

Thoughtworks Global CIO Survey 2026: Who governs enterprise AI?

Germany: Workforce accountability meets ownership questions

Executive summary

Germany's CIOs report a combination of workforce accountability and organizational ownership challenges. Workforce disruption is the most frequently cited outcome for which German CIOs say they are personally accountable without full authority to influence it. At the same time, fragmented ownership and unclear IT-business mandates feature prominently among barriers to scaling AI.

Key findings

Workforce disruption sits high on the accountability agenda. 41% of German CIOs cite workforce disruption as an outcome they are personally accountable for but cannot fully influence, the highest response within Germany. Brand or reputational damage follows at 40%.

Ownership questions feature strongly among scaling challenges. Cybersecurity is cited by 35%, fragmented ownership across business units by 31% and a lack of clear ownership or mandate between IT and business units by 30%.

CAIOs are widespread, but the relationship with technology leadership varies. 76% report that a CAIO has been hired. Among CIOs describing the relationship, 39% say the CAIO operates or will operate independently with equal or greater enterprise influence, 30% cite friction or unclear boundaries and 29% describe the CAIO as an extension of CIO/CTO strategy.

Organizations are considering several structural responses. 54% are embedding technology leads in business units, 51% are expanding the CIO's enterprise-wide AI role and 41% identify hiring a CAIO among actions taken or planned, compared with 27% globally.

What this suggests

Germany's findings bring together two pressures: CIOs report responsibility for workforce outcomes they cannot fully influence, while AI ownership remains spread across business and technology leadership. That makes clear decision rights and working relationships especially important as organizations scale AI.