

# The Procurement Imperative

A view from the C-suite in Europe

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**In 2026 procurement remains central to business decision-making. But the function is at a crossroads. Procurement teams are being asked to do more: cut costs, manage disruption and drive digital change. But confidence in their ability to deliver on that broader mandate, and in its alignment with wider corporate strategy, is slipping.**

The latest iteration of Economist Enterprise's research takes the pulse of the C-suite on procurement's evolving role, tracking its transformation over the past five years. The findings are anchored in a survey of 2,648 C-suite executives across Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, the Nordics and North America. **Within Europe, 604 executives were surveyed in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.**

## Artificial intelligence now shapes procurement's agenda

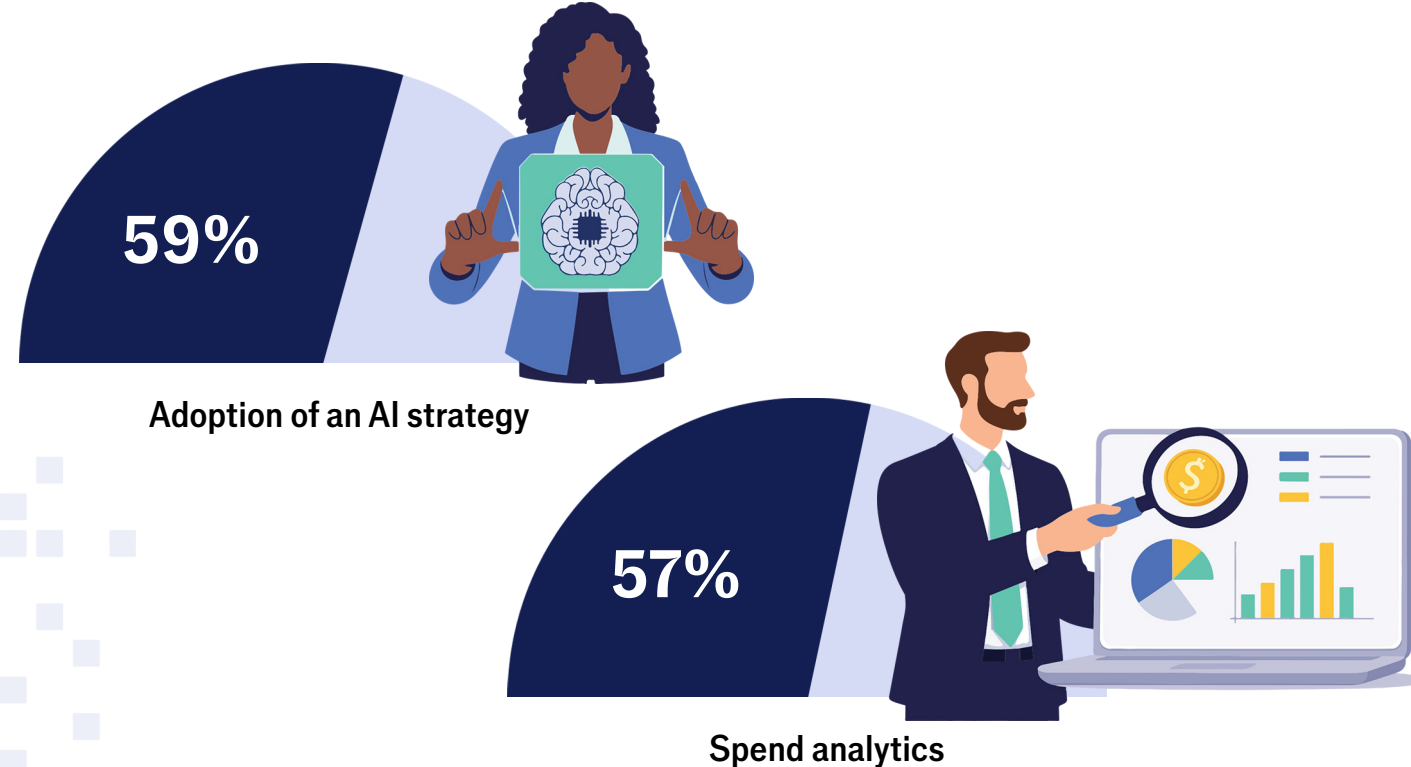
Executives in Europe increasingly see procurement as a data-led function, with digital transformation topping procurement's short-term priorities.

### Top short-term strategic priorities for procurement in Europe



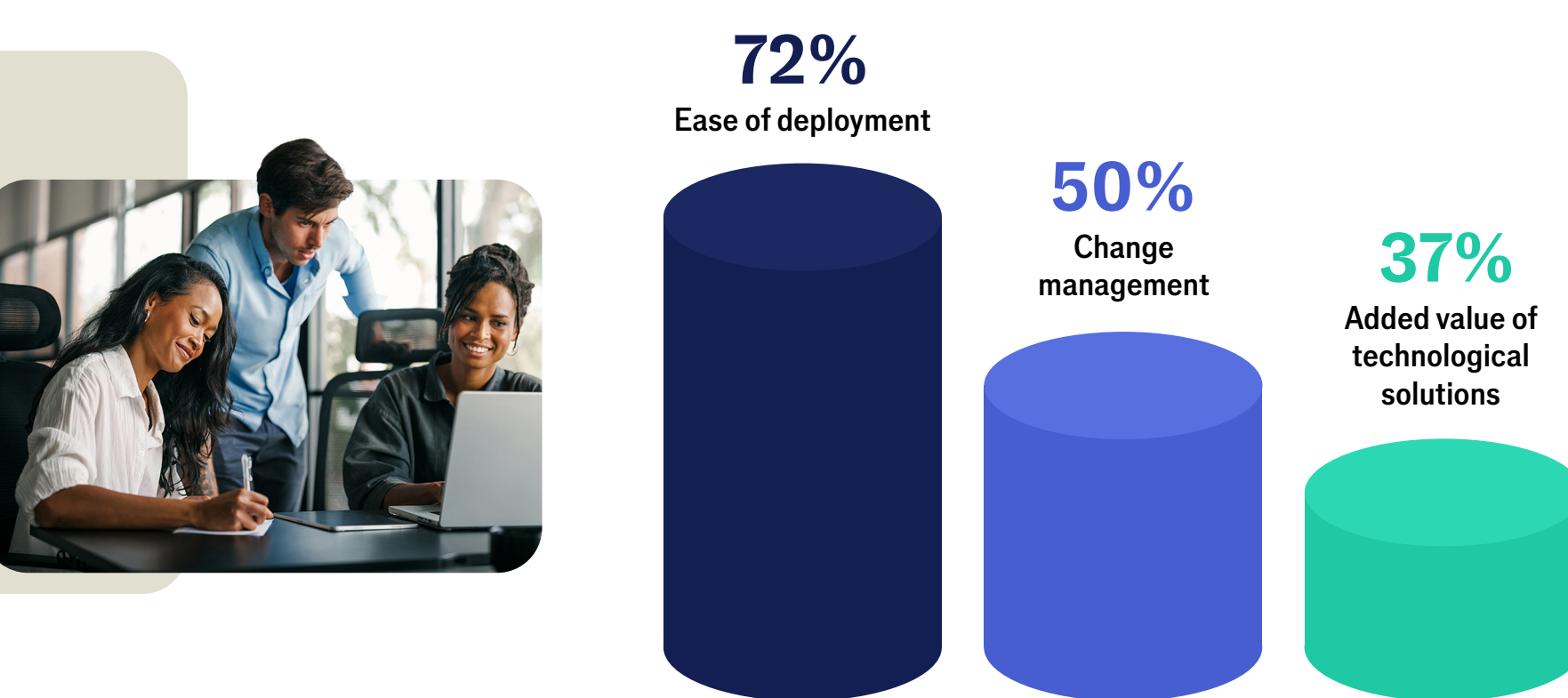
AI sits at the centre of this shift. The adoption of AI strategies and spend analytics are driving digital transformation, and agentic AI is emerging as the technology most likely to shape procurement's future in Europe.

### Top drivers of digital transformation in procurement in Europe



But AI adoption has so far yielded mixed results and faces technical obstacles.

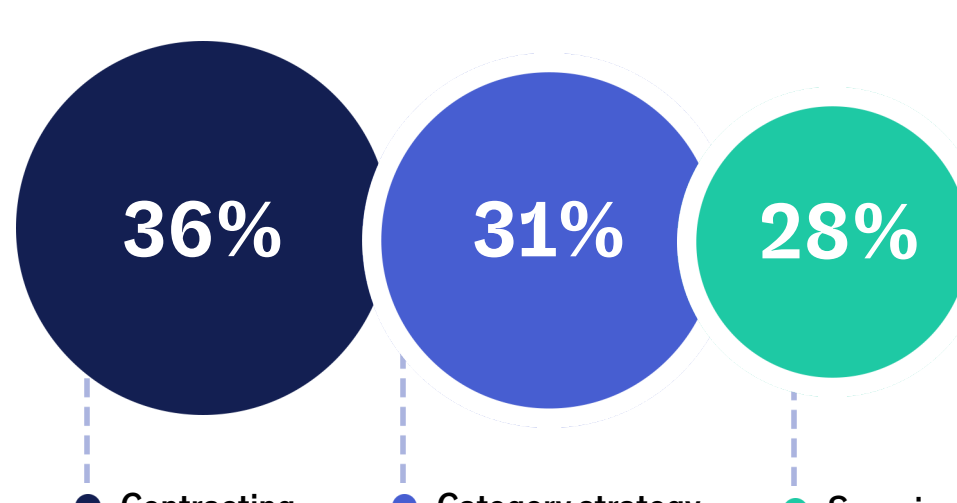
### Top barriers to adopting or scaling AI in Europe



## Procurement is aiming AI at its biggest bottlenecks

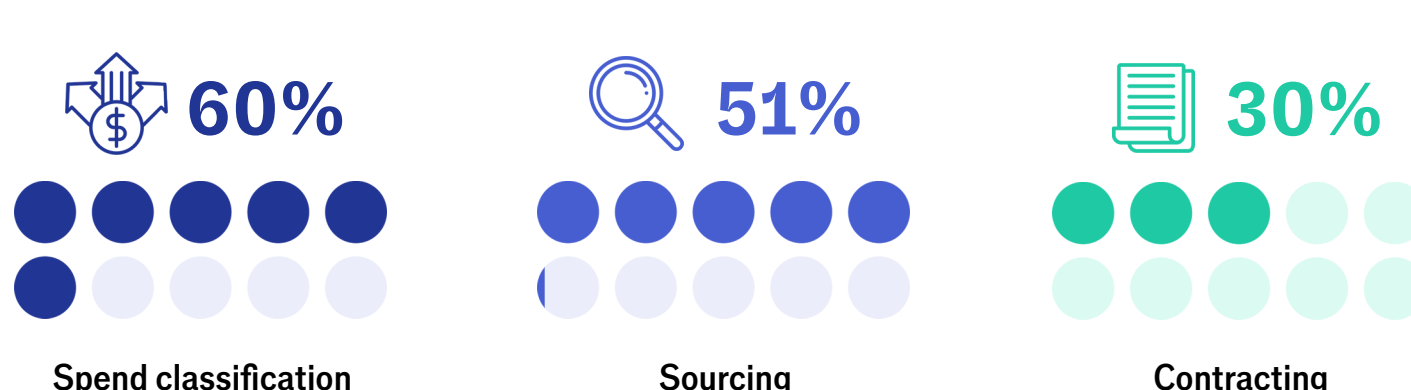
Even as AI climbs the agenda, several core processes remain stubborn sources of delay.

### Areas experiencing the biggest delays in procurement processes in Europe



Executives in Europe are pointing AI at these same pain points. The outlier is spend classification, which owes its prominence less to delay than to the data-led ambition behind digital transformation—echoing the strength of spend analytics as a driver above.

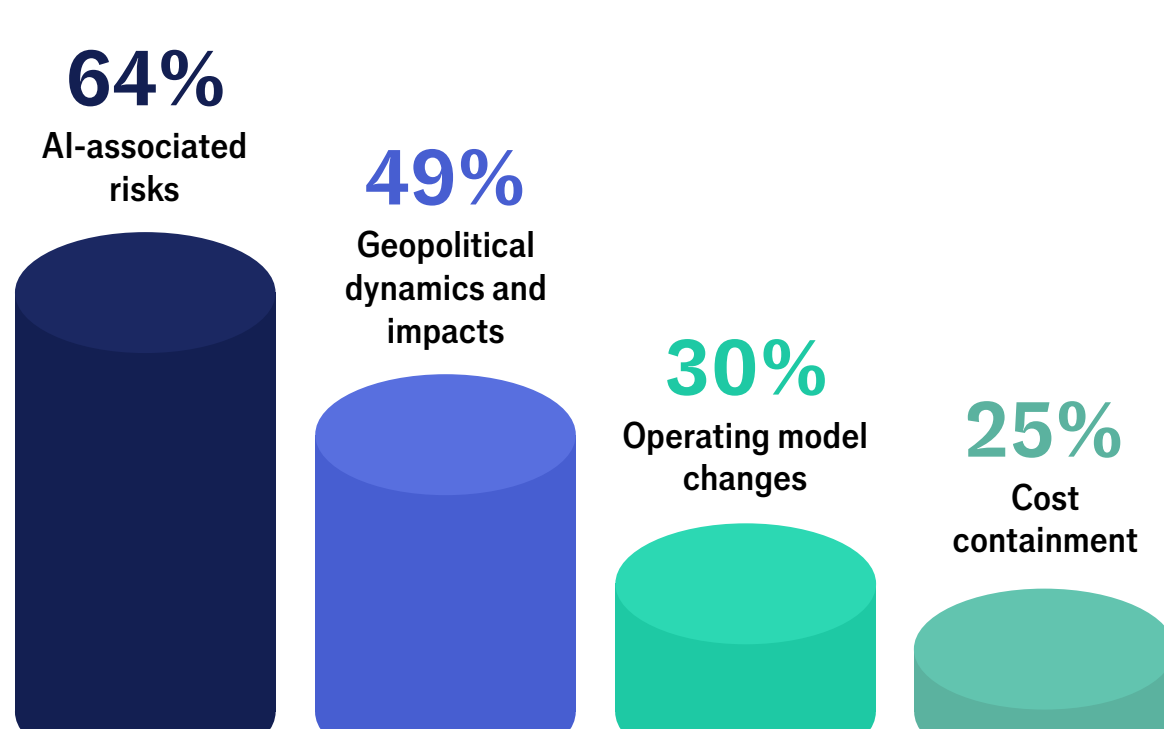
### Procurement processes to be improved through AI over the next 12 to 18 months in Europe



## Europe is preparing for AI-driven change

European executives see AI as both an opportunity and a source of risk. As procurement teams adopt new technologies and seek to automate more processes, leaders are focusing less on short-term cost pressures and more on how their organisations will adapt.

### Top short-term priorities for organisational risk in Europe



Find out more about how procurement is changing—and what it means for your organisation—in our [full analysis](#).

