



**Winning in Warsaw**  
Prospects for Business Service Centres

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# Contents

Preface	3
Business Service Centres	4
BSC perspectives on Warsaw	7
Warsaw's positioning	9
Improving Warsaw's success	13
Acknowledgements	15

I did not know what to expect,  
but this city led me to be more ambitious for our BSC  
project

Anonymous CFO, after 2 days field work in Warsaw

# Preface

## Document settings and purpose

This document has been compiled by Global Location Strategies (GLS), Deloitte's Centre of Excellence for corporate site selection and foreign direct investment services.

It seeks to understand the positioning of Warsaw as a destination for Business Service Centres (BSCs - e.g. Shared Services (Finance, IT, HR or others), Global Business Services, Centres of Excellence and operations of Outsourcing Service Providers).

It also sets out directional guidance for public and private organisations that aim to improve Warsaw's success in attracting Central Europe-bound BSCs.

It draws on GLS' Shared Services site selection methodology, GLS' experience with over 100 BSC location studies delivered in the last 10 years, on publicly available data and on information received in the context of 2017 and 2018 GLS field work across Central and Eastern Europe.

## Limitations

This document, in whole or in part, should not be considered as a location recommendation, nor as a Deloitte endorsement of or opinion on any particular location mentioned throughout the next pages. It reports on facts only.

Regarding the considerations on how to improve Warsaw's success in attracting BSCs, these are but directional suggestions. Further stakeholder consultation and analysis is required to assess their feasibility and effectiveness.

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# Business Service Centres

## What are they?

BSCs are entities that handle intra-company support, for example in the areas of finance and accounting, human resources, payroll, IT, legal, compliance, and procurement.

To the extent that process characteristics and the required customer relationship allows, BSCs conduct tasks that cut across business units and regions as much as possible,

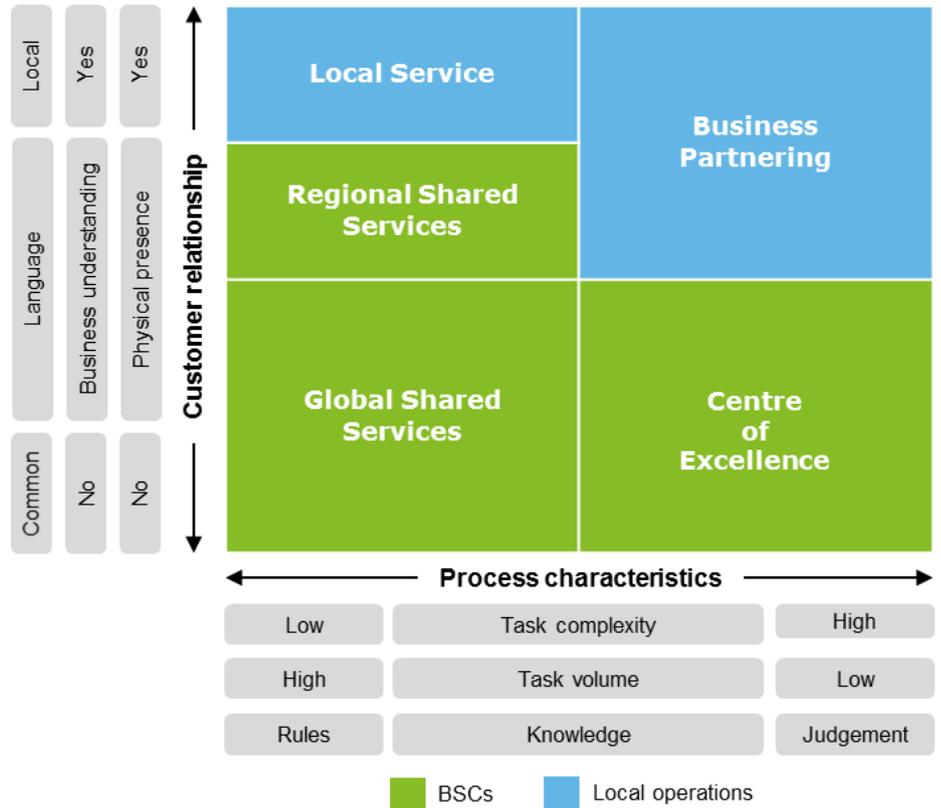
Organisations can either opt to conduct them in-house (so-called "captive" centres), to outsource them to so-called Business Process Outsourcing providers (BPOs), or to implement a hybrid solution (a combination of the aforementioned options).

For the purpose of this report, "BSC" is considered as a synonym for shared services centres, global business services and Centres of Excellence– be they captive, outsourced or hybrid.

## Looking back

Back in the mid-1980s, a handful of US corporations started creating intra-company platforms, concentrating the activities common to their different business units. Their aim was to realise cost efficiencies by creating economies of scale effects.

Within a few years, these platforms – then referred to as Shared Services Centres (SSCs) – were off-shored to capitalise on wage cost arbitrage opportunities. India was the prime go-to point.



**Process characteristics** – The way activities, processes, tasks are performed and value is added in work performed. **Customer relationship** – The need for (internal and external) customer proximity and the level of interaction with them.

Figure 1: Scope of BSC activities

In the beginning of the 1990s, US multinationals turned their sights on Europe. Many consolidated operations in existing sites in Western Europe, a few ventured into Central Europe. Poland was their first stop.

By the late 1990s Central Europe had gained traction, with Poland and Hungary as favoured "safe landing zones".

Ten years later, off-shoring of SSCs gained significant momentum. India quickly became the leading destination by headcount. It holds that position till today with over 800.000 employed in the sector.

As BSCs expanded from repetitive, “non-voice” tasks in the area of finance and accounting, to more value-adding, language-enabled activities, competition for India loomed. With an abundance of highly-educated people and low payroll costs, Central Europe’s time had come.

Initially only a handful of Central European capitals attracted international SSCs, yet the eastward expansion of the EU quickly brought other “landing zones” into play.

By 2017, fDi Markets (a Financial Times service) reported the creation of BSCs across more than nineteen cities in eight Central European countries. For 2003, these numbers were eight and four respectively.

**The now**

Companies clearly have expanded the reach of their BSCs. If 10 years ago only a few conducted processes beyond finance and accounting, many of them now have added functions such as HR, IT and procurement

The BSC community also grew vastly. In its 2017 Annual Report, the Polish Association of Business Services Leaders (ABSL Poland) approximates total employment by BSCs at 244.000 across the more than 1.000 BSCs in the country. The figures for Poland’s neighbours further illustrate

Central Europe’s successes in the BSC sector, well, as illustrated below.

Furthermore, they ventured beyond traditional destinations. Tier-1 cities still account for the majority of new BSC job creation, but companies have a far wider choice of where to locate their BCSs today as compared to a decade ago.

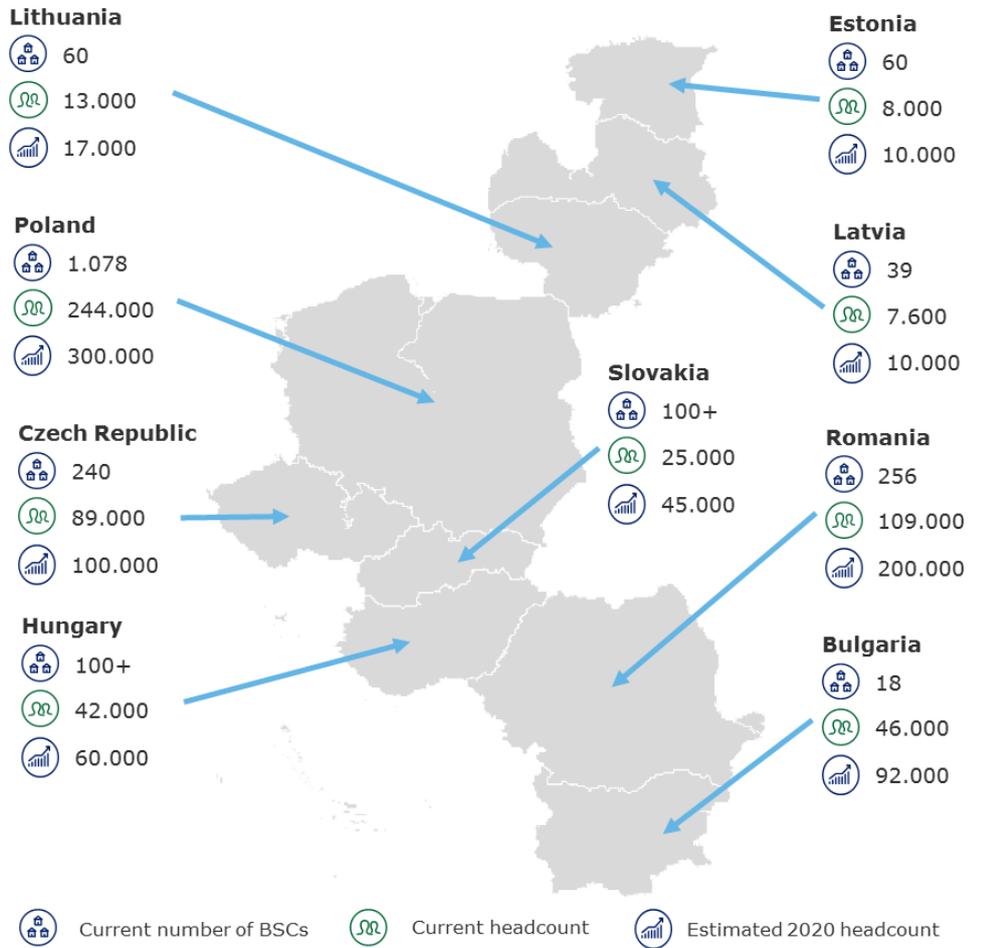


Figure 2: Indicative BSC sector characteristics in selected countries

## The outlook

Change is in the air. When Deloitte sounded over 300 executives globally on their expected changes to the use of shared services in the next three to five years, it found that:

- 77% plan to increase the number of knowledge-based processes
- 71% plan to increase the number of functions
- 56% plan to increase customer-facing processes
- 52% plan to increase the geographies/regions serviced

For Central Europe, the job creation impacts are expected to be significant. Reports of BSC industry associations across the region estimate that by 2020 the sector will require an additional 200.000 employees. Poland alone would take-up around 25% of that number.

### Impacts of automation

There is no doubt that Robotic Process Automation (RPA - the application of technology for processing a transaction) and Artificial Intelligence (AI - the use of intelligent machines that work and self-learn like humans) will change the nature of BSCs activities.

Some have it that automation will change the importance of location, as BSC tasks could be conducted by a server located anywhere. But is this correct? Certainly, RPA and AI will impact the need for BSCs having employees conducting repetitive tasks. But they will equally create an opportunity for delivering more and higher-value adding services.

In the digital world, client empathy will play a key role in business services' success going forward.

This means that human intervention, STEM skills, cultural breadth and good accessibility will continue to play a role in BSC location decisions. The expectation is that Central Europe will have a role to play in that going forward.

### Business drivers

If achieving cost efficiencies was a key driver leading to the first shared service centres being set-up in the 1980s, it is still an important consideration today. But as BSCs evolve, companies go beyond that. Today, BSCs are created to realise a wider set of corporate objectives, with improved process efficiencies, quality and internal control as key drivers after cost reduction.

### Location criteria

Every company, every project will have its unique set of location criteria, and that list can easily lead to over 80 data points requiring thorough investigation.

Good practice groups the criteria into certain "dimensions", which in turn can be broadly organized into "business fit" and "business cost" considerations. How these dimensions are weighted varies from one company to the other.



Figure 3: Typical BSC location criteria

# BSC perspectives on Warsaw

Warsaw, Poland’s capital, is often said to be the economic heart of Central Europe. It is also one of the leading destinations for business services in the whole of Europe.

It witnessed a significant growth over the past few years as a result of its large talent pool, availability of multilingual and qualified professionals.

Warsaw’s BSC “ecosystem” includes both captive operations and companies delivering business services to third parties (so-called BPOs), cutting across a variety of industries.

## HR landscape

The Warsaw wider metropolitan area boasts a 1,6 million workforce. It is a go-to location for foreign investors. Eighty Fortune 500 firms have selected it as the basis for their Polish or even their Central European operations.

In terms of young talent, the city’s over 60 private and public universities have enrolled more than 250.000 students, acting as an academic magnet for talent across Poland, and beyond. Warsaw’s technical and economics universities account for roughly one third of the student population, with 42.000 and 41.000 students respectively.

The annual pool of graduates amounts to 58.000. The majority of these will join the local job-seekers market.

As for the BSC sector, Warsaw counts 167 BSCs with a combined employment of around 42.600. This equates to 17% of Poland’s total BSC employment and leads to an average headcount of 255 employees per BSC. In terms of talent categorisation: around 60%

of the employees have up to 6 years experience, senior specialists and managers account for the remaining 40%.

In terms of industry sector, Warsaw-based BSCs tend to follow the national pattern where parent companies are predominantly IT or active in commercial and professional services. Yet the city has a pronounced and an increasing share of BSCs stemming from the Banking, Financial and Insurance sector.

Accenture	DLA Piper	Oriflame Cosmetics
ArchiDoc	DSV	Pandora
AVON	DXC Technology	PKO BP Finat
bioMerieux	F5 Networks	Procter & Gamble
BNP Paribas Securities Services	Groupon	ProService Finteco
Canon	HRK	Randstad Payroll Solutions
CBRE Corporate Outsourcing	IMPAQ	Raya Contact Center
Citibank	IT Kontrakt	RBS Global Hub Europe
Colgate-Palmolive	ITMAGINATION	Roche Global IT Solutions
Contract Administration	JLL	Sarens
Demant Technology Centre	Linklaters	Schneider Electric
Dentons	Mercer	Siemens
DHL Parcel	Mettler-Toledo	Teleperformance Polska
Diebold Nixdorf	OEX Group	VELUX

Table 1: Indicative list of BSCs in Warsaw.

Recent BSC location decisions indicate that the pace is up for Warsaw as a BSC destination. Reportedly, the city recorded more new BSC jobs during the Q1 2016 – Q1 2017 period than any other Polish city. Interestingly, some of the recent BCS decisions for Warsaw stem from companies that already had like operations elsewhere in Poland. Yet at least four Polish cities witnessed a larger number of new centres being established during the same period.

The city has low unemployment - around 3,0 %, a level very much comparable to that of other major Central Europe business hubs.

Still, one can argue that the sector has space to grow. With the city’s economically active population

hovering around 996.000, Warsaw has one of the lowest BSC “penetration rates” when compared to other major and secondary BSC destinations in Central Europe.

**Office market**

With a current office stock around 5,300 million square meter, Warsaw leads among Central Europe’s capitals. Average vacancy rates hover at 11%, but that includes B-class buildings which are of lesser interest to the BSC community.

If historically BSCs would locate in the near-airport Mokotow district, the last 5 years have seen a steady increase in office developments in the Central Business District and its direct neighbourhood. BSCs and other companies have been quick to respond and there is a clear trend for business to locate in the city’s centre. This allows employees a better choice of public transport and amenities.

Notwithstanding intra-city relocations by existing companies, new entrants can expect a wide choice of office space in the near and mid-term: more than 700.000 m<sup>2</sup> of office space will become available in the 2018 – 2020 period.

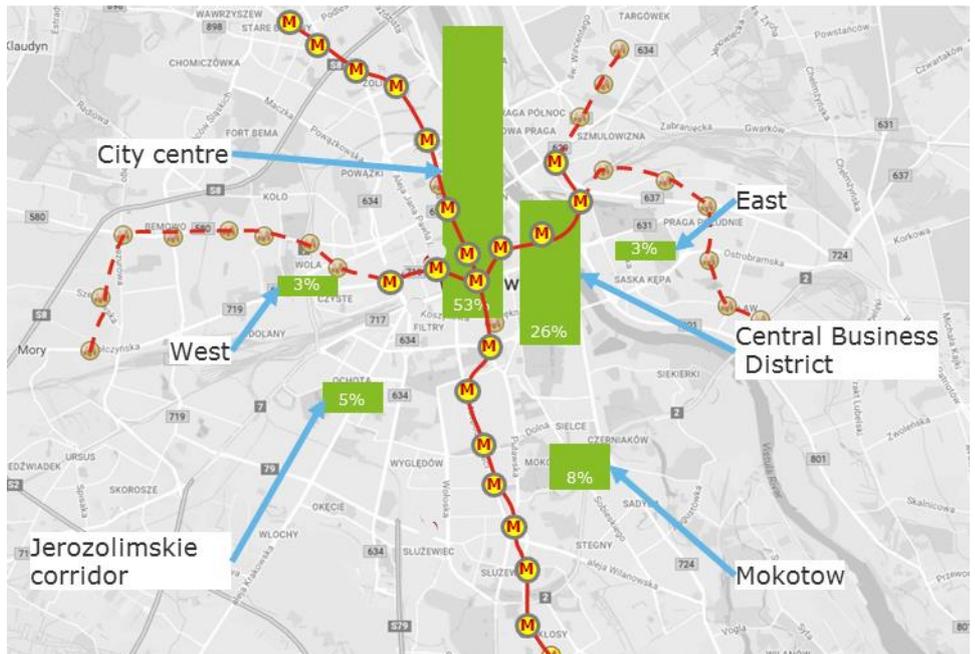


Figure 4: Percentages of office construction

# Warsaw's positioning

## Methodology

To understand where Warsaw stands among its peers, the city was rated against key business fit and business cost indicators, as tabled below.

Business fit criteria	Weights
<b>BSC cluster indicators</b>	<b>25%</b>
Number of employees in the BSC cluster	60%
Total number of BSCs	20%
BSC/total employment	20%
<b>Talent pool indicators</b>	<b>45%</b>
Economically active population	5%
Number of universities	5%
Number of students	30%
Number of IT students	30%
Number of economics, accounting and management students	30%
<b>Air connectivity indicators (main airport)</b>	<b>15%</b>
Number of countries served	15%
Number of destinations served	70%
Passenger traffic (million)	15%
<b>Office market indicators</b>	<b>15%</b>
Current stock (thousand m <sup>2</sup> )	15%
12 month pipeline under construction (thousand m <sup>2</sup> )	70%
Average vacancy rate	15%

Table 2: Criteria and weights used

Business cost assumptions
<b>Junior roles, 1-3 years of experience - 10 FTE/role</b>
General ledger
Accounts payable
Customer service
IT Helpdesk
Java junior developer (1-3 yrs of experience)
<b>Team leaders of 5-10 FTEs team- 1 FTE/role</b>
General ledger
Accounts payable
Customer service
IT Helpdesk
Java team leader (5+ yrs experience + 2 yrs as TL)
<b>Office space - 12 m<sup>2</sup> per FTE</b>
<b>Inflation</b>
Wages - Based on country nominal wage inflation
Rent - Based on country consumer price index
Office space - 12 m <sup>2</sup> per FTE
Five year net present value discount rate - 10% per year

Table 3: Business cost assumptions

Selected Central European capitals, Bratislava, Bucharest, Budapest and Prague (all bespoke BSC destinations) have been used for comparison purposes. Data has been drawn from publicly available sources

It is important to note - as stated in the preface to this document - that this comparison is indicative only. Every BSC project will have its unique set of criteria, skill requirements, criteria weights and cost drivers. Then, locations change continuously. Particularly talent availability and wage costs tend to be very dynamic, reflecting the ever-changing balance between talent pool demand and offer.

As a consequence, the paragraphs below should not be used for any location decision. Furthermore, the selection of the benchmark cities does not fully reflect reality where corporations tend to consider a broader set of cities in their location searches

## Findings

### Business fit

The comparison is based on the below data-points.

	Warsaw	Bratislava	Bucharest	Budapest	Prague
<b>Business fit</b>					
<b>BSC cluster indicators</b>					
Number of employees in the BSC cluster	42 600	18 500	70 000	40 000	40 050
Total number of BSCs	167	43	110	90	100
BSC/total employment	4,3%	8,3%	6,8%	4,6%	6,2%
<b>Talent pool indicators</b>					
Economically active population	995 800	222 437	1 024 309	867 923	644 643
Number of universities	70	12	36	19	33
Number of students	246 000	75 000	222 000	155 000	145 000
Number of IT students	14 000	7 100	14 000	19 500	10 900
Number of economics, accounting and management students	41 000	12 000	14 400	23 100	32 800
<b>Air connectivity indicators (main airport)</b>					
Number of countries served	50	76	22	49	56
Number of destinations served	150	266	78	156	164
Passenger traffic (million)	16	24	9	9	12
Current stock (thousand m <sup>2</sup> )	5 300	1 720	2 300	3 300	3 340
12 month pipeline under construction (thousand m <sup>2</sup> )	750 000	250	300 000	300 000	330 200
Average vacancy rate	11,7%	6,4%	8,5%	9,5%	7,7%

Table 4: Business fit data-points

As illustrated by the opposite graph, there are notable differences between the cities considered when set against a few generic BSC location evaluation criteria.

Warsaw stands-out positively in terms of number of BSCs and total sector headcount. The city also seems to be geared towards smaller BSCs, and with a low BSC "penetration rate" in its economically active population, it has space to grow.

As far as the availability of junior talent is concerned, Warsaw benefits from its contingent of university students. The number of students in economics and related studies surpasses that of the runner-up city by 25%, or more than 8.000.

Warsaw's Chopin airport lags slightly behind its peers in the number of destinations-served. In practice, this may not be that significant to BSC decision makers – as exemplified by the city having the largest BSC cluster in our comparison.

When it comes to availability of suitable office space, Warsaw's current stock and pipeline defies that of the other cities.

In summary: it is unsurprising that Warsaw has great potential for BSCs in the current peer line-up.

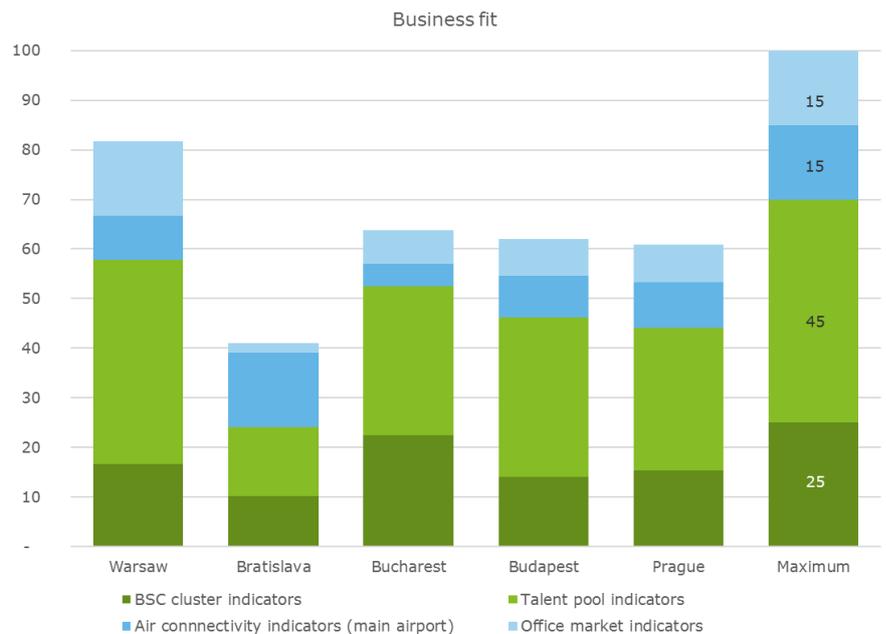


Figure 5: Business fit comparison

**Business cost**

Indicative business cost has been calculated based on the net present value of payroll and prime rents, taking into account expected wage and rent inflation over the 2018 – 2020 period. The comparison is based on the below data-points.

	Warsaw	Bratislava	Bucharest	Budapest	Prague
<b>Business cost (EUR/year)</b>					
<b>Indicative annual gross salaries (junior roles, 1-3 years of experience)</b>					
General ledger	22 000	24 600	26 900	27 100	25 600
Accounts payable	20 300	21 100	18 900	25 300	24 400
Customer service	16 900	21 100	21 100	24 000	23 800
IT Helpdesk	26 900	29 900	26 900	25 300	25 600
Java junior developer (1-3 yrs experience)	37 100	31 600	46 400	45 000	48 200
<b>Indicative annual gross salaries (team leaders, 5-10 FTEs)</b>					
General ledger	44 000	31 500	32 800	39 100	37 200
Accounts payable	38 800	28 100	36 400	36 100	33 900
Customer service	30 800	28 100	23 200	34 800	30 500
IT Helpdesk	44 000	34 300	45 200	57 000	40 400
Java team leader (5+ yrs experience + 2 yrs as TL)	68 200	35 100	71 000	57 000	57 700
Prime rent (per m <sup>2</sup> )	204	186	228	162	240
<b>Inflation rates</b>					
Average nominal wage inflation 2018 - 2022	4,7%	4,1%	11,8%	4,9%	3,9%
Average CPI inflation 2018 - 2022	2,0%	2,0%	3,6%	2,7%	2,1%

Table 5: Business cost indicators

As illustrated opposite, Warsaw emerges as a cost competitive city on net present value of 5-year payroll and office rent costs.

Scrutiny of the underlying data leads to a couple of observations:

- Office space costs are of only marginal significance in the cost basis of a BSC.
- Current Warsaw junior role payroll costs are between 4% and 18% lower than those across the peer cities. The city's large talent pool, combined with a relatively low "penetration degree" of the BSC sector could be a cause of this.
- By contrast, current team leader costs in Warsaw are higher than in three of the other cities in our sample. This could be the result of Poland's BSC cluster's growth, and the ensuing need of existing and incoming BSCs for experienced talent to shepherd their growth.
- Wage cost inflation has a tremendous impact of cost attractiveness over the 5-year period. Though national nominal wage inflation projections have been used for the current analysis, at least in the case of Poland to date, this has been a realistic approximation.

- A currency devaluation in any of the non-Euro cities (all but Bratislava) might tilt the picture. But presently, there is no strong sign presently of the non-Euro countries abandoning the pegging of currency to the Euro.

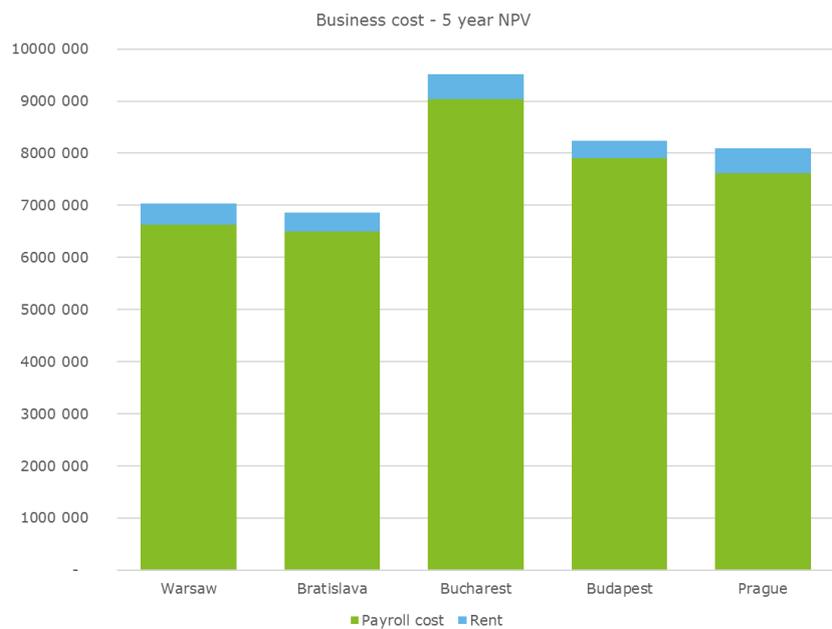


Figure 6: Five year net present value of payroll and office rent cost

**Tentative conclusions**

The high-level location analysis identifies that some of Central Europe's capitals perform differently against a generic set of BCs location criteria and business cost considerations.

Warsaw reveals itself as a strong contender amongst the peers considered.

Its differentiating factors being the size of its recruitment pool for junior talent, and choice of office locations when it comes to business fit.

As for senior talent, "the war is on". Warsaw is no exception to what is happening the world-over. Throughout Central Europe, and beyond, BSCs are furthering their scale and scope. Experienced talent is wanted-for, everywhere. Warsaw, like other cities, has launched initiatives to attract and retain such talent.

Cost-wise, the outlook is that going-forward, the city will – relatively speaking – experience a lesser war for junior talent than the other cities considered.

Mapping the cities against the selected location criteria and cost factors puts Warsaw in the upper quadrant of the graph, with above peer-average business fit and below peer-average business cost.

This implies that it could be a location to seriously consider by BSC decision makers as they line-up their options in Central Europe.

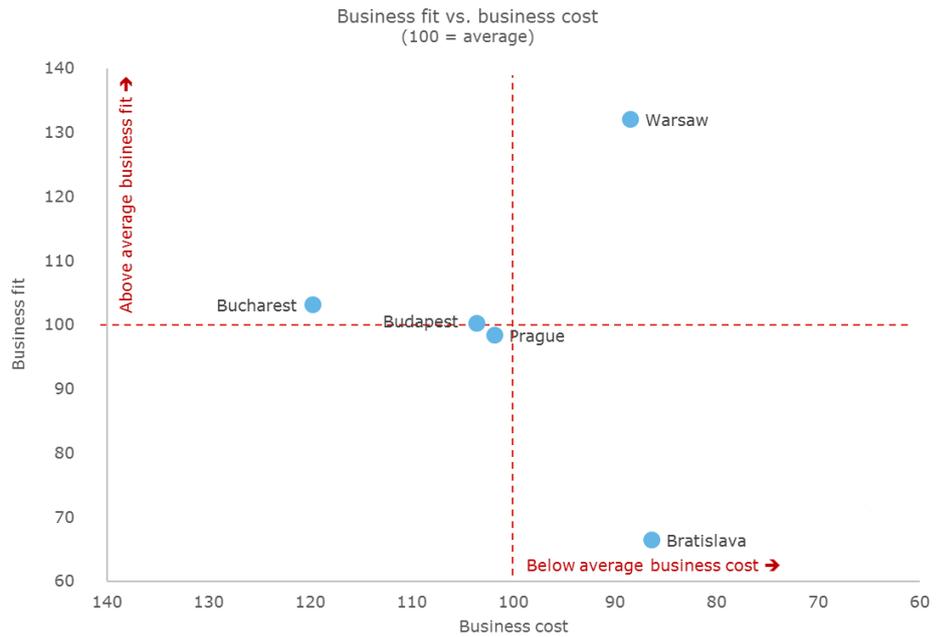


Figure 7: Business cost versus business fit

# Improving Warsaw's success

## Positive winds

The above high-level analysis indicates that BSCs can win by locating in Warsaw.

This suggests that the city, and the local stakeholders to the growth of Warsaw BSC cluster, may win as well.

The results of this criteria-driven analysis is corroborated by other bespoke sources, which list Warsaw in the top-25 of the world's high-potential outsourcing cities.

## Time for action has come

One can assume that as long as the city ensures that it meets the basic location criteria of BSCs, and keeps these competitive, it will continue to see an influx of BCS investment. Consequently, Warsaw could benefit without any of the BSC sector's stakeholders changing their modus operandi.

Yet a more proactive stance could be warranted. Poland's and Warsaw's economy continue to become more service-based. Vast contingents of tertiary education graduates will seek employment in services and in an international environment. BSCs are known to offer such employment opportunities.

Then, competition is on with other Polish cities, and cities elsewhere in Central Europe. Many of these cities have historically been more proactive in promoting their BSC landscape.

## Setting sail

It is not the ambition of this document to provide an extensive and detailed set of actions that

Warsaw's BSC stakeholders should consider going forward. That said, our multiple location due diligence engagements in Warsaw and other BSC destinations, and understanding of BSC decision makers needs suggest that the below actions might be considered.

### Increasing visibility

"Unknown is unwanted" – Awareness about Warsaw's potential as "safe landing zone" for BSC is limited, certainly when compared to that about other BSC destinations. Getting on the corporate radar screen is essential.

In our experience, this is best achieved by a continuous presence at bespoke gatherings of the international BSC community, such as selected conferences, and by personally engaging with the BSC community. This community typically is ready to share experiences and eager to learn. Hence, the engagement should be focused on exploration and information-sharing, and certainly stay clear from aggressively promoting Warsaw. This on-site tactic should be part of a wider media campaign covering printed and electronic carriers.

### Fostering Warsaw's BSC community

Insofar it does not already happen, stakeholders should foster the information exchange between the players and the stakeholders of the city's BSC cluster. E.g. by staging discussion forums, reciprocal site visits and bi-lateral consultation. Stakeholders – City authorities, real estate developers, recruiters, professional service suppliers – should take initiatives to that matter. ABSL is believed to be able

to provide valuable guidance in that respect.

In this context, it will also be important that the national investment promotion agency, PAIH, is continuously kept abreast of Warsaw's successes. Regular invitations to BSC community meetings could be a tactic to achieve this.

#### **Talent pool development**

War-for-talent is of major concern to BSC leaders. Throughout the Warsaw BSC community, corporations have already established strong links with educational facilities to meet their ongoing need for fresh talent. To the extent possible, positive experience would be worthwhile sharing, and duplicating.

In this context, City authorities may have a role to play when it comes to deepening the talent-pool's language skills. Particularly French and German are very much sought-for.

#### **Target markets**

Whilst analysis of BSC trends shows that such operations are set-up by companies from all sectors and many geographies, Warsaw's BSC stakeholder should explore whether – in addition to catering to the overall market of newcomers – there are some specific niches that could be explored.

Further analysis is due, but potential niches might include: Banking, Finance and Insurance, Asian companies, and BSCs with strong IT needs.

The breadth of Warsaw's talent pool could also justify the emphasis of the city as go-to locations for multi-functional BSCs.

Geographically speaking, special attention could be given to companies with their main administrative offices in: Germany,

France, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States.

#### **Dedicated resources**

Leading BSC cities' economic development departments tend to have a dedicated resource to promoting the growth of the BSC cluster. If the Warsaw city authority could do likewise it would parallel the *modus operandi* specialisation that already exists among recruitment agencies and real estate professionals.

#### **Aftercare**

"It is easier to grow a company than to attract a company". The stakeholders should make it their business to regularly follow-up on the developments within the BSCs already located in the city. It could be considered to designate a special and neutral resource for that purpose.

# Acknowledgements

This document draws on a broad set of sources, as listed below.

- ABSL Czech Republic, 2017 Annual report
- ABSL Romania, 2017 Annual report
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- ABSL Poland, 2017 Annual report and 2018 BSC project reports
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