

Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

B2B payment practices trends Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) 2026



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About the Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

The Atradius Payment Practices Barometer is an annual survey of business-to-business (B2B) payment practices in markets across the world.

Our survey gives you the opportunity to hear directly from businesses trading on credit with B2B customers about how they are coping with evolving trends in customer payment behaviour. Staying informed about these trends is vital because it helps to identify emerging shifts in customer payment habits, allowing businesses to address potential liquidity pressure and maintain smooth operations.

Businesses operating in – or planning to enter – the markets and industries covered by our survey can gain valuable insights from our reports, which also shed light on the challenges and risks companies anticipate in the coming months, as well as their expectations for future growth.

In this report, you will find the survey results for **Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)**.

Markets surveyed: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Türkiye. Insights into topics by market and local sectors can be found in the individual reports that form the 2026 edition of the Atradius Payment Practices Barometer for Central and Eastern Europe.

The survey was conducted between the end of Q1 and mid-Q2 2026 and remained open for a few days after the onset of the Middle East geopolitical tensions, allowing respondents to reflect on potential impacts as they completed the questionnaire. Survey findings should therefore be viewed with this in mind.



B2B payment practices trends

CEE firms report pressure on cash flow planning

Across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), companies appear to favour cash in business-to-business (B2B) trade. This reflects a clear focus on protecting liquidity in an environment where payment risk remains high. With 54% of transactions settled at the point of sale, payment certainty continues to outweigh the use of trade credit in B2B commercial relationships. However, the remaining 46% of sales still take place on credit, confirming that allowing business customers to defer payment for goods or services under agreed payment terms remains essential in CEE intercompany trade, even as suppliers manage it more cautiously. Differences across sectors and markets are clear. SMEs in services are the most likely to sell on credit, while companies in the Czech Republic and Romania make the greatest use of trade credit across the region. Bulgaria and Hungary follow, while Slovakia aligns closely with the regional average. By contrast, Slovenia and Türkiye rely less on trade credit, with Poland recording the lowest use overall.

Despite this preference for cash, trade credit is gaining ground. Companies are extending credit to sustain sales and support customers facing liquidity pressure. Manufacturing and larger firms are leading this shift, reflecting their role in complex supply chains and international trade. Smaller services firms, although reliant on credit themselves, remain more cautious, with tighter cash positions limiting how far they can extend it. At country level, this expansion is most evident in Slovakia, Türkiye and the Czech Republic, while Hungary and Bulgaria show more restraint. Romania remains a key user, but signs point to a more cautious approach.

Most CEE suppliers still operate with short payment cycles. Terms within 30 days from invoicing remain the norm across the region, with longer terms used selectively to support competitiveness. Even where credit is extended, companies prioritise keeping cash inflows quick and reliable. Medium-sized and larger firms tend to offer more flexibility, supported by some improvements in payment behaviour among business customers. Smaller firms, particularly in services, remain more cautious, as they have less room to absorb shocks. At market level, Türkiye stands out for the most relaxed payment terms, combined with the highest share of businesses saying customer payment behaviour has weakened. Romania shows a similar picture, although with shorter terms, suggesting that strict policies alone do not fully protect suppliers. Elsewhere in the region, B2B payment behaviour shows limited improvement, but it remains inconsistent. This helps explain why most companies continue to favour short payment cycles, especially in Bulgaria, while Hungary remains the most cautious.

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B2B payment practices trends

Against this backdrop, late payments remain widespread. Around 83% of CEE suppliers report delays, with nearly one third of invoices overdue. The impact on working capital is significant, forcing companies to rely on reserves or external financing. Manufacturing and medium sized firms are the most affected, while services companies appear less exposed, likely due to faster cash cycles and smaller transactions. By market, late payments are most pronounced in Türkiye and Slovakia, followed by Slovenia and Romania, while Hungary reports the lowest levels.

The drivers of delay are clear. Around six in ten companies cite customer liquidity pressure as the main cause, particularly among large manufacturers and firms in Türkiye and Bulgaria. Operational factors also play a role, with around one in four companies pointing to banking processes, especially in Romania and the Czech Republic.

Looking at payment timing, reflected in Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) data, survey evidence shows that more payments are drifting into delay, increasing the amount of working capital tied up in receivables and not available for operations. This increases financial pressure on the business, as well as the likelihood of missed payments. More CEE companies now report rising write-offs than declines, indicating that part of this delayed flow is already turning into losses. The age of receivables remains the main trigger for write-offs, confirming that longer delays are key in driving losses. Data by business segment and market highlight that medium to large companies, particularly in manufacturing and trade, and businesses in Türkiye, Romania and Slovakia are the most affected.

The impact on operations is direct and widespread. Delayed payments constrain liquidity, making it harder for companies to plan and manage cash flow. This pressure is most evident among SMEs in services and firms in Türkiye. At the same time, reliance on external financing is increasing, particularly among manufacturing SMEs and companies in Slovakia. Reduced cash availability is also limiting day to day operations, especially for smaller firms and businesses in Slovenia.

To mitigate the impact of customer payment risk on the business, CEE companies are adapting their strategies. The majority are reducing exposure by favouring cash transactions or requesting advance payments, particularly in trade and in Türkiye. Almost as often, companies report setting up internal reserves to absorb losses, a strategy most widespread among manufacturing SMEs and firms in Slovakia. However, more structured risk management tools remain underused. Credit insurance and similar solutions are still relatively limited, although adoption is higher among medium sized firms in trade and companies in Slovenia, where these tools are used to monitor risk and act early.

Overall, the picture is one of growing tension, pointing to rising liquidity stress for businesses across the region, which is becoming a concern for companies selling on credit in B2B trade.

Key insights on the next page



Key insights

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

Payment behaviour of B2B customers (12 months)

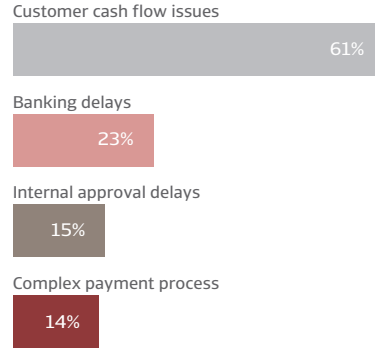
Exposure clusters: reported level of B2B invoices paid late by percentage of respondents



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026

Top 4 reasons B2B customers pay invoices late

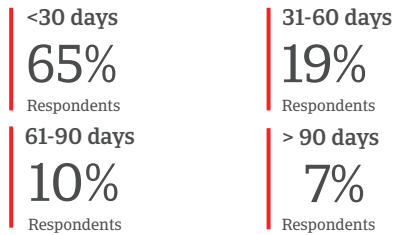
% of respondents - multiple response



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026

Breakdown of past due payments

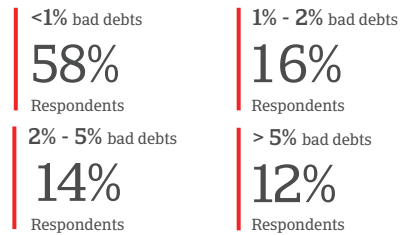
% of past due invoices by payment timing



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026

Reported bad debts

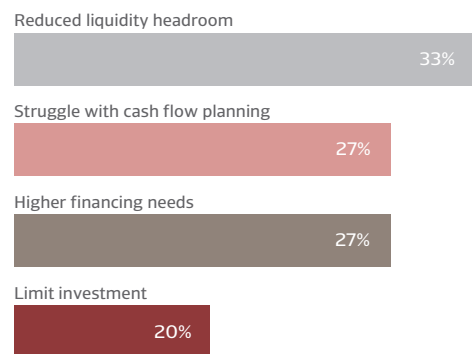
% of respondents - bad debts levels



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026

Top 4 impacts of customer payment risk on working capital

% of respondents - multiple response



Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market
Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026





Looking ahead

Insolvency expectations across CEE point to ongoing pressure

Looking ahead over the year, the outlook for B2B payment behaviour across CEE does not point to a marked shift from current challenging conditions. This reflects a broader economic backdrop marked by uneven growth, persistent cost pressures, tighter financial conditions and ongoing global uncertainty. Together, these factors continue to weigh on business confidence and limit the scope for improvement in customer payment behaviour.

Differences in sentiment across sectors and markets are marked. Manufacturing and services firms, along with smaller businesses, appear slightly more optimistic. This may reflect stronger links to domestic demand and, in some cases, greater flexibility in adapting to changing conditions. By contrast, trade companies stand out as the most pessimistic across the region. Their exposure to demand volatility remains high, inventory cycles and supply chain uncertainty continues to shape a more cautious outlook.

Medium and large firms are also more guarded in their expectations, likely reflecting broader exposure across supply chains and customer portfolios. By market, the picture remains fragmented. Slovenia, Türkiye, Bulgaria and Slovakia show some confidence in local economic conditions or recent stabilisation. Hungary stands out for weaker sentiment, reflecting ongoing economic pressure, while the Czech Republic and Romania sit in between, with more balanced but still uncertain expectations. These differences highlight how local economic landscapes continue to shape payment behaviour alongside broader regional trends.

Corporate insolvency risk is emerging as a growing concern across the region. Around 36% of businesses believe insolvency levels will remain at already elevated levels, while an even larger share expects them to rise further in the coming months. The remaining respondents are uncertain. Across sectors, industry and trade show the highest levels of concern, with more than half of companies expecting insolvencies to increase. This reflects their exposure to weaker demand, tighter margins and longer cash conversion cycles. Services, in contrast, show a more balanced view, with fewer businesses anticipating further deterioration, highly likely due to relatively faster cash cycles and closer customer relationships.

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Looking ahead

Differences by company size are less pronounced, although medium and large firms report slightly higher levels of concern, consistent with their broader exposure and risk profile. Market level sentiment remains uneven. Businesses in Slovenia, Slovakia and Türkiye report higher levels of concern, while perceptions in the Czech Republic and Hungary are more contained. Overall, insolvency risk is becoming a more prominent concern across CEE, confirming the cautious stance businesses are taking towards trade credit and payment risk.

When asked about the key risks they expect to disrupt B2B payment behaviour in the coming months, companies consistently point to macroeconomic pressures. Concern about economic slowdown and rising cost pressure dominates across sectors, sizes and markets. These factors directly affect customers' ability to pay and businesses' willingness to extend credit. Geopolitical uncertainty adds a further layer of risk through trade disruptions, energy costs and supply chain instability, although its impact varies across the region.

Manufacturing, construction and services businesses are particularly concerned about domestic economic conditions, while trade firms are more focused on geopolitical developments, given their reliance on cross border flows and supply chains. SMEs feel demand pressure more acutely, while larger firms show broader risk awareness. By market, Poland and Slovenia show highest concern about the economic outlook, while Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are more focused on cost pressures. In Türkiye, concerns are more widespread across all risk categories, pointing to a more challenging operating environment.

Overall, the outlook for B2B payment behaviour in CEE remains one of concern, with uncertainty around payment trends combining with elevated insolvency risk and ongoing macroeconomic strain. This suggests that vulnerabilities continue, and businesses are preparing for a prolonged period of tight liquidity, with a continued focus on cash flow and payment risk management.

Key insights on the next page



Key insights

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

Top 3 risks businesses expect to shape B2B payments (next 12 months)

% of respondents - multiple response

#1 | Economic slowdown

#2 | Cost pressures on the business

#3 | Geopolitical instability

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026



Expected insolvency risk outlook (next 12 months)

% of respondents

Stay elevated
36%

Rise further
45%

Not sure
18%

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – 2026

Across CEE, firms struggle with cash flow planning at a time where insolvency expectations are rising. Together, this points to a more challenging payment landscape, with businesses focusing more on payment risk and cash flow management



Survey design

Sample overview – Total interviews = 1,684

Markets			
Bulgaria	Hungary	Romania	Slovenia
Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia	Turkiye
Business sector		Interviews	%
Industry		355	21
Construction		344	20
Trade		351	21
Services		634	38
TOTAL		1,684	100
Business size		Interviews	%
Micro <10 employees		476	28
SME 10-49 employees		512	30
SME 50-249 employees		358	21
Large 250 or more employees		338	20
TOTAL		1,684	100

Survey methodology

We updated our panel to better reflect the market structure across activities and size classes. Additional details on the survey sample design can be found in the statistical appendix. For this edition, comparisons with previous reports are not possible, with annual variation captured only through respondent feedback.

Survey scope

Population: Companies from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) were surveyed, with interviews conducted with the appropriate contacts responsible for accounts receivable management.

Sample design: The Strategic Sampling Plan enabled analysis of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) data by sector and company size. A total of 1,684 businesses participated, with quotas maintained across four company size categories. The sample covers businesses where trade credit is actively used, by business sectors and size. Results are reported as weighted percentages to reflect the economic weight of each sector, size class, and market.

Selection process: Companies were contacted via an international internet panel, and respondents were screened for role and quota control at the start of the interview.

Interview method: Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI), each lasting approximately 15 minutes.

Timing: The survey was conducted between the end of Q1 and mid-Q2 2026.



Interested in finding out more?

Please visit the [Atradius](#) website to access our latest publications. [Click here](#) to access our analysis of individual industry performance, detailed focus on country-specific and global economic concerns, insights into credit management issues, and information about protecting your receivables against payment default by customers.

To find out more about B2B receivables collection practices in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and worldwide, please visit atradiuscollections.com.

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- South America

All reports highlighting market and sector specific findings of the 2026 edition of the Atradius Payment Practices Barometer for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are available for download from the Atradius website at [Knowledge and research](#)



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