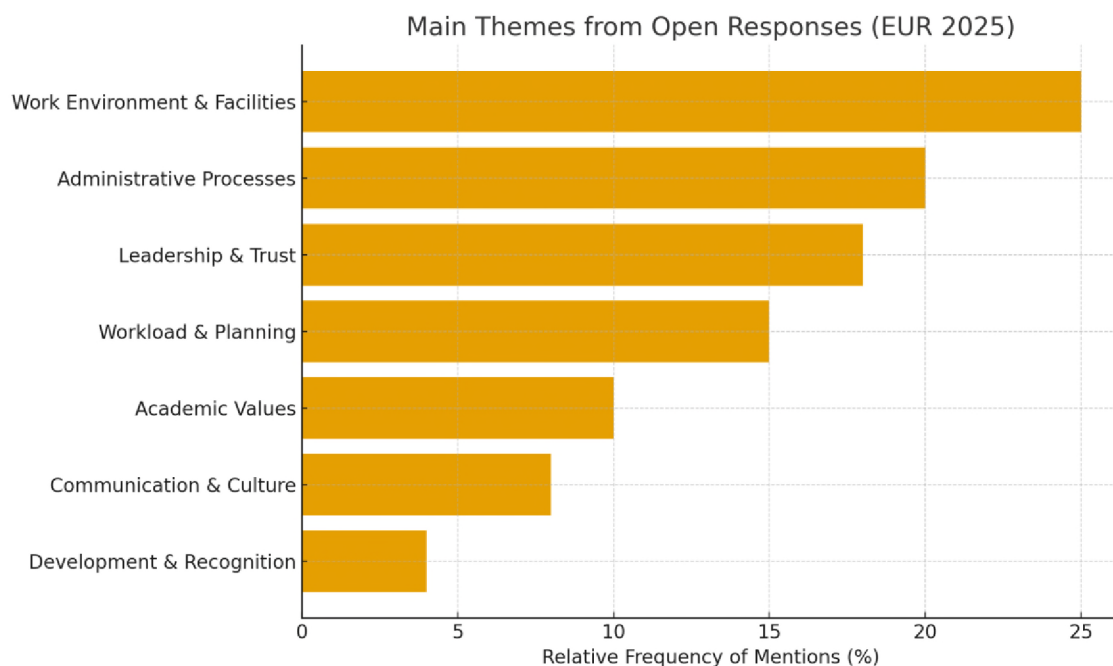


Appendix 2: Two open questions

➤ Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve your work experience at EUR?

The bar chart summarizes and translates the main themes and representative findings in a concise way, providing detailed feedback from both academic and support staff (N=83). The remarks reflect a combination of practical workplace concerns, structural and procedural inefficiencies, and deeper cultural and leadership issues.

Despite the critical tone of several responses, many employees remain motivated and committed to EUR's mission and express a strong desire to contribute to a more efficient, transparent, and inspiring work environment.



The bar chart shows which themes respondents mentioned most often. The qualitative feedback paints a consistent picture: the respondents value EUR as an employer but experience increasing frustration with bureaucratic processes, workspace policies, and top-down decision-making. Improvements in efficiency, transparency, leadership accountability, and working conditions are seen as essential for restoring motivation and pride in working at EUR.

Suggestions for Improving Work Experience at EUR

Respondents provided a broad range of suggestions, which can be grouped into several key themes. While some remarks are practical and concrete, others express deeper concerns about workload, governance, and trust in decision-making.

1. Work Environment and Facilities

A frequently mentioned topic concerns the physical and practical work environment:

- Many respondents are dissatisfied with flex-office and clean-desk policies, describing these as detrimental to collaboration, social cohesion, and productivity.

- The Tinbergen building relocation raised concerns about workspace availability, noise, and a lack of personal desks.
- Requests include more office space, permanent or personalized desks, lockers for secure storage, and better climate control (heating and air conditioning).
- Some also mentioned better coffee machines and beans as small but meaningful quality-of-life improvements.

2. Administrative Processes and Bureaucracy

Many respondents pointed to inefficiencies and bureaucratic burdens that negatively affect motivation:

- Reimbursement procedures, Diversity Travel, and administrative systems (Oracle, Project Control, etc.) were cited as complex, time-consuming, and demotivating.
- Respondents called for professionalization of support services (HR, Control, Secretariat), clearer processes and protocols, and better internal communication about changes.
- Some suggested using AI tools or improving the EUR website search to enhance usability.

3. Leadership, Governance, and Trust

A recurring theme was a lack of trust and transparency in leadership and decision-making:

- Respondents feel that management often implements top-down policies without consulting employees or taking feedback seriously.
- Calls were made for more open communication, honest explanations of policy changes, and greater accountability of management.
- Several comments emphasized the need for better selection and training of managers, including assessing managerial suitability and involving teams in appointments.
- Respondents also suggested internal reviews or investigations into local work environments to ensure social safety and good leadership practices.

4. Workload and Workforce Planning

Concerns about high workload and unequal distribution of tasks were raised repeatedly:

- Respondents requested structural workforce planning that anticipates absences (e.g. parental or sick leave).
- The current workload was described as unsustainable, often pushing research to evenings and weekends.
- There is a desire for more teaching support (e.g., grading, coordination) and better balance between teaching and research duties.

5. Academic Values and Mission

Several respondents reflected critically on EUR's strategic direction:

- Many called for stronger emphasis on academic excellence, autonomy, and scientific integrity, instead of a perceived overemphasis on "impact" or "management trends."
- Some suggested linking promotion criteria more clearly to the EUR vision and recognizing activities that create societal value.
- Respondents expressed a wish for a learning, innovative organizational culture where mistakes are addressed constructively.

6. Communication, Cooperation, and Culture

Improving communication and collaboration across departments and between academic and professional staff was a common request:

- Respondents asked for clearer information flow, timely updates, and a better overview of who does what within EUR.

- A few highlighted the need to strengthen mutual respect between staff groups and foster a more connected university community.
- Meeting-free weeks and more collaboration across faculties and services were mentioned positively.

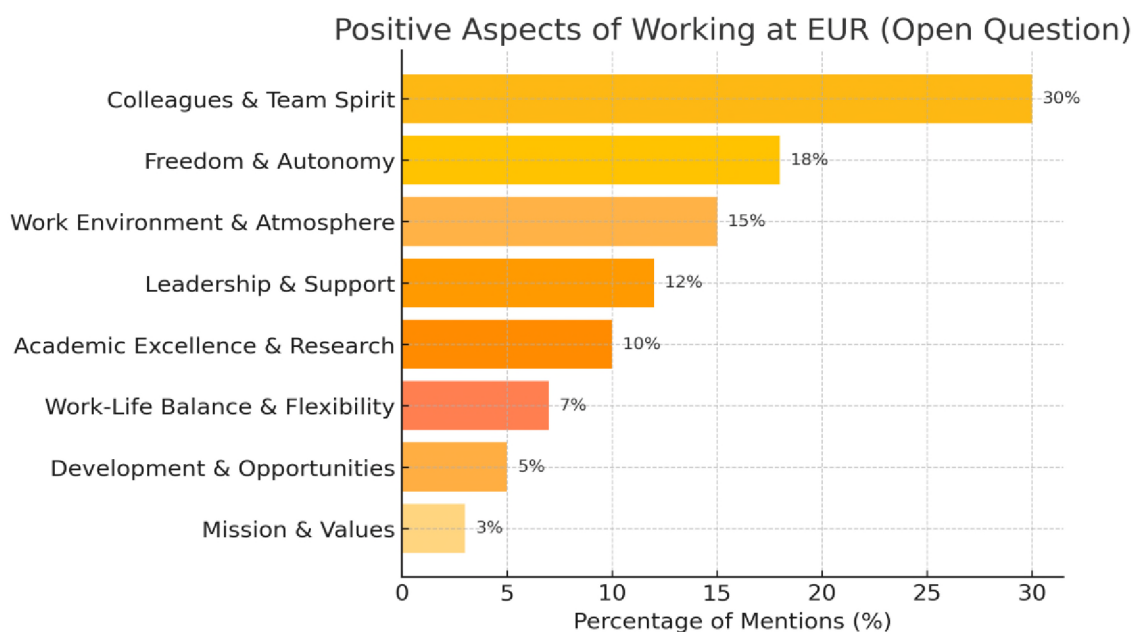
7. Development and Recognition

A smaller number of respondents emphasized professional and personal development opportunities and continued implementation of Recognition & Rewards principles, including more time and resources for training and growth.

➤ What are you most positive about in terms of your work experience at EUR?

The majority of respondents (N=80) expressed strong appreciation for their immediate colleagues, a sense of freedom in their work, and a generally positive and cooperative atmosphere. Many emphasized that local leadership and team level culture make a decisive difference in their experience. Respondents value academic independence, flexibility, and meaningful work that contributes to EUR's broader mission.

While some noted challenges elsewhere in the organization, this question revealed a strong sense of intrinsic motivation, collegiality, and pride in the work being done at EUR.



Themes and Representative Comments

Respondents provided a broad range of suggestions, which can be grouped into several key themes. While some remarks are practical and concrete, others express deeper concerns about colleagues and team spirit, freedom, and autonomy in work.

1. Colleagues & Team Spirit

Respondents overwhelmingly appreciate the collegial, friendly, and supportive environment within their departments and teams. Colleagues are described as approachable, cooperative, and dedicated.

Many note that their direct peers and team culture are what make EUR and ESE in particular a pleasant place to work:

“Applied Economics is a very nice and supportive community.”

“My colleagues are nice and helpful.”

“People are open and willing to help each other out.”

2. Freedom & Autonomy

Academic and professional freedom are central to many positive responses. Staff value autonomy in planning and executing their work, the ability to pursue their own research interests, and flexibility in how they structure their workdays:

“Freedom to plan my work.”

“Academic freedom, although it is starting to get under pressure.”

“Freedom and independence of faculty.”

3. Work Environment & Atmosphere

Respondents often refer to a pleasant, informal, and collaborative atmosphere. They describe EUR/ESE as a place with good interpersonal relations, healthy communication, and a constructive, open culture, especially within departments or sections;

“Informal and cooperative work environment.”

“Nice and friendly team spirit.”

“It is an open, welcoming environment, with attention for work-life balance.”

“The work culture in my department (Econometric Institute) is very healthy.”

4. Leadership & Support

Many appreciate approachable, engaged, and supportive leaders, particularly at the departmental level. Several respondents highlight leaders who show genuine care, provide guidance, and foster a culture of trust and recognition:

“Wise leaders for more than a decade.”

“My department leadership works very well.”

“Feedback is heard, and action is taken.”

5. Academic Excellence & Research

Employees express pride in working in an intellectually stimulating and high quality academic environment. They appreciate opportunities for academic collaboration, research discussions, and access to facilities and data:

“Intellectually stimulating environment.”

“Academic research done by excellent researchers.”

“High quality scientific research.”

6. Work-Life Balance & Flexibility

Flexibility in working hours, the option to work from home, and respect for personal time are viewed as strong positives. Several respondents note EUR's family-friendly culture and supportive approach to wellbeing:

"There is room to dictate your own working hours."

"The possibility to keep a healthy life-work balance."

"EUR is family-oriented. I really appreciate that."

7. Development & Opportunities

Respondents recognize the many opportunities for professional and personal growth, including courses, events, and space for initiative. Some refer to EUR-wide programmes such as *Share Your Knowledge Week* or *Wellbeing Week* as examples of good practice:

"There is space when you want to learn or develop something new."

"Development opportunities and EUR events are valuable."

"There are many opportunities within EUR when it comes to personal development."

8. Mission & Values

A smaller group of employees express pride in EUR's mission and societal focus. They feel connected to the university's goals regarding equality, openness, and impact:

"I enjoy contributing to EUR's goals and find the work meaningful."

"The mission and vision of central EUR, with attention to equality and openness."

"We work to give students access to good education and make good research possible."