

5th Chief Risk Officer Roundtable

Frankfurt am Main, Wednesday, 28 January 2026

Meeting summary

The Chief Risk Officers (CROs) of eleven financial institutions (see Annex) and senior staff from the ECB's Directorate General Macroeprudential Policy and Financial Stability and Directorate Risk Management participated in the fifth annual CRO Roundtable. This annual Roundtable aims at bringing together CROs from a diverse group of financial institutions, helping to inform the ECB's regular monitoring of systemic threats to the euro area financial system.

1. Key threats to euro area financial stability

The session opened with a tour de table during which the CROs outlined what they currently perceived to be the three main threats to euro area financial stability as well as one possible “blind spot” for policymakers¹. “Known unknowns” (i.e. risks that are identified, acknowledged, and understood to exist, but whose exact details, timing, likelihood, or impact are uncertain) dominated the CROs top threats to euro area financial stability: geopolitical risks, artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber security threats. Geopolitical risks were considered a top threat to euro area financial stability by every CRO. They saw the pace, speed and uncertainty of geopolitical change as a fault line under the financial system, and one that is highly challenging to predict, price or to risk manage. Many saw AI as a top threat to euro area financial stability given the high weight of technology companies in global equity indexes, the use of AI in fraud, cyber-attacks and the spread of misinformation, as well as the potential for AI-led innovations to disrupt the financial sector. Related to their perception of an elevated level of geopolitical tensions and advances in AI, many CROs noted an increase in the frequency and sophistication of cyber security threats. Several CROs described themselves as participants in a costly cyber-arms race with potential attackers, articulated by one participant as “*running to stand still*”. Finally, some CROs flagged low structural economic growth as an area of concern, not least in combination with high (public) debt in a few countries. Private markets featured in the discussion of top threats, as well as during the second session (see below). Another “known unknown” featured in the discussion on blind spots: some CROs saw climate risks as a potential blind spot for policy makers. Those CROs considered the de-prioritisation of climate risks in the global policy agenda as increasing the likelihood of a disorderly transition

2. Private markets: how translatable are risks in the U.S. to the euro area?

Two introductory presentations by CROs compared private credit markets in the U.S. and Europe, offering insights from their experiences as investors in private credit and noting the underwriting criteria specific to insurance firms.

While the size of European private markets remains significantly smaller than those in the U.S., the CROs observed stronger growth in Europe, with some expressing concern that this growth was coming late in the cycle. Some CROs noted that certain risk factors prevalent in the U.S. are less relevant in Europe. For instance, leveraged private credit funds are less prevalent in Europe, and few private market investors in Europe have exposures to insurance firms, resulting in lower interconnectedness between these sectors. Several CROs underscored the potential for private markets to channel savings—such as retirement funds—toward Europe's investment needs, not least in infrastructures and defence.

The CROs emphasised that the term “private markets” encompasses a diverse range of sub-asset classes with distinct risk characteristics. This diversity, they argued, calls for a more granular approach to risk management, which should also be reflected in regulatory capital requirements and stress testing frameworks. The CROs highlighted the need for tailored frameworks to manage private equity and private credit investments, particularly when both asset classes are held within the same institution

¹ “Blind spots” refer to sources of risk that CROs perceive policymakers might either be unaware of, might not be focused on, or might not have full visibility of.

Annex: List of participating institutions

Aegon

AXA

Banco BPM

Banco Santander

Crédit Agricole

DWS Group

European Commodity Clearing

Generali

Hannover Re

KBC Group

Tikehau Capital