



# What's ahead for procurement leaders in financial services in 2026

As 2026 approaches, financial services procurement faces a rapidly shifting landscape defined by structural transformation, advanced AI adoption, and a new regulatory paradigm in Europe. What should procurement leaders prioritise to unlock value and manage risk in a sector under pressure to deliver both resilience and innovation?

## A new era of transformation and opportunity

In the coming year, procurement leaders in financial services will operate in an environment shaped by significant cost-out programmes, technology-driven change, and a renewed focus on risk and resilience.

Across Europe and globally, several major financial institutions are targeting cost savings of up to £2 billion by 2026, signalling a clear shift toward deep structural transformation and sustainable margin improvement. However, our [recent survey of CPOs and CFOs on indirect spend](#) revealed that only 1 in 5 CPOs and CFOs felt that they have full visibility of their indirect spend, pointing to challenges that could get in the way of these cost-out ambitions.

But the role of Procurement is evolving fast. When empowered by leadership to operate as strategic enablers of business objectives, Procurement becomes integral to enterprise-wide transformation, digital initiatives, and risk management.

## Three major trends shaping the financial services procurement agenda



### 1. Large-scale cost-out and transformation

Large transformation programmes will dominate the 2026 agenda, with Procurement leading the charge to reshape sourcing models for efficiency and agility. One of the sector's most significant opportunities is the evolution from reactive cost control to strategic value management. Procurement teams that break down silos, improve spend visibility, and forge stronger links with Finance will unlock untapped savings and accelerate value creation. The focus for 2026 is shifting from one-off savings to supplier-enabled innovation and total cost-of-ownership optimisation.

Moreover, as financial services organisations pursue automation and digitalisation, Procurement's remit is expanding beyond the financial to include operational flexibility and alignment with broader digital transformation goals.



### 2. M&A momentum and synergy realisation

Mergers and acquisitions continue at pace, with 784 European financial services deals recorded in 2024 and sustained activity expected into 2025. Capturing value from post-M&A integration remains a major, and often underexploited, lever.

By acting as the connective tissue between merging entities, Procurement leaders can drive post-merger integration by realising synergies, harmonising supplier portfolios, and leveraging combined buying power. Early investment in robust governance frameworks and shared systems – think integration playbooks and shared data models – will be a key differentiator.



### 3. AI-enabled procurement at scale

2026 will mark the shift from AI experimentation to enterprise-scale deployment. Financial institutions are embedding AI across category management, supplier analytics, and third-party risk monitoring. Leading procurement functions are using AI to improve spend intelligence, contract governance, and predictive risk management, positioning themselves as efficiency drivers and guardians of resilience in an increasingly data-driven environment. The competitive edge will come from the ability to harness data to automate routine processes and generate real-time insights that inform both tactical and strategic decision-making.

# 2026 also brings heightened risk

While transformation and innovation will dominate the agenda in 2026, the year will also bring a sharper focus on regulatory, geopolitical, and operational risk. As financial institutions push harder on digitalisation and cost transformation, procurement leaders must ensure that resilience and compliance evolve at the same pace.

## Resilience amid regulation: The impact of DORA

2026 sees the first full oversight cycle for the EU Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA), fundamentally changing how institutions manage ICT and third-party risk. Procurement faces heightened regulatory accountability for enforcing supplier compliance, audit rights, and resilience testing across the supply base. Smaller suppliers may struggle to meet these standards, likely driving further consolidation of third-party ecosystems. While this shift may strengthen resilience in the short term, it also increases concentration risk. For procurement leaders, the upcoming challenge will be balancing compliance with innovation and competitiveness.

Beyond DORA, ongoing volatility – from geopolitical disruption to economic uncertainty and evolving regulation – will keep risk firmly at the top of the procurement agenda.

## Investing in risk management is key

Procurement teams will increasingly invest in predictive analytics and machine learning to detect, assess, and mitigate supplier risk. Access to real-time data will enable faster, risk-informed decisions and a stronger supply chain, with Procurement shifting from reactive compliance to proactive, predictive resilience.

Leaders investing in digital infrastructure, cross-functional governance, and collaborative supplier platforms will be best placed to respond dynamically and maintain business continuity through future disruptions.

## The way forward: priorities for procurement leaders

As 2026 approaches, procurement leaders in financial services should focus on three imperatives:

1

Drive cost transformation and margin improvement through advanced sourcing, AI adoption, and strategic supplier relationships.

2

Prioritise post-M&A value creation by investing early in integration, harmonisation, and synergy capture.

3

Strengthen risk and resilience by embedding digital tools, data-driven risk management, and rigorous supplier oversight into procurement processes.

Those who take a proactive, innovation-driven approach – supported by technology and deep collaboration across the enterprise – will position procurement as a true value engine for the business, delivering both resilience and a competitive edge in 2026 and beyond.

## Ready to accelerate your procurement transformation?

Find out how leading financial services organisations are unlocking value and building resilience with Efficio.

[Learn more](#)

## Experts



**Jonathan Wilson**

Principal – Financial Services  
[jonathan.wilson@efficioconsulting.com](mailto:jonathan.wilson@efficioconsulting.com)



**Peter Davison**

Principal – Financial Services  
[peter.davison@efficioconsulting.com](mailto:peter.davison@efficioconsulting.com)

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## About Efficio

Efficio is a global leader in procurement and supply chain management and transformation. With a singular focus in this space, we specialise in supporting businesses to get ahead of change – combining strategic insight with hands-on support to help you navigate challenges with confidence. Whether it's adapting to cost pressures, supply chain disruptions, or regulatory shifts, our expertise ensures that organisations remain ahead of the curve.

We partner with blue-chip multinationals, private equity firms and their portfolio companies, and public sector and government organisations worldwide. We help reduce costs and improve margins, build and upskill teams, strengthen supply chain resilience, maximise sustainability improvements, and more.

Our consultants don't just advise from a distance – we work alongside your in-house team to identify, deliver, and sustain improvements, helping you unlock long-term value and elevate procurement's impact across the business.

Learn more about how we can help you achieve your business goals at [efficioconsulting.com](https://www.efficioconsulting.com).

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