

Building winning B2B sales teams:

European Sales Salary Benchmark 2026

Insights and best practices from 330+ sales professionals across DACH, Benelux, and the Nordics – including expert strategies from sales leaders winning in today's market.

What's on the menu?

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02 Compensation Analysis

- a. Sales Leadership (CRO, VP Sales, Head of Sales)*
- b. Account Executives (AEs)*
- c. Sales Development Representatives (SDRs)*

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The market has changed. And so has the way we think about **compensation**

The growth-at-all-costs era is over. Going into 2026, European SaaS companies are focusing on scaling sustainably. And it's showing in how they pay their sales teams.

We analyzed compensation data from 330+ sales professionals across Benelux, DACH and Nordics. Then we spoke to sales leaders to break down what it actually means.

What we found is that the days of inflated OTEs and unrealistic quotas are behind us in Europe. Companies are designing more competitive packages for experienced professionals who deliver real results.

The data in this guide comes from real compensation packages, not theoretical frameworks or guesswork. We hope you'll use it to make informed decisions about your recruitment efforts.

As we built out this year's report, we wanted to give you more than benchmarks. You'll find the insights and best practices you need to build compensation strategies that actually work in today's market.

We wish you every success in building a world-class sales team!

Vladan Soldat

Founding Partner, **Nobel Recruitment**

The background of the slide features a photograph of two men in an office environment. The man on the left, wearing a white button-down shirt, is leaning forward and pointing at a laptop screen. The man on the right, with curly hair and wearing a striped button-down shirt, is looking at the laptop. The office has a modern feel with a dark blue wall and large windows in the background. On the left side of the slide, there are large, abstract, light-colored shapes that partially overlap the text.

Compensation & Salary Benchmarks for Sales Leaders

71% of CROs receive equity

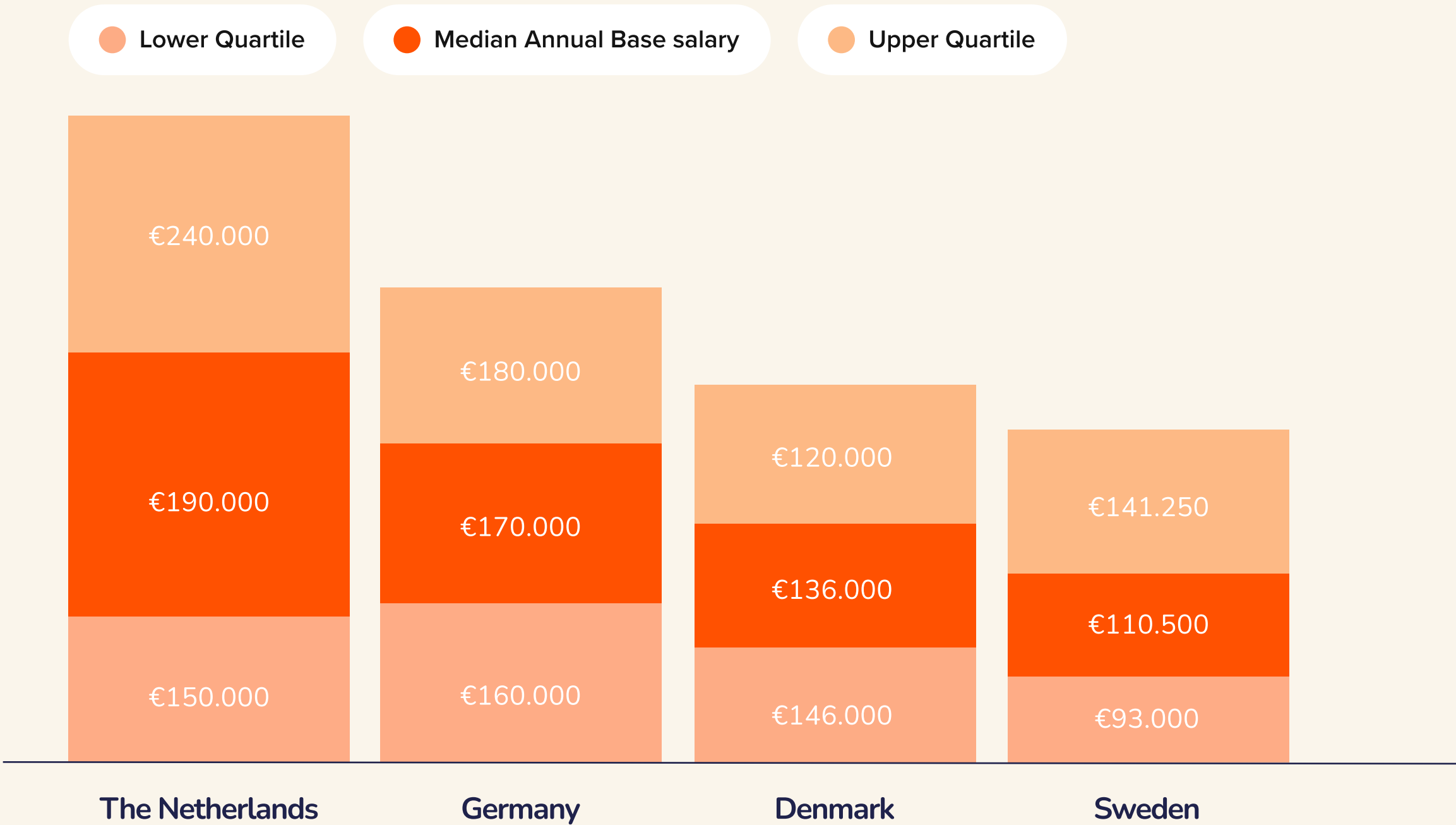
The European sales leadership market is built around equity-heavy packages that reflect real value creation. With 71% of CROs receiving equity (the highest of any GTM role), 63% of VP of Sales, and 61% of Heads of Sales also participating in equity programs, companies understand that game-changing leadership requires more than just competitive cash compensation.

For roles like these, base compensation is only the entry fee, the real game is creating an environment where exceptional leaders can build systems, develop people, and drive sustainable growth.

Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) By Country

A Chief Revenue Officer oversees all revenue-generating functions, aligning sales, marketing, and customer success to drive sustainable growth.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
NL	€204.000	80%	71%
DE	€300.000	99%	75%
DK	€165.000	75%	30%
SE	€206.000	86%	33%

Key Insights:

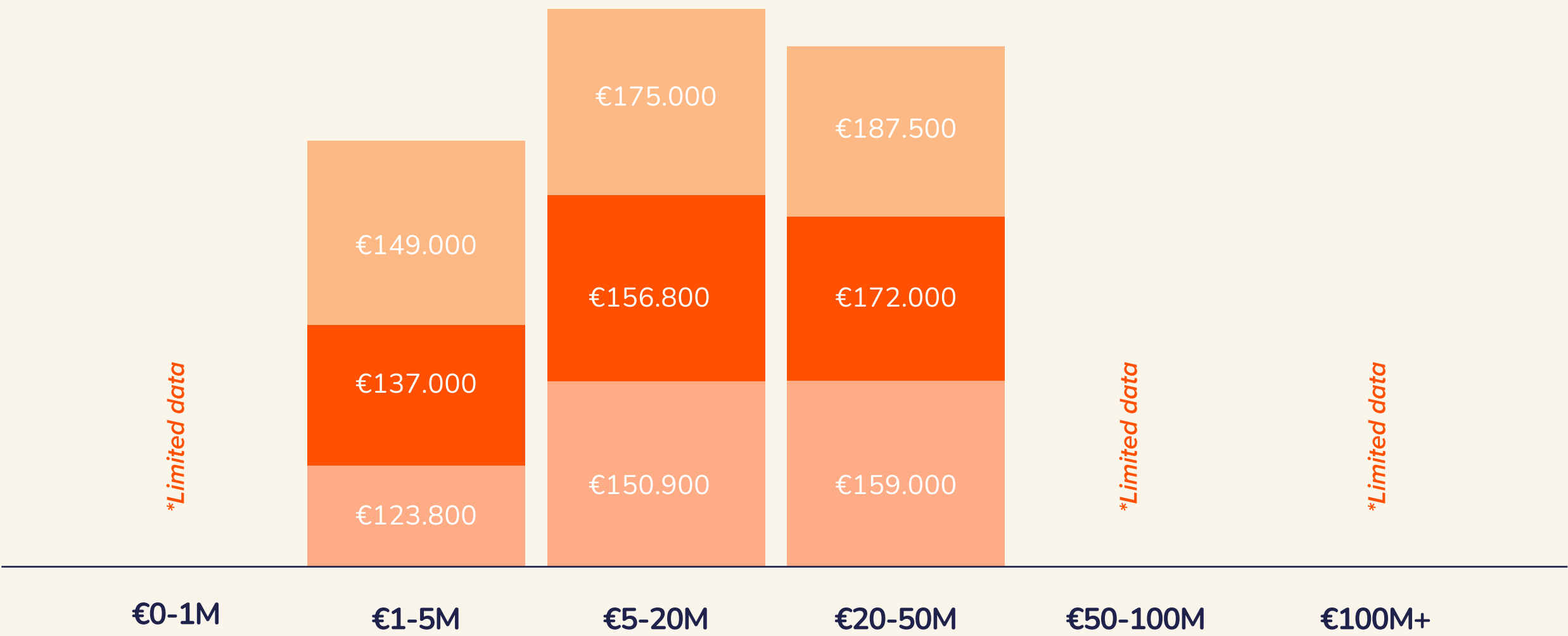
German CROs show the highest OTE achievement rates at 99% and strong equity participation at 75%, suggesting superior process maturity. Meanwhile, Nordic markets are seeing strong CRO performance (75-86% achievement) but may be missing retention opportunities by offering equity to only 30-33% of executives.

Chief Revenue Officer (CRO)

By Revenue stage

A Chief Revenue Officer oversees all revenue-generating functions, aligning sales, marketing, and customer success to drive sustainable growth.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
€1-5M	€178.500	72%	60%
€5-20M	€275.000	82%	67%
€20-50M	€300.000	104%	100%

Key Insights:

The €20-50M revenue stage shows the highest median OTE at €300,000 and an achievement rate of 104%, representing the peak compensation period for CROs. This stage also shows the highest equity participation at 100%. It may be an inflection point where companies have proven product-market fit but still need exceptional leadership to navigate the transition to mature, enterprise-level operations.

“

The OTE Factor

You can easily calculate a factor of the OTE as your target. An AE might have an OTE to target factor of five or six. In bigger companies, this factor rises. You get to 7, 8, 9, 10 and so on. Account managers are normally in the double-digit factoring. If you have a two-step model with SDRs, you calculate them in combination, like if you have one SDR per three AEs, you calculate the three AEs plus the SDR together to determine what they should be bringing in. You factor in attrition for both people and target attainment. In the end, it all breaks down to a factor of your OTE.



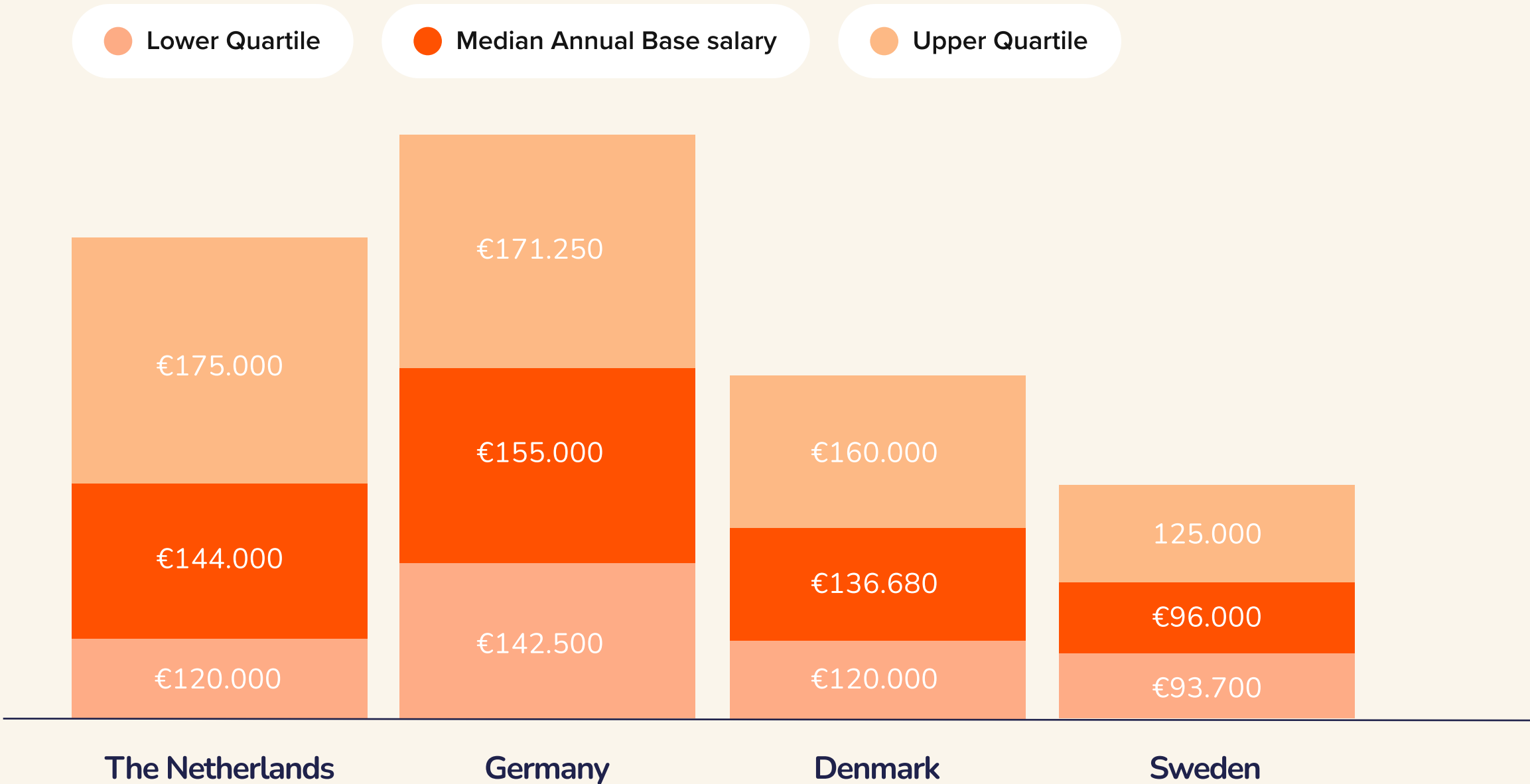
- Christian Reichert

Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) at Shiftmove

VP of Sales By Country

A VP of Sales leads the (new business) sales organization, setting strategy, managing teams, and ensuring revenue targets are met across regions or segments.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
NL	€275.000	79%	67%
DE	€300.000	65%	67%
DK	€200.000	96%	50%
SE	€174.000	93%	*limited data

Key Insights:

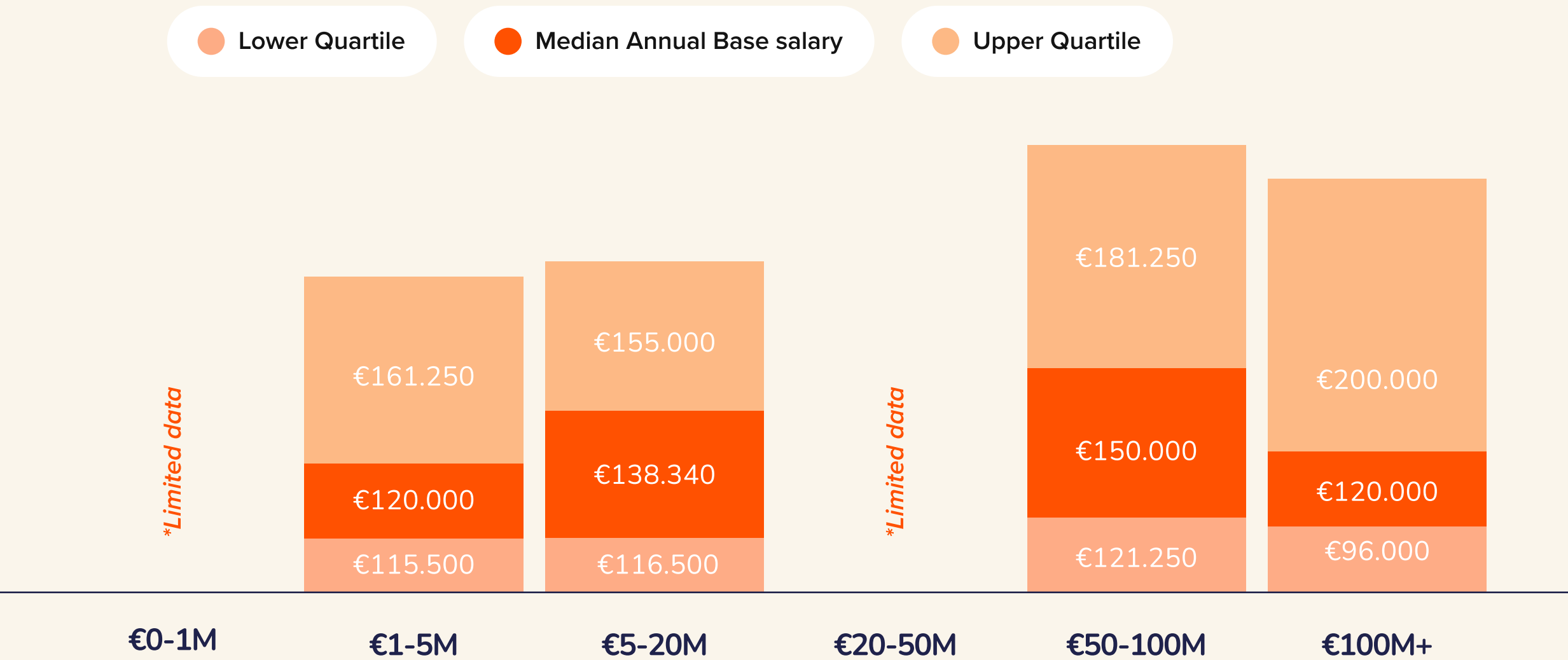
We have observed that VP's of Sales typically receive lower base salaries compared to Chief Revenue Officers (CROs). However, their overall On-Target Earnings (OTE) tend to be higher. This suggests that VPs of Sales are incentivized more aggressively through performance-based compensation, particularly when new business targets are met.

VP of Sales

By Revenue Stage

A VP of Sales leads the (new business) sales organization, setting strategy, managing teams, and ensuring revenue targets are met across regions or segments.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
€1-5M	€160.000	77%	61%
€5-20M	€268.000	81%	65%
€50-100M	€178.000	83%	*limited data
€100M+	€300.000	95%	*limited data

Key Insights:

Across revenue stages, compensation at the lower quartile and median is broadly comparable. The divergence emerges in the upper quartile, where later-stage companies pay a clear premium—signalling a greater willingness to invest in top executives.

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Contracted Annual **Recurring Revenue** (CARR)

For our Sales Leaders, we base the targets on Contracted Annual Recurring Revenue (CARR) of the team. CARR represents the additional recurring revenue secured through a contract: for new business, it equals the full contract value, while for existing customers, it's the incremental value added in the renewal or expansion.

Personally, I prefer the leader's targets to be as closely tied to the reps as possible. Longer contracts earn extra rewards. In some cases, as they move higher in leadership, the focus shifts from pure volume to quality: customer satisfaction, contract duration, and churn. Keeping high Customer Satisfaction and a churn rate below 5% is rewarded, and with equity on the line, sustainable growth and long-term customer relationships become the primary incentives.



- Michael Rasmussen

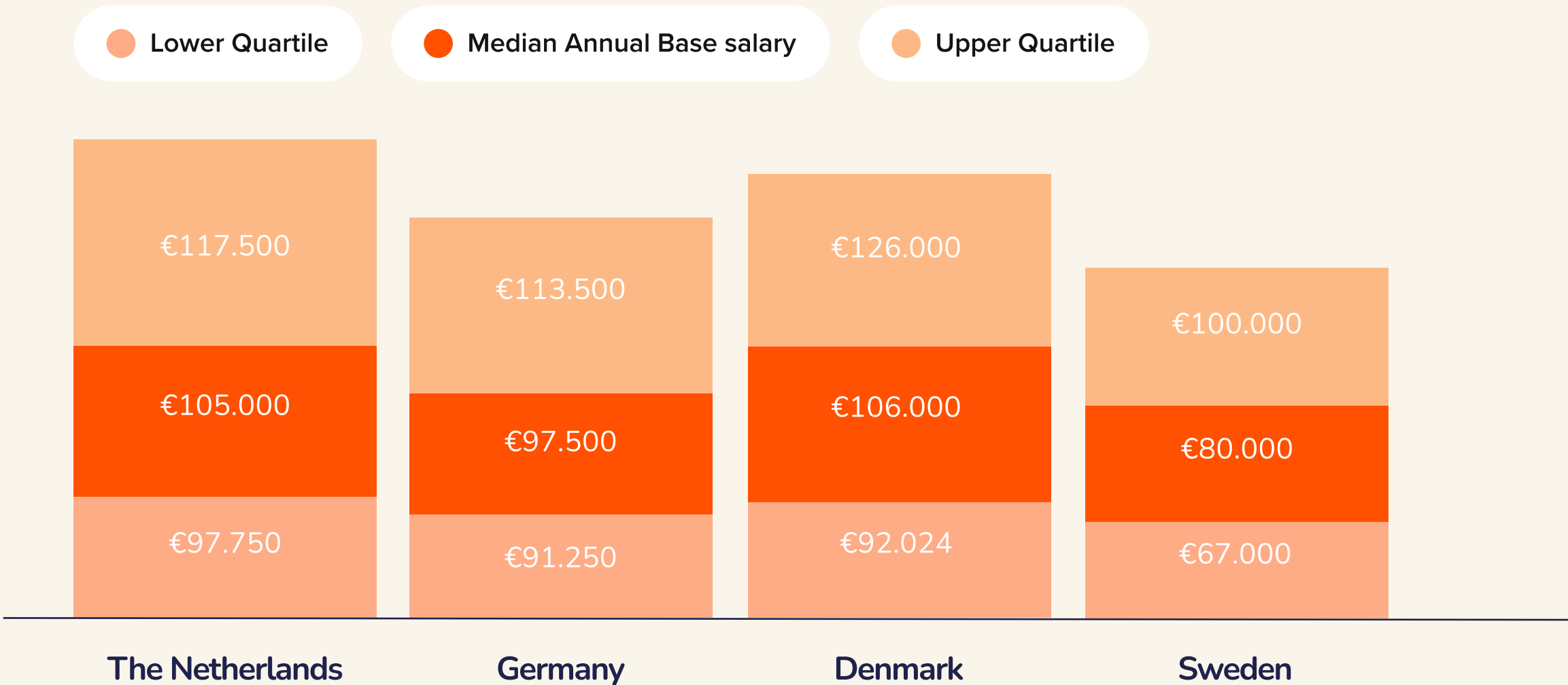
Board of Directors at Contenera

Head of Sales

By Country

A Head of Sales manages the day-to-day operations of the sales team, focusing on execution, performance, and team development.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
NL	€188.000	82%	75%
DE	€160.000	75%	25%
DK	€145.000	91%	29%
SE	€135.000	94%	*limited data

Key Insights:

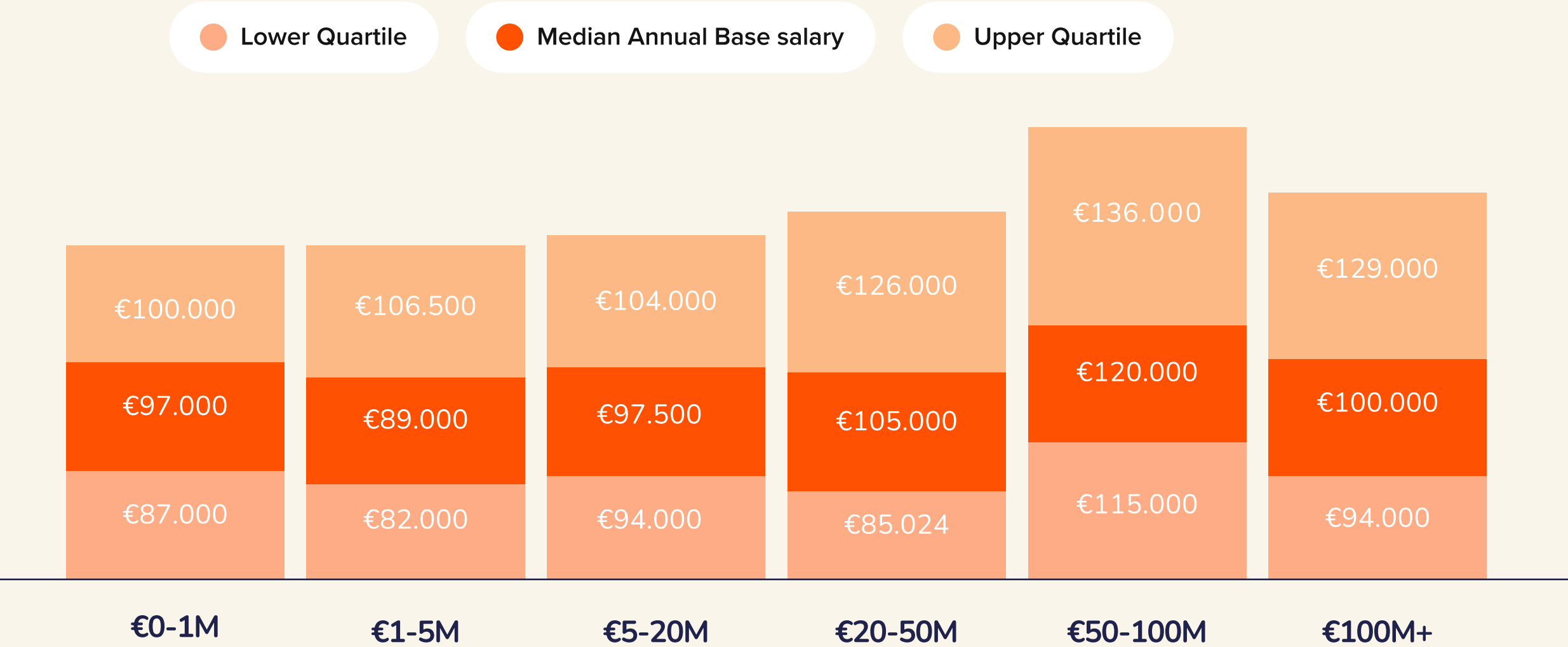
Swedish Heads of Sales achieve 94% OTE rates—the highest performance across all countries and roles. Netherlands offers the highest equity participation at 75% but lower achievement rates.

Head of Sales

By Revenue Stage

A Head of Sales manages the day-to-day operations of the sales team, focusing on execution, performance, and team development.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
€0-1M	€133.000	70%	88%
€1-5M	€130.000	80%	53%
€5-20M	€170.000	86%	58%
€20-50M	€175.000	91%	33%
€50-100M	€168.000	78%	*limited data
€100M+	€163.500	98%	50%

Key Insights:

Early-stage companies offer the highest equity participation at 88%, while showing the lowest achievement rates at 70%, possible due to unrealistic target-setting challenges during the start-up phase.

“

Setting Achievable Sales **Targets**

I always give the example of that Swedish pole vaulter, Duplantis. He has all the records in his name — 2.02m, 2.03m, 2.04m, 2.05m — and he beats each one by just one centimeter.

That's what you want to create in a sales team. You need to consistently adjust targets quarterly because the team needs to see that if we don't hit it because it wasn't realistic, adjustments are made.



- Tim van Gerrevink

Founder of Sales Sessions & The Scaler Company



Compensation & Salary Benchmarks for Account Executives

Only 41% of AEs receive equity

The market for AEs is moving toward more realistic compensation structures that prioritize achievable targets over inflated promises. With base salaries ranging from €45,000 to €150,000 and only 41% receiving equity compensation, there seems to be an opportunity for companies to hire exceptional talent by offering equity.

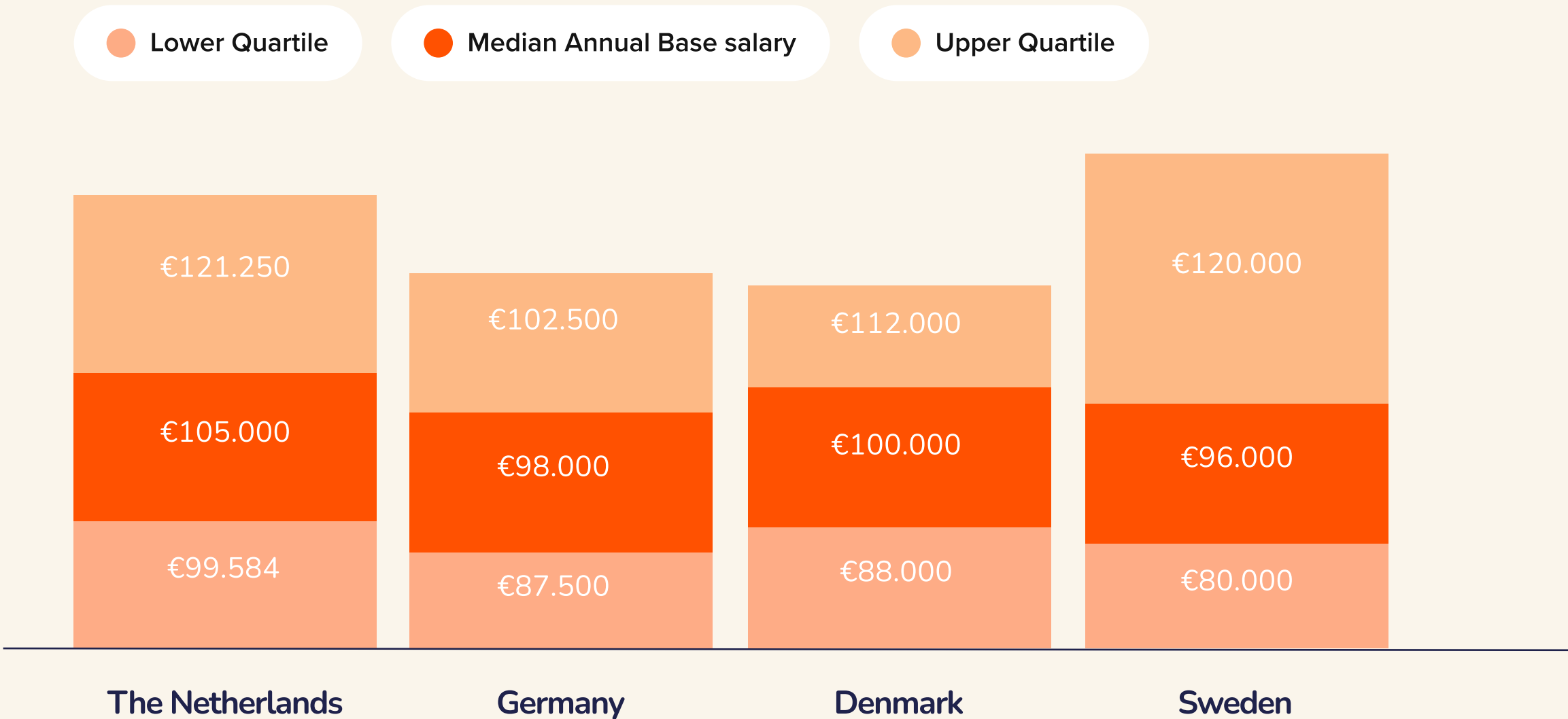
Companies are learning that sustainable performance comes from realistic OTE structures and proper enablement, not aggressive targets that demoralize teams.

Senior Account Executive

By Country

A seasoned sales professional responsible for closing high-value deals and managing complex client relationships.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
NL	€170.000	86%	45%
DE	€190.000	85%	42%
DK	€178.000	105%	36%
SE	€150.000	105%	30%

Key Insights:

The demand for great, senior AE's is growing. Especially in The Netherlands where the median salary has exceeded the salary levels in Germany.

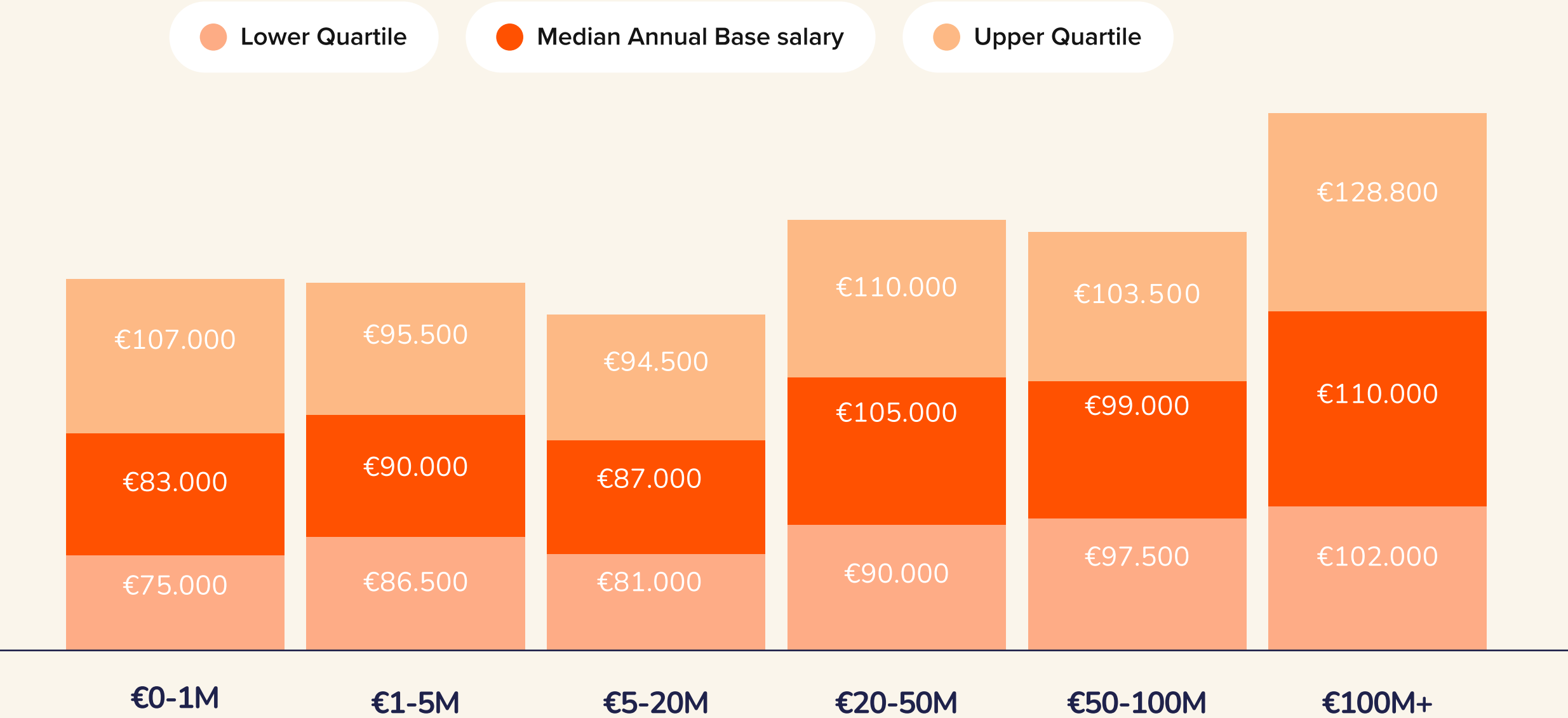


Senior Account Executive

By Revenue stage

A seasoned sales professional responsible for closing high-value deals and managing complex client relationships.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
€0-1M	€150.000	95%	50%
€1-5M	€163.000	95%	43%
€5-20M	€165.000	100%	41%
€20-50M	€120.000	85%	33%
€50-100M	€184.000	90%	30%
€100M+	€200.000	85%	38%

Key Insights:

Consistent with expectations, median salaries for closers rise with company size. The difference between early-stage and late stage tech packages is typically north of €30,000 in base salary.

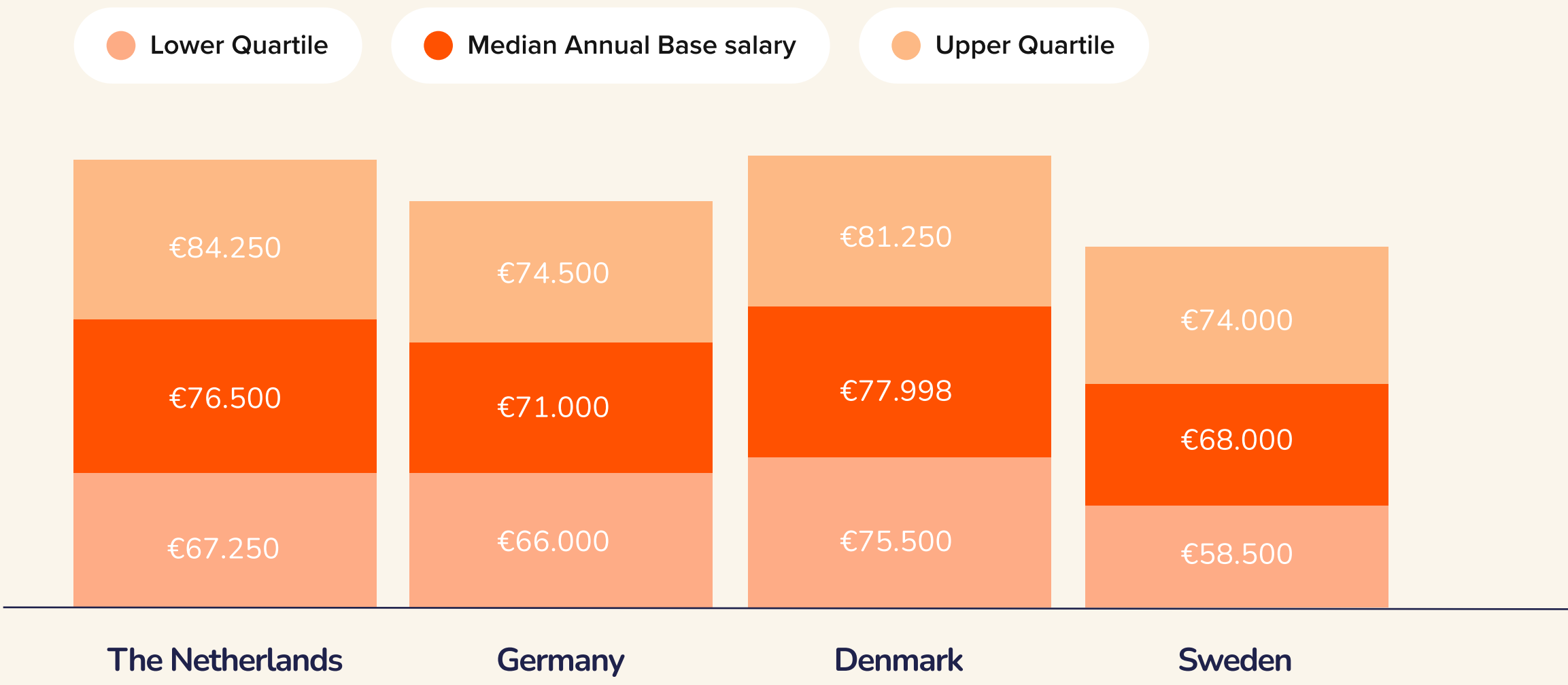


Account Executive

By Country

An Account Executive drives new business by managing the full sales cycle, from prospecting to closing deals, typically within a defined territory or segment.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
NL	€116.000	80%	41%
DE	€119.000	85%	40%
DK	€124.520	105%	30%
SE	€126.000	105%	25%

Key Insights:

Denmark pays the highest base salaries (€77,998 median) but offers low equity participation (30%). Denmark achieves 105% of their OTE targets, matching Sweden's performance rate but with significantly higher base compensation.

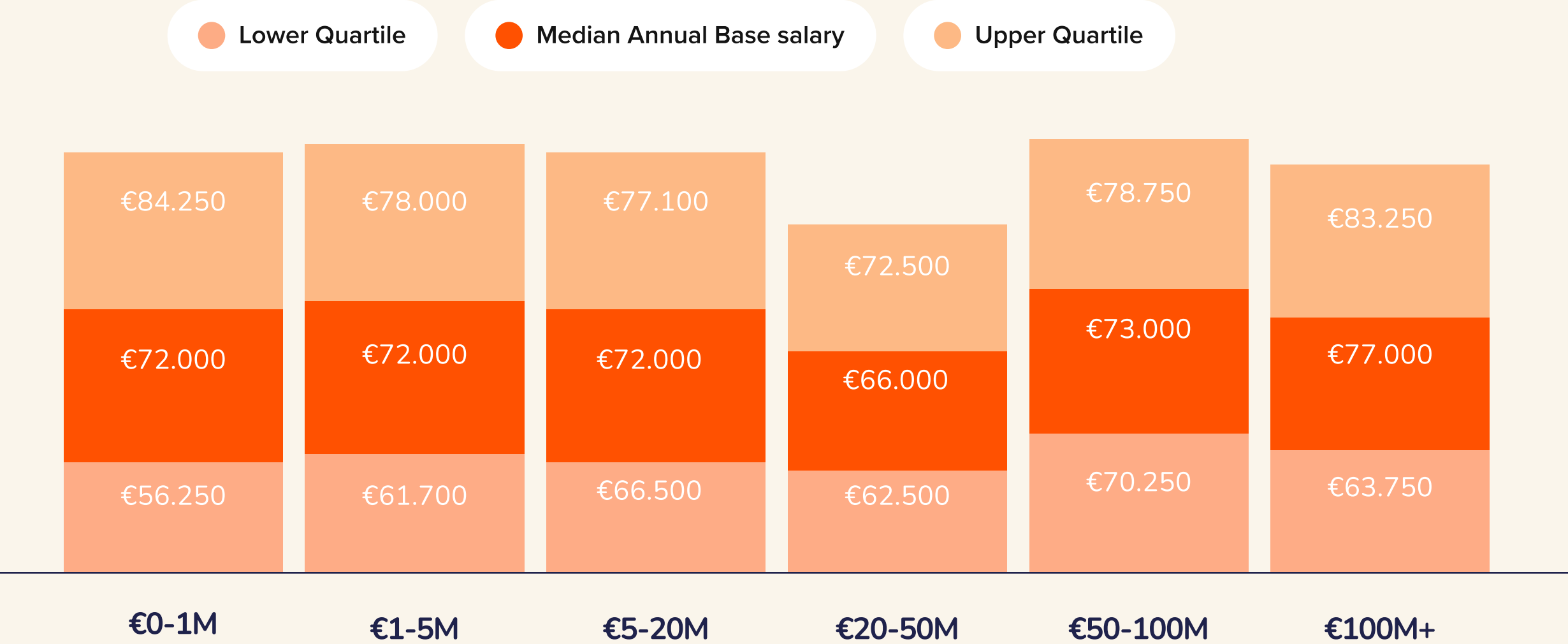


Account Executive

By Revenue stage

An Account Executive drives new business by managing the full sales cycle, from prospecting to closing deals, typically within a defined territory or segment.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
€0-1M	*limited data	95%	50%
€1-5M	€100.000	95%	43%
€5-20M	€120.000	100%	41%
€20-50M	€118.000	85%	33%
€50-100M	€140.000	90%	30%
€100M+	€125.000	85%	38%

Key Insights:

Junior and mid-level AE salary levels are remarkably similar, regardless of a company's revenue stage.



“

Balancing Compensation with Business Sustainability

It's crucial for sales leaders to have financial literacy and understand how a P&L works. I don't mind if someone makes 200% of their quota this quarter with accelerators, but we need to understand the bottom-line impact. Are we able to sustain paying this for everyone?

That's what leaders need to grasp—the true financial impact of compensation decisions.



- Koen Stam

Head of Benelux at Personio

Compensation & Salary Benchmarks for Business Development Representatives (BDR)



BDR Compensation

BDR base salaries across Europe range from €36,000 (lower quartile) to €61,250 (upper quartile), with only 8-22% receiving equity compensation. Our analysis reveals that 54% are compensated on activities (32% meetings booked, 22% demos booked) rather than booked revenue, while 28% receive revenue-based commissions.

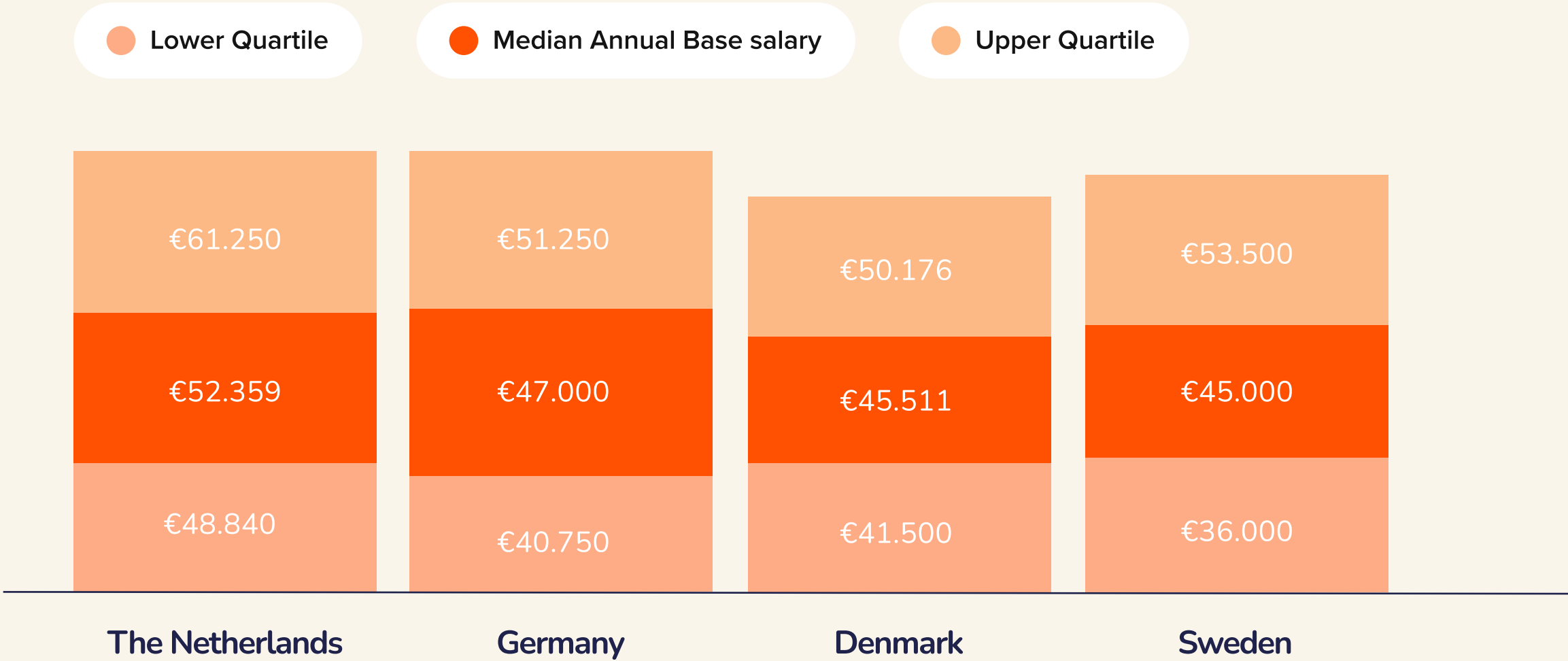
Companies are in a position where they need to balance long term effect and short term behaviour incentivization for BDRs.

Business Development Representative (BDR)

By Country

A BDR focuses on outbound prospecting and lead generation, qualifying potential customers for the sales team.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
NL	€85.000	72%	22%
DE	€68.000	85%	11%
DK	€70.000	105%	13%
SE	€55.000	105%	10%

Key Insights:

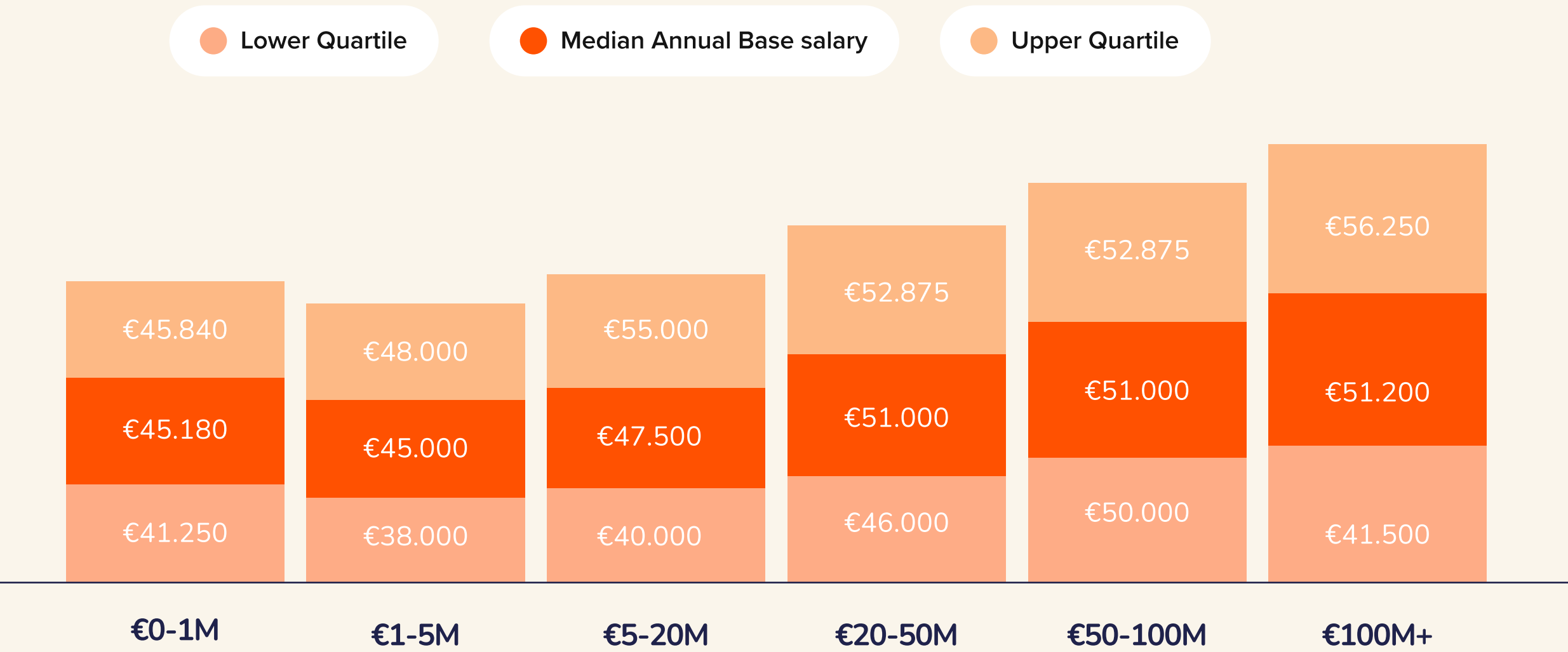
Many data points from the Netherlands reflect experienced BDRs, which contributes to the relatively higher salary levels. Notably, while the OTE is the highest in this market, actual attainment rates are the lowest.

Business Development Representative (BDR)

By Revenue Stage

A BDR focuses on outbound prospecting and lead generation, qualifying potential customers for the sales team.

Median Annual Base Salaries (Including Holiday Allowance)



OTE (On-Target Earnings)

The total compensation sales people earn when they hit 100% of their targets - base salary plus commission and bonuses.

	Median OTE	% of OTE achieved	Equity participation
€0-1M	€52.500	95%	18%
€1-5M	€65.000	95%	22%
€5-20M	€66.500	100%	12%
€20-50M	€74.000	95%	8%
€50-100M	*limited data	*limited data	*limited data
€100M+	€66.979	90%	10%

Key Insights:

Early-stage companies (€0-5M) show the highest equity participation (18-22%) while maintaining strong achievement rates (95%), demonstrating smart use of equity for talent retention when cash is constrained.

“

Importance of Country-Level Benchmarking

The salary bands we use in Germany look very different from the UK, and even between our Amsterdam and London offices there are meaningful differences. That's why we run country-level benchmarks, otherwise you simply can't attract the right people. And it's not just about hiring; it's about retention. In Benelux, where we've operated for five years, our average tenure is three to three-and-a-half years, which I'm proud of.



- Koen Stam

Head of Benelux at Personio

Market Insights & Strategic Recommendations

Insight #1 - European companies are winning with realistic quotas

Given the data from 339 sales professionals, we've partnered three critical insights with action steps that teams can take to react and adapt to changes in the SaaS market. Here is where we'd recommend starting out.

What we found: While global data suggests only 41-43% of software sales reps hit quota in 2025, our European sample tells a different story. Sales leaders achieve 85% of OTE on average, AEs achieve 86%, and BDRs achieve 84%, significantly outperforming global benchmarks. Most striking: Nordic BDRs and AEs achieve 105% of OTE on average.

Why it matters: Achievable quotas aren't just good for morale. They've been shown to drive sustainable performance across the board. The data shows clear regional patterns: Nordic companies excel at BDR enablement (105% achievement), DACH companies have mastered sales leadership processes (92% achievement), while Benelux markets show balanced performance across all roles. This suggests process maturity varies by role and region.

Rewarding Over-Performance

“I’m a huge fan of rewarding over performance and calculating targets. I prefer having lower OTE but higher kicker amounts because then you quickly figure out who your top performers are. What you can do is have annual targets with monthly targets in combination, where over performance is paid out on an annual basis, which leads to people staying longer. You connect over-performance more to the annual target while still having monthly payouts and targets.”



- Christian Reichert
Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) at Shiftmove

Action steps

Audit your current achievement rates by role and region.

If achievement is below 80%, consider recalibrating targets.

Implement quarterly check-ins to adjust quotas based on market conditions.

Use accelerators for over-achievement (105%+ scenarios) to reward top performers.

Insight #2 - Later stage companies under- utilize equity for talent retention

What we found: Early-stage companies show higher equity participation across all roles, but this drops significantly as companies scale.

Why it matters: European SaaS companies are systematically under-utilizing equity for talent retention, particularly for BDRs and AEs who drive the core business outcomes that create company value.

The Role of Equity in Employee Retention

“I don't think equity in and of itself is the key to making people happy within their role or within the company. What it does really well is attract people. People join a startup or scale-up because of the equity potential—because of the chance of a successful exit at some point. What it also does is this: if after a couple of years you're thinking about leaving, it can be something that helps you stay at the company longer because there's an impending exit, whether it's an acquisition or an IPO. That way, it can extend your tenure.

Equity won't make people stay if they're not happy. I've been at companies where I did receive equity, but the culture was so bad that I wanted to leave anyway. It didn't keep me there a second longer. Culture and product are what ultimately keep people as engaged as you want them to be.”



- Patrick Wittenberg
Vice President of Sales EMEA & APAC at Docker

Action steps

Track retention by equity participation - measure whether equity recipients stay longer and perform better.

Build equity education programs - many employees undervalue equity until properly explained.

Create equity refresh programs - prevent the "golden handcuffs" problem with ongoing grants for top performers.

Insight #3 - Revenue stage drives compensation more than role level

What we found: Compensation differences between revenue stages are substantial. Sales leaders see median base salaries rise from €120,000 at early-stage (€0-5M) to €150,000 at growth-stage (€20-50M), then stabilize at €135,000 for enterprise (€100M+). AEs show similar patterns: €75,000 at early-stage climbing to €85,000 at enterprise. BDRs scale from €45,000 at early-stage to €55,000 at enterprise.

Why it matters: Your compensation strategy must evolve as you scale. Companies using the same approach at €5M and €50M are either overpaying early or undercompeting later.

Target Setting for Early Stage Companies

“It’s very dependent on the phase of the company. One early-stage company I joined wanted 4x growth to reach €100k MRR in 18 months. I said we could do it in a year. But first I checked how feasible it was. The average deal value was €500. That’s very low. After interviewing customers, I realized they were completely wrongly positioned. They were selling an advanced weapon to simple soldiers who couldn’t operate it. We needed to target bigger companies who understood the impact. If that weapon could improve your ROAS by 5%, but your monthly ROAS is €1,000, that’s only €50. But if your ROAS is €100,000, or a million euros, that 5% improvement gets more interesting. We repositioned, raised the average deal value to €3,500, and hit €100k MRR in eight months.”



- Tim van Gerrevink
Founder of Sales Sessions & The Scaler Company

Action steps

€0-5M Stage: Emphasize equity upside and career growth potential; accept 85% OTE achievement as you build processes.

If €5-20M Stage: Begin increasing base salaries while maintaining strong equity participation; target 87% OTE achievement.

€20-50M Stage: Balance cash and equity strategically; expect equity participation to drop as cash increases.

€50M+ Stage: Leverage process maturity and employer brand to moderate compensation; expect 90%+ OTE achievement.

All Stages: Benchmark against companies at your revenue stage, not just your industry.

Insight #4 - AEs prioritize remote work over traditional perks

What we found: When we asked 100+ AEs across Europe what matters most beyond their paychecks, **28% prioritized remote/flexible work** above everything else, followed by car allowances (22%), equity (15%), pension/insurance (12%), and professional development (8%). However, regional preferences show stark differences. The Netherlands and Germany still value traditional car allowances heavily, while Nordic AEs prioritize long-term security through enhanced pensions and insurance.

Why it matters: The shift toward valuing flexibility (28% of responses) reflects a fundamental change in what top AE talent expects from employers in the post-pandemic era. Companies still offering only traditional benefit packages are missing what nearly one-third of their target talent actually wants.

Customize instead of **standardize**

Action steps

Audit your current benefits against the 28% flexibility demand - if you're not offering remote/hybrid options, you're missing nearly one-third of potential candidates.

Customize by region - maintain car allowances in The Netherlands/Germany, emphasize pension/security in Nordics.

Don't abandon equity - only 15% mentioned it unprompted, but it's often undervalued until explained properly.

Ask your team directly - these preferences vary by individual; survey your current AEs about what they actually want vs. what you're providing.

Insight #5 - Only 35% of BDRs prefer the traditional AE promotion

What we found: When we asked European BDRs about their career expectations, 42% want to specialize and advance within the BDR function rather than immediately jump to AE roles. Only 35% follow the traditional BDR-to-AE pipeline, while 23% are looking at sales operations, marketing, or other functions entirely.

Why it matters: Most companies assume all BDRs want to become AEs and structure their retention strategies around AE promotion timelines. But nearly half of BDRs actually want to become senior pipeline generation specialists.

The growth path of BDR

“We've hired a remarkable number of talented individuals who began their journey with us as BDRs. In the Benelux region alone, 7 out of our 9 top performers last quarter started in BDR roles. This highlights the importance of looking beyond the immediate role when hiring BDRs. They often grow into key contributors within the organisation.”



- Koen Stam
Head of Benelux at Personio

Action steps

Create senior BDR career tracks - titles like "Senior BDR," "Lead BDR," "GTM Engineer," or "BDR Team Lead" with clear progression and compensation increases.

Stop assuming everyone wants to be an AE - ask your BDRs directly what they want; 42% will surprise you with their answer.

Create Measure retention by career track. Track whether BDRs leaving for AE roles vs. those leaving for senior BDR roles elsewhere. You might discover you're losing talent unnecessarily.

Methodology & About Nobel Recruitment

Survey Methodology

This benchmark represents Nobel's commitment to providing actionable market intelligence to the European SaaS community. We believe that transparent compensation data benefits both companies and professionals by enabling informed decision-making and fair market practices.

The Nobel Recruitment SaaS Salary Benchmark 2026 is based on comprehensive primary research conducted across key European markets. Our methodology consists of:

339

total sales salaries collected from June 24th to August 2nd, 2025

138

Sales Leadership responses (CRO, VP Sales, Head of Sales)

150

survey responses combined with proprietary data from 189 candidate placements

111

Business Development Representative responses including BDR managers

Geographic coverage

across Benelux, DACH and Nordic markets

120

Account Executive responses across standard, senior, and enterprise levels

Company stage representation

from €0-5M revenue through €100M+ enterprise organizations

About Nobel Recruitment

Since 2017, Nobel Recruitment has meticulously built relationships with Europe's finest GTM talent, helping companies including Payhawk, Gainsight, Chargebee, and hundreds more build commercial teams that consistently smash targets. Our proposition is based on the following principles:



B2B Commercial Focus

With 10+ years of experience supporting B2B commercial teams, we have a deep appreciation of what makes a top hire.



Unparalleled Network

We are always in touch with top talent at any given time, through our expansive network, annual SaaS Awards, and exclusive networking events.



Continuous Hiring

To secure game-changing talent, you need to have started hiring 6 months ago. Luckily for you, we did.



No Mis-Hire Guarantee

We're so confident we can place the ideal candidate that if you're not happy, we'll hire a replacement at no extra cost.

Building winning B2B Sales Teams:

European Sales Salary Benchmarks 2026

Thanks! Questions?

Please contact our team at
info@nobelrecruitment.com.