



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Global Head of L&D / Head of Talent	€ 130,000	€ 140,000	€ 150,000
L&D / Talent Director	€ 110,000	€ 120,000	€ 130,000
L&D / Talent Manager / Business Partner	€ 70,000	€ 80,000	€ 90,000
L&D / Talent Specialist	€ 50,000	€ 60,000	€ 70,000
Instructional Designer / Digital Learning Specialist	€ 50,000	€ 55,000	€ 60,000

Key Notes

- Typically modest 5–10% except for Heads of L&D/Talent in multinationals 10–15%.
- Remote and hybrid models have accelerated investment in digital learning content and virtual leadership development.
- AI-driven content design, analytics and learning platform expertise are driving a 10–20% pay premium in advanced organisations.

Takeaway

L&D and Talent Management are entering a data-informed, skills-based era. The function is now central to retention, leadership readiness and workforce agility. As Irish organisations invest in AI, analytics and internal mobility, demand for learning and talent professionals with strategic and digital capability expertise will continue to rise through 2026.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS / REWARDS

These leaders are strategic HR executives responsible for designing, implementing and overseeing an organisation's total rewards framework including base pay, variable pay, benefits, incentives and recognition programs. They align reward strategies with business objectives, drive competitive positioning in the talent market, ensure regulatory and internal compliance and foster a culture of performance and engagement across the organisation.

Context and Key Challenges

- Cost-of-living pressures drive expectations for frequent and larger adjustments.
- Scarcity of talent with benchmarking, pay analytics, global equity and mobility skills.
- Rising demand for customised, wellbeing-oriented benefits.
- Regulatory complexity: Gender pay reporting, pay transparency and auto-enrolment.
- Globalisation of programmes requires balancing local rules with global alignment.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- Advanced analytics for pay fairness, benchmarking and retention modelling.
- Mid-cycle adjustments for critical or shortage roles.
- Broader roll-out of equity and LTIPs to non-executive levels.
- Flexible benefits including wellbeing, mobility, eldercare and hybrid allowances.
- Greater transparency in salary bands and pay rationale.
- Simplification of reward structures for employee clarity.



C&B Talent in High Demand

Over 60% of Irish employers report difficulty sourcing C&B HR analytics experts

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS / REWARDS

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Global Head of Rewards	€ 140,000	€ 170,000	€ 200,000
Head of Rewards	€ 120,000	€ 150,000	€ 180,000
Rewards / Benefits Manager	€ 80,000	€ 100,000	€ 110,000
Analyst / Specialist (Comp & Benefits / Rewards)	€ 50,000	€ 60,000	€ 75,000

Key Notes

- Manager/Specialist: 10–30% of base in bonuses or equity. Head/Director: 30–40%+ in global firms.
- Equity/deferred compensation is more common in tech and fintech.
- Tech and pharma are most generous, financial services are building stronger bonus culture.
- Dublin salaries are higher; regional salaries are often lower.
- Global mobility and equity expertise accelerates pay. Inflation and skills premiums are pushing for more frequent adjustments.

Takeaway

The landscape for Compensation and Benefits professionals in Ireland is evolving rapidly. Demand is highest for those with expertise in global equity, advanced analytics and customised benefit design. To remain competitive, organisations must offer comprehensive compensation packages that go beyond base salary, incorporating bonuses, LTIPs and flexible benefits. Transparency and simplification in reward structures will further enhance employee engagement and organisational success.

EMPLOYEE AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

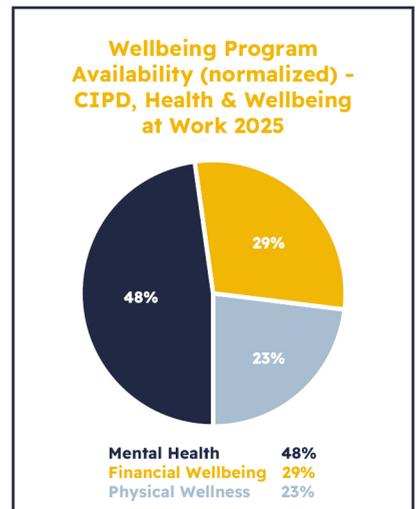
At HR Search we see Employee and Industrial Relations (ER/IR) as part of a continuum with Engagement and Wellbeing highlighting how fair treatment, culture and employee experience are interconnected. These functions include leadership and specialist roles focused on shaping culture, managing employee relations, delivering wellbeing initiatives and integrating engagement and ER/IR insights into business strategy.

Context and Key Challenges

- Expanding gender pay gap reporting, new EU pay transparency rules, the AI Act and the introduction of auto enrolment are driving increased workload alongside evolving requirements for sick pay, maternity protection and the National Living Wage.
- Union engagement, collective bargaining and works councils are more prominent.
- Employees expect visible action not just surveys.
- Programmes must deliver measurable impact across mental, financial and physical health.
- Line managers remain the frontline yet many lack confidence to manage sensitive issues effectively.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- Proactive culture shaping, conflict prevention and alignment with ESG.
- Linking engagement metrics to retention, performance and wellbeing.
- Covering mental, physical, social and financial health often using digital platforms.
- Demand rising for ER/IR specialists with collective bargaining expertise.
- Engagement and wellbeing are increasingly tied to diversity, equity and inclusion.



EMPLOYEE AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Head of ER/IR, Engagement and Wellbeing	€ 95,000	€ 115,000	€ 130,000
Employee and Industrial Relations Manager	€ 70,000	€ 80,000	€ 90,000
Engagement and Wellbeing Manager	€ 70,000	€ 75,000	€ 80,000
Employee and Industrial Relations Specialist	€ 55,000	€ 65,000	€ 70,000
Engagement and Wellbeing Specialist	€ 55,000	€ 60,000	€ 65,000

Key Notes

- Bonuses tend to be 5–10% with senior leadership 10–15%.
- ER/IR-heavy roles strongest in financial services, pharma and unionised sectors. Engagement and wellbeing roles are more common in tech and professional services.
- Dublin salaries 8–12% higher; public sector and regional roles lower.
- ER/IR professionals with collective bargaining and legal expertise are in high demand.

Takeaway

ER/IR, Engagement and Wellbeing is shifting from reactive case management to proactive influence on culture, performance and trust. Rising regulation, union activity and employee expectations are driving demand for ER/IR specialists and engagement and wellbeing leaders.

HRIS

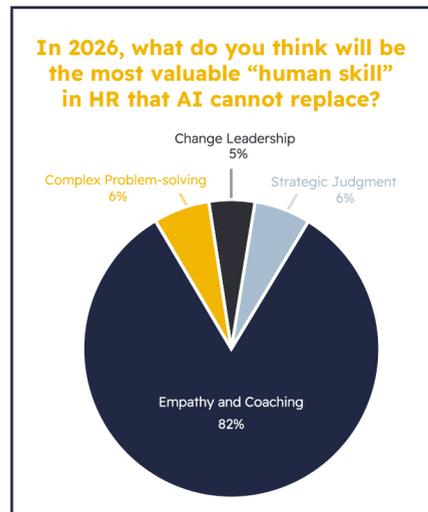
HRIS professionals manage the design, configuration, optimisation, and governance of HR information systems. These roles bridge HR operations, technology, and data analytics, forming the backbone of digital HR delivery.

Context and Key Challenges

- Organisations juggle multiple HR platforms (Workday, SAP, Oracle, SuccessFactors, ServiceNow) with integration and user adoption key challenges.
- HRIS professionals are expected to deliver dashboards, workforce reporting and predictive analytics, moving beyond basic system administration.
- GDPR and evolving data privacy rules increase responsibility for data governance and cybersecurity.
- AI adoption in HR workflows (recruitment, talent, case management) requires expertise in automation design and ethical AI use.
- Skilled Workday, SAP SuccessFactors and Oracle specialists are scarce in Ireland, driving competition.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- HRIS is central to strategic HR decision-making and workforce planning.
- Professionals who combine system expertise with data storytelling and predictive insights are in high demand.
- HRIS experience enables progression to HR Technology Lead, People Analytics Manager or broader HR Operations leadership.
- Ireland's tech, pharma and financial hubs offer multinational HR tech opportunities.
- Scarce talent and complex platforms drive rising salaries and contractor rates.



HRIS

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
HR Technology / Systems Lead (10+ yrs, large org)	€ 100,000	€ 115,000	€ 130,000+
HRIS Manager / Lead (5-10 yrs)	€ 75,000	€ 85,000	€ 95,000+
HRIS Analyst / Specialist (3-5 yrs)	€ 55,000	€ 65,000	€ 75,000+

Key Notes

- Growing presence of bonus schemes, equity grants and LTIPs in global multinationals for HR tech leads.
- Certified Workday and SAP SuccessFactors professionals consistently command 10-20% higher salaries.
- Daily rates for HRIS contractors range from €400-€700 especially in transformation projects.
- HRIS talent with analytics, automation and transformation project experience can step into Director-level HR Operations or People Analytics leadership within 3-5 years.

Takeaway

The HRIS profession in Ireland is shifting from systems administration to strategic workforce enabler. Organisations increasingly rely on HRIS teams to deliver insights, automation and employee experience at scale. Going into 2026 HRIS roles will remain high-demand and high-value particularly for professionals combining platform expertise, data analytics and change management.

This career path offers strong upward mobility into HR Tech leadership and People Analytics functions cementing HRIS as a cornerstone of future HR strategy.

TALENT ACQUISITION

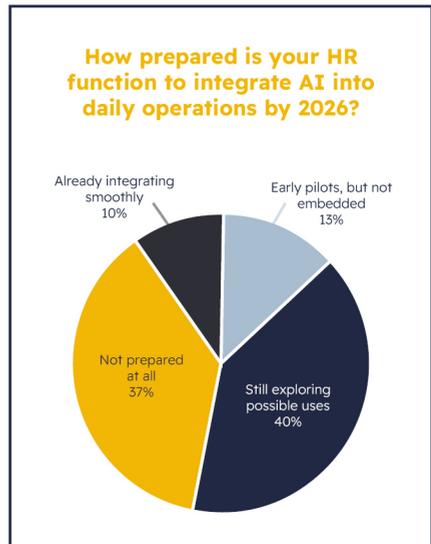
TA professionals, recruiters, talent partners and TA leaders are responsible for sourcing, attracting, assessing and hiring talent. Responsibilities cover end-to-end recruitment, employer branding, candidate experience and workforce insights to support organisational growth across sectors.

Context and Key Challenges

- Job seekers expect hybrid work, career progression and wellbeing support; failing to meet these lowers acceptance rates.
- Hiring volatility demands agility amid freezes and rapid scaling.
- ATS platforms, LinkedIn Recruiter, AI sourcing tools and digital assessments are standard; TA must balance automation with personalisation.
- Strong EVP and seamless candidate journeys are critical.
- Performance is measured not just on time-to-hire, but quality of hire and early retention.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- Shift from transactional recruiting to strategic workforce planning.
- Adoption of AI sourcing, chatbots and predictive analytics favours digitally fluent TA specialists.
- International recruitment requires visa and cross-border compliance expertise.
- Human-centric recruitment, emphasising empathy and responsiveness, remains highly valued.
- Salary growth is plateauing due to candidate oversupply.



TALENT ACQUISITION

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Head of TA / TA Lead (10+ yrs, large org)	€ 90,000	€ 100,000	€ 120,000+
Senior TA Partner / TA Manager (5-10 yrs)	€ 75,000	€ 80,000	€ 85,000+
TA Specialist / Recruiter (2-5 yrs)	€ 35,000	€ 45,000	€ 55,000+

Key Notes

- More prevalent at senior levels in multinationals. Early-career TA roles usually offer smaller performance bonuses.
- TA contractors remain in demand for scaling projects with daily rates typically €250–€450 depending on scope and sector.
- TA professionals with expertise in data, EVP and stakeholder influence can progress to senior HR leadership or talent strategy roles within 3–5 years.

Takeaway

The Talent Acquisition profession in Ireland is transitioning from pure recruiting to strategic talent advisory and workforce enablement. Organisations expect TA teams to deliver not only speed but also long-term talent quality, brand strength and data-driven insights.

Going into 2026 TA remains a high-demand career path particularly for professionals who blend sourcing expertise with digital capability and strong candidate experience management. This evolution offers a clear bridge into senior HR, employer branding or talent leadership roles.

HR GENERALISTS

HR Generalists include professionals typically at mid-level HR roles often holding titles such as HR Generalist and HR Officer. These roles span across SMEs, multinationals and public or semistate organisations in Ireland. They are usually hands-on covering a wide breadth of HR activities including recruitment, employee relations, policy, compliance and HR administration.

Context and Key Challenges

- HR Generalists are expected to cover multiple areas including recruitment, ER, L&D, compliance, payroll support and DEI, often without the same level of resources available in larger HR functions.
- Irish and EU legislation such as the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, pay transparency and AI in HR regulation is creating additional compliance requirements. Generalists are often the front line for policy implementation.
- While senior HR leaders drive strategy, Generalists are expected to adapt quickly to new HRIS, AI-enabled recruitment tools and digital workforce management systems.
- Rising industrial relations activity in certain sectors alongside higher employee expectations for flexibility, engagement and career growth creates a heavier ER workload.
- Work-life balance challenges, Generalist roles can be intensive especially in smaller organisations where the role spans across all HR activities.

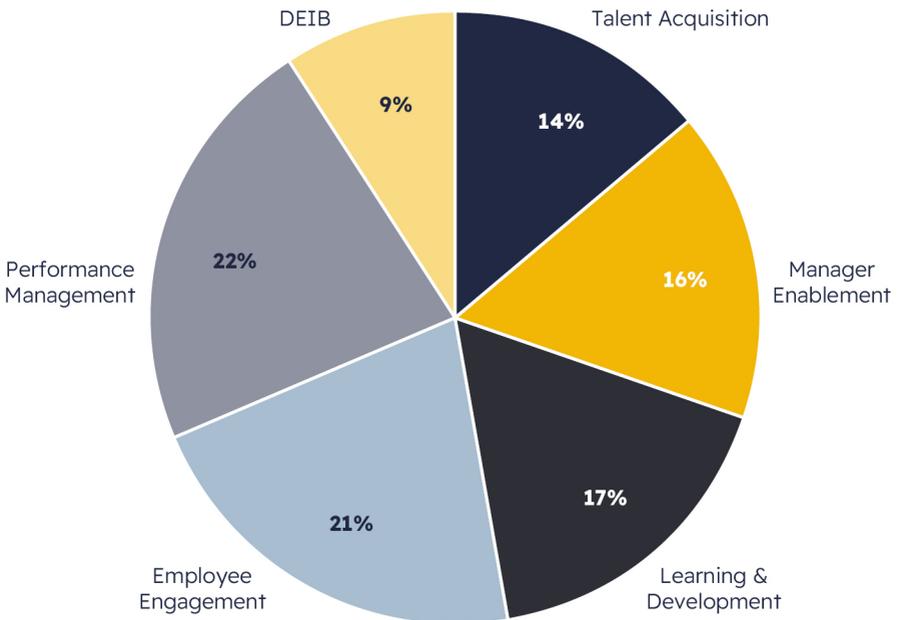
Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- HR Generalists experience remains a key feeder into HRBP, HR Manager and specialist roles such as L&D, Reward and Talent. Broad exposure builds strong foundations for advancement.
- Organisations are increasingly valuing HR Generalists who can report and interpret workforce metrics to support decision-making.
- Many HR Generalists roles now offer hybrid or flexible arrangements widening access to opportunities outside immediate geography.

HR GENERALISTS

- Some Generalists are moving into niche areas including ER, DEI and Talent Acquisition driven by organisational need and employee demand.
- Salary pressures are pushing up generalist pay especially in multinationals and sectors like tech, pharma and financial services. Public and semi-state roles remain more structured and incremental.

Key HRBP Trends in Ireland (2025)



Data Source: Ibec HR Report 2025 & Lattice 2026 State of People Strategy Report

HR GENERALISTS

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Senior HR Generalists / HR Officer (6–10 yrs)	€ 55,000	€ 60,000	€ 65,000+
HR Generalists (mid-level / 3–6 yrs)	€ 50,000	€ 55,000	€ 60,000+
HR Administrator / HR Coordinator (3 yrs)	€ 35,000	€ 40,000	€ 45,000+

Key Notes

- Increasing prevalence of small annual bonuses, healthcare and pension contributions at Generalist level particularly in international employers.
- Multinationals in tech, pharma and financial services pay at the upper end of the range. Professional services and domestic SMEs sit closer to the median. Public or semistate remain incremental.
- HR Generalists in Ireland often advance into HRBP or HR Manager roles within 5–7 years especially if they demonstrate strong ER, data and stakeholder management skills.

Takeaway

The HR Generalists role in Ireland is evolving from a primarily transactional function to one requiring greater adaptability, tech fluency and data literacy. As compliance, employee relations and hybrid workforce demands intensify HR Generalists are becoming indispensable problem-solvers within organisations.

Going into 2026 Generalists who build analytics, transformation and strategic partnering skills will be well-positioned to move quickly into more senior HR leadership pipelines.

HR BUSINESS PARTNERS

HRBPs include mid-to-senior HR professionals who partner closely with business leaders to align people strategy with organisational goals. Titles typically include HR Business Partner, Senior HR Business Partner or People Partner. These roles are often positioned between HR Generalists and HR Directors with a strong emphasis on strategic execution, employee relations and workforce planning.

Context and Key Challenges

- HRBPs are expected to deliver both tactical support and strategic alignment. Many organisations are demanding stronger commercial acumen alongside core HR skills.
- Rising expectations for hybrid work, mental health support and inclusion initiatives increase the complexity of stakeholder management.
- HRBPs need to interpret data from HRIS and analytics platforms to advise leaders. Those without strong digital and analytical capability are at a disadvantage.
- Ongoing organisational redesign, hybrid models and AI adoption mean HRBPs are heavily involved in managing change often with limited resources.
- HRBPs face workload intensity especially in leaner teams where they act as both strategist and hands-on operator.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- HRBPs are becoming more central to organisational decision-making as people and culture remain critical to growth.
- Demand is rising for HRBPs who can provide insights through data, dashboards and predictive workforce planning.
- Many HRBP roles are now hybrid, offering flexibility but also requiring stronger digital leadership and collaboration skills.
- HRBP experience is one of the clearest pipelines into HR Director and Head of HR roles especially for those demonstrating strong commercial impact.
- Inflation, competition for skilled HR talent and the strategic importance of the HRBP role are driving salary growth across sectors.

HR BUSINESS PARTNERS

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Lead / Principal HRBP (10+ yrs, large org)	€ 80,000	€ 100,000	€ 120,000+
Senior HR Business Partner (6–10 yrs)	€ 75,000	€ 85,000	€ 95,000+
HR Business Partner (3–6 yrs)	€ 60,000	€ 70,000	€ 80,000+

Key Notes

- Increasing prevalence of performance-based bonuses on average 10–15% of annual salary LTIPs and share options at senior HRBP level in multinationals.
- Tech, pharma and financial services offer higher salaries and bonus potential. Public and semistate roles remain more structured.
- HRBPs with strong data, change management and stakeholder skills are well-placed to move into HR Director roles within 3–5 years.

Takeaway

The HRBP role in Ireland is seen as a strategic driver of organisational success. As workforce planning, transformation and analytics become more central HRBPs who combine commercial insight with digital capability will stand out. Going into 2026 HRBPs will remain one of the most in-demand roles in HR offering a clear career bridge into senior leadership.

HR OPERATIONS

HR Operations covers the leadership and specialist roles that deliver HR services at scale ensuring compliance, efficiency and a seamless employee experience.

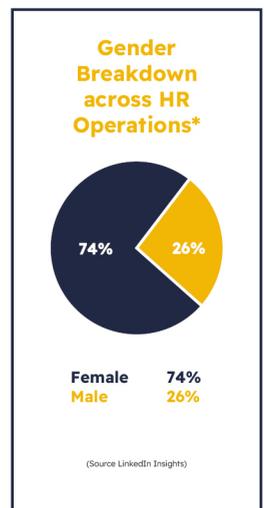
At HR Search we've seen rising demand for professionals who can enhance service delivery, optimise systems and support global operating models. As automation and data-driven processes advance HR Operations continues to evolve from a transactional function into a strategic enabler.

Context and Key Challenges

- Ongoing system upgrades particularly to Workday, SAP SuccessFactors and Oracle Cloud driving demand for deep HRIS expertise.
- Multinationals centralising into shared service hubs while smaller firms manage lean teams stretched across multiple priorities.
- Evolving Irish and EU legislation around statutory leave, working time and reporting such as gender pay gap and right to request remote work.
- Payroll and HRIS specialists remain in short supply especially in pharma, tech and financial services prompting higher contract rates.
- HR Ops leaders face pressure to deliver seamless onboarding, payroll accuracy and benefits now critical touchpoints for engagement.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- Ireland's growing role as an EMEA HR Ops hub driving demand for global process and shared service expertise.
- Automation, AI and self-service tools streamlining administration and elevating digital and systems skills.
- Payroll becoming more strategic encompassing compliance, vendor partnerships and workforce analytics.
- HR Ops leadership now recognised as a route into broader HR leadership often linked to reward and transformation.
- Accurate HR data management is increasingly business-critical, raising demand for analytics and reporting expertise.



HR OPERATIONS

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Low	Median	High
Global Head of HR Operations	€ 150,000	€ 175,000	€ 200,000+
Head of HR Operations	€ 95,000	€ 110,000	€ 120,000+
HR Operations Manager	€ 80,000	€ 90,000	€ 100,000+
Global HR Operations Specialist	€ 60,000	€ 70,000	€ 80,000+
HR Operations Specialist	€ 50,000	€ 55,000	€ 65,000+
Global Payroll Specialist	€ 55,000	€ 60,000	€ 70,000+

Key Notes

- Bonuses typically 5–10% at specialist and manager level rising to 10–15% for Heads of HR Ops.
- Workday and SuccessFactors skills attract a 10–15% uplift.
- Dublin roles remain 8–12% higher though hubs in Cork, Galway and Limerick are increasingly competitive.

Takeaway

HR Operations is increasingly an in-demand area in Ireland as it has evolved beyond administration into a function that directly shapes compliance, employee experience and digital HR transformation. Global HR Operations roles are expanding with the growth of shared service hubs. As organisations prioritise systems expertise and process excellence demand and salaries for tech-savvy operations leaders and specialists are expected to rise further into 2026.

HR CONTRACTING

HR contracting continues to grow as a strategic solution for skills gaps, transformation projects and interim leadership. At HR Search, we see organisations seeking contractors with expertise in ER/IR, reward, L&D, HRIS and change management. Flexibility, project experience and sector knowledge remain key differentiators, with premium rates for niche skills. Experienced interim and project-based HR professionals will remain in high demand through 2026.

Context and Key Challenges

- Difficulty recruiting experienced permanent HR talent.
- Transformation, digital HR, and change programmes require specialist interim support.
- Retaining top contractors is tough, particularly in tech, pharma, and financial services.
- Integrating contractors and ensuring knowledge transfer can be tricky.

Opportunities and Shifts into 2026

- High demand for ER/IR, reward, L&D, and HRIS expertise on interim or project-based contracts.
- Contractors increasingly lead digital HR, automation, system implementations, and organisational change.
- Remote and hybrid options widen the candidate pool.
- Interim HR leaders gain cross-sector experience, boosting career mobility.
- Niche expertise commands higher day rates, especially in regulated or tech-driven sectors.



Did you know:

Average contract lasts
14 months

6 weeks
time to hire for
80%
of contract roles

Women
account for
27%
of Ireland's professional
contractor workforce

HR CONTRACTING

Estimated 2026 Salary Bands (Base salary)

Title / Level	Typical Daily Rate (€)
Interim HR Director / Head of HR	700 - 1,200
Contract HR Business Partner / HR Manager	500 - 800
Contract HR Specialist / Consultant	400 - 700
Project-based HR Consultant	350 - 650

Key Notes

- Longer contracts (6–12 months) often pay slightly less than short, high-pressure projects.
- ER/IR, reward, HRIS, and L&D/Talent specialists command top rates.
- Rates vary by sector, complexity, location, and seniority.
- Flexibility (hybrid/remote) can widen the pool but may affect Dublin vs regional rates.

Takeaway

HR contracting is a strategic, growing solution in Ireland. Skilled contractors with strong expertise, project experience, and sector knowledge are in high demand and can command premium rates – a trend set to continue through 2026.

TRUSTED PARTNERS

At HR Search, we specialise in Human Resources recruitment. We offer our clients and candidates professional and honest advice in a timely and caring manner. As trusted partners, we leverage our expertise in HR and recruitment to deliver tailored solutions that meet the unique needs of everyone we work with.

Since our founding in 2015, we've grown organically by building strong, lasting relationships with the businesses we serve. Today, we are recognised as the go-to specialists for HR recruitment. A significant portion of our business comes through referrals—a testament to our reputation in the HR community.

Our Expertise:

Executive Search

We offer retained search partnerships, specialising in senior-level appointments up to C-suite.

Contingent Recruitment

We provide temporary, contract and permanent recruitment services across all levels. We service clients' HR requirements across both generalist and specialist HR roles. Whether you are a Head of HR with an SME or a CPO with a global organisation, we can cater for your requirements.

Championing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We believe in the transformative power of DEI in recruitment and work closely with our clients to create inclusive hiring strategies. As advocates of diversity, we're proud to have earned the Silver Medal in Diversity from the Irish Centre for Diversity and hold a WeConnect accreditation, affirming our commitment to driving meaningful change in the workplace.

Successful Human Resource recruitment has HR knowledge, understanding and relationships at its core. We are a team of HR Experts, who work collaboratively to ensure that every HR assignment results in success, while meeting the expectations of the client and candidate. Get to know us more below!

TRUSTED PARTNERS



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HR Search Salary Band Index Ireland 2026

Title / Level	Low (€)	Median (€)	High (€)
Global CHRO / Global CPO	200,000	250,000	280,000
Irish CHRO / CPO	150,000	170,000	190,000
HR Director (large domestic)	140,000	160,000	180,000
Head of HR (SME / Divisional)	100,000	120,000	130,000
Global HR Strategy Director	140,000	180,000	200,000
Director - Organisational Development	140,000	160,000	180,000
Head of Change & Transformation	140,000	160,000	180,000
HR Change / Transformation Manager	75,000	90,000	100,000
HR Advisory / Consultant	60,000	70,000	80,000
Global Head of L&D / Head of Talent	130,000	140,000	150,000
L&D / Talent Director	110,000	120,000	130,000
L&D / Talent Manager / Business Partner	70,000	80,000	90,000
L&D / Talent Specialist	50,000	60,000	70,000
Instructional Designer / Digital Learning Specialist	50,000	55,000	60,000
Global Head of Rewards	140,000	170,000	200,000
Head of Rewards	120,000	150,000	180,000
Rewards / Benefits Manager	80,000	100,000	110,000
Analyst / Specialist (Comp & Benefits / Rewards)	50,000	60,000	75,000
Head of ER/IR, Engagement & Wellbeing	95,000	115,000	130,000
Employee & Industrial Relations Manager	70,000	80,000	90,000
Engagement & Wellbeing Manager	70,000	75,000	80,000
Employee & Industrial Relations Specialist	55,000	65,000	70,000
Engagement & Wellbeing Specialist	55,000	60,000	65,000
HR Technology / Systems Lead (10+ yrs, large org)	100,000	115,000	130,000

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HR Search Salary Band Index Ireland 2026

Title / Level	Low (€)	Median (€)	High (€)
HRIS Manager / Lead (5-10 yrs)	75,000	85,000	95,000
HRIS Analyst / Specialist (3-5 yrs)	55,000	65,000	75,000
Head of TA / TA Lead (10+ yrs, large org)	90,000	100,000	120,000
Senior TA Partner / TA Manager (5-10 yrs)	75,000	80,000	85,000
TA Specialist / Recruiter (2-5 yrs)	35,000	45,000	55,000
Senior HR Generalists / HR Officer (6-10 yrs)	55,000	60,000	65,000
HR Generalists (mid-level / 3-6 yrs)	50,000	55,000	60,000
HR Administrator / HR Coordinator (3 yrs)	35,000	40,000	45,000
Lead / Principal HRBP (10+ yrs, large org)	80,000	100,000	120,000
Senior HR Business Partner (6-10 yrs)	75,000	85,000	95,000
HR Business Partner (3-6 yrs)	60,000	70,000	80,000
Global Head of HR Operations	150,000	175,000	200,000
Head of HR Operations	95,000	110,000	120,000
HR Operations Manager	80,000	90,000	100,000
Global HR Operations Specialist	60,000	70,000	80,000
HR Operations Specialist	50,000	55,000	60,000
Global Payroll Specialist	55,000	60,000	70,000

HR Contracting / Interim Daily Rates

Title / Level	Typical Daily Rate (€)
Interim HR Director / Head of HR	700 - 1,200
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