

Adeptis

2026 Executive Mandate Framework

Benchmarking CISO Authority in the Age
of Active Enforcement (UK & France)



Executive Summary

As of Q4 2025, the regulatory landscape in the UK and France has shifted fundamentally. With NIS2 enforcement in France and the UK Cyber Security and Resilience Bill active, "Plausible Deniability" is no longer a legal defense for Boards.

Today, a CISO search that fails isn't usually due to a lack of candidates it's due to a Mandate Mismatch. High-caliber leaders are refusing roles where the accountability outweighs the authority.

Structural Independence (The Reporting Line)

Historically, 70% of CISOs reported to the CIO. In 2026, this is a "Failed Structure."

Auditors now view the CIO/CISO relationship as a conflict of interest. You cannot have the "Builder" (IT) also acting as the "Inspector" (Security). The CIO is incentivised by speed and uptime; the CISO is incentivised by integrity and risk control.

To be effective, the CISO must have a direct line to the CEO or a designated Board Risk Member.

Benchmarking Question: *Does your CISO have the authority to halt a digital rollout if security milestones are missed?*

The Power of Veto (Supply Chain Integrity)

Under the 2026 "Cybersecurity Act 2," companies are liable for the security of their "High-Risk Suppliers"

The CISO must have contractual veto power. If a SaaS provider or infrastructure partner doesn't meet the resilience standard, the CISO should be able to block the procurement.

Benchmarking Question: *Is your CISO's signature required on all major ICT procurement contracts?*

The "Officer" Status (Personal Liability & Shielding)

In 2026, CISOs are being held personally accountable for "Gross Negligence" in breach scenarios.

You cannot hire a top-tier CISO on a standard "Managerial" contract. They require:

- **D&O Insurance:** Explicit naming in the policy.
- **Indemnity Clauses:** Protection against regulatory fines where "best effort" was documented.
- **Legal Counsel:** Access to independent legal advice paid for by the firm in the event of an investigation.

Benchmarking Question: *Is your CISO contractually protected in the same way your CFO is?* Conduct a legal review of the CISO's contract to ensure it reflects their status as a "Company Officer" rather than a "Manager

THE ADEPTIS "MANDATE MATURITY" SCALE

Level	Maturity Label	Characteristics	Compensation (UK/FR)
Level 1	Tactical	Reports to IT; Budget is a sub-set of IT; No Board access.	£120k / €110k
Level 2	Operational	Reports to COO/CFO; Separate budget; Quarterly Board updates.	£160k / €150k
Level 3	Strategic	Reports to CEO; Veto power on vendors; Personal liability protection.	£220k+ / €200k+
Level 4	Resilience Officer	Seat on the Board; Directs Group Risk; Full P&L for Cyber.	£300k+ / €280k+

MARKET SIGNALS: UK VS. FRANCE

France (The "ANSSI" Factor): French firms are prioritizing "Sovereign Talent" leaders who can navigate the strict local requirements of the SecNumCloud and NIS2.

UK (The "Resilience" Factor): UK firms are focusing on "Operational Continuity." We see a high demand for CISOs with a background in Crisis Management and Financial Services (DORA).

How Adeptis Group Helps

An executive search for a CISO without a defined mandate is a waste of time and capital. Before you go to market, ensure your "Pillars" are documented.

We don't just find the candidate; we facilitate the Mandate Design. We ensure that by the time we present a shortlist, your organization is structured to attract the top 1% of the market.

Get in Touch with Rea!



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Connecting Talent, Securing the Future

