From Oversight to Foresight:

How Risk Committees Are Redefining Board Agendas Across Türkiye and EMEA

In 2026, the business environment across Türkiye and the broader EMEA region is being reshaped by intensifying geopolitical tensions, macroeconomic volatility, and rapid technological transformation. These forces are not only increasing the complexity of risk itself, but also fundamentally changing its human dimension - how it is perceived, interpreted, and acted upon by leadership teams.

Against this backdrop, as Odgers Türkiye, we engaged in a series of in-depth discussions with chairpersons, board members, and former CEOs who collectively oversee diverse conglomerates, listed entities, and multi-sector organizations with significant regional and global footprints. While these conversations reflect distinct governance environments, sectoral realities, and ownership structures, a clear and compelling convergence emerged across all interviews. Despite the diversity of these leadership perspectives, this strong consensus reveals a fundamental redefinition of what risk represents in today's operating environment - making these insights particularly vital for strategic planning.

These conversations consistently highlight that risk management has fundamentally transitioned from a protective control function into a core strategic capability that directly shapes decision quality, speed, and adaptability.

Across our dialogues, several key strategic patterns emerged:

- Risk as a Strategic Lever: Organizations are shifting from defensive avoidance toward calibrated risk-taking as a deliberate source of competitive advantage.
- Forward-Looking Integration: Risk management is no longer a retrospective reporting exercise, but an active, forward-looking input into transformation agendas and strategic architecture.
- Systemic Interdependence: Geopolitical, technological, and socio-economic risks are deeply intertwined. Managing them requires an integrated governance framework rather than siloed functional responses.
- Data-Driven Visibility: Real-time analytics and predictive technology are being integrated into risk frameworks, reshaping how organizations anticipate and interpret uncertainty.
- Ownership & Resilience: Governance architectures that combine formal discipline with the long-term orientation of ownership-driven structures demonstrate stronger performance sustainability.

Ultimately, this alignment brings the entire discussion to a single critical outcome: **talent and leadership capability**. Leadership mindset, adaptive intelligence, decentralized decision-making, and cross-functional coordination stand out as the defining variables in risk outcomes.

Organizations that institutionalize agility and distributed decision rights prove significantly more resilient under stress.

Consequently, the role of boards, governance bodies, and risk committees is evolving. Rather than operating as retrospective oversight bodies, risk committees are reframing their mandate into strategically embedded, forward-looking mechanisms. Boards that successfully integrate risk and talent into a single governance lens are far better equipped to convert uncertainty into sustained competitive advantage.

In an increasingly unstable and interconnected world, the ultimate question is no longer whether organizations can identify risk, but whether they have the right people, capabilities, and leadership mindset to respond to it.

A shift toward continuous, real-time risk engagement

One of the most pronounced changes is the transition from periodic risk reviews to continuous, high-frequency engagement. Historically, risk inventories were revisited annually as part of governance cycles. Today, this cadence has become insufficient. Particularly in diversified group structures, risk tracking has shifted toward a more dynamic and layered model, where both parent companies and subsidiaries operate with continuously updated and synchronized frameworks.

Cihan Elbirlik, third-generation shareholder and Chairman of a globally integrated industrial group with an extensive international footprint across multiple export markets and cross-border investments – including long-standing strategic partnerships with Japanese shareholders – overseeing Automotive Supply, Battery Technologies, Industrial Manufacturing, Mobility Solutions, and Energy Storage sectors, highlights how macro topics such as national competitiveness have moved from annual assessments to near-daily board-level discussions, driven by the speed and volatility of geopolitical and economic developments. This evolution reflects not only increased frequency, but a deeper shift in mindset: risk is no longer treated as a static inventory, but as a continuously evolving system requiring constant recalibration.

Reinforcing this, Gür Çağdaş, Vice Chairman of a diversified conglomerate and Chairman of its Risk Committee - playing a pivotal role in enterprise-wide governance, capital allocation discipline, and forward-looking risk orchestration across Construction, Automotive, Hospitality, Retail, Media, Real Estate Development, and Technology sectors - underlines that in an environment shaped by geopolitical fragmentation and tighter financial conditions, the critical differentiator is no longer the identification of risk itself, but the organization’s ability to translate real-time risk insights into timely and high-quality decisions.

At a broader level, Cansen Başaran-Symes, Chair of Allianz Türkiye and former president of TÜSİAD - with extensive board-level experience spanning insurance, asset management,

financial services, and audit & advisory, as well as cross-sector governance roles in corporate sustainability, risk, and strategic transformation - situates this transformation within a broader polycrisis architecture, where geopolitical volatility, macroeconomic instability, climate disruption, technological acceleration, and socio-economic fragility are no longer independent domains but deeply interdependent systems producing compounding effects.

In her framing, this environment fundamentally challenges the classical assumption that risk can be decomposed into discrete categories. Instead, risk behaves as a networked system where shocks propagate across domains. In such a system, anticipation becomes more important than prediction, and prevention becomes more valuable than reaction. Risk management therefore evolves from a reporting function into a systemic sensing and shaping capability, embedded directly into strategic leadership.

From structure to system: embedding risk across the organization

Beyond frequency, a deeper structural shift is underway: risk governance is becoming embedded across organizational layers. Risk management is increasingly deployed from parent companies down to subsidiaries and ventures, with each board retaining ownership while alignment is maintained through consolidated frameworks. This distributed model strengthens both accountability and responsiveness, while enabling faster escalation of emerging risks.

A key enabler of this transformation is the evolving role of finance leadership. CFOs are no longer limited to reporting functions; they are now active participants in interpreting risk and shaping responses alongside boards. Cihan Elbirlik notes that this shift has resulted in a much closer and more continuous interaction between CFOs and boards, extending governance beyond formal meetings into ongoing, real-time dialogue and rapid-response decision-making cycles.

In parallel, Çağdaş emphasizes that effective risk management can no longer operate as a standalone control layer. Instead, it must be structurally embedded into strategic planning processes, supported by reliable data, and translated into coordinated decisions across the organization.

At this point, Başaran-Symes adds an additional structural lens: in interconnected systems, governance is no longer only about structure, but about synchronization

capability across the entire organizational ecosystem. The speed of change requires organizations not only to detect risk but to propagate understanding of risk across layers at the same speed at which it emerges. This introduces a new governance requirement: distributed cognitive alignment.

Reframing risk: from defensive control to strategic leverage

Perhaps the most significant transformation is conceptual. Serdar Çaloğlu, Board Member across various companies and former Group CEO of a diversified conglomerate - with extensive leadership experience spanning Telecommunications, Media, Financial Services, Energy, and Industrial Sectors - emphasizes that risk management has moved far beyond its traditional protective role: “Risk management today is not only a protective function, but also a key driver of long-term value creation.”

This shift is reflected in how leading organizations now approach strategic decisions. Rather than avoiding risk, boards increasingly use risk intelligence to inform timing, capital allocation, and market positioning. Expanding on this perspective, Gür Çağdaş highlights that risk committees are now expected not only to mitigate downside exposure, but also to define risk appetite explicitly - determining which risks should be taken, under what conditions, and in alignment with growth objectives. This marks a clear transition from risk avoidance toward calibrated risk-taking as a source of competitive advantage. In practice, this includes early exits from sectors based on geopolitical foresight, proactive diversification of supply chains ahead of disruption, and early positioning on ESG-related transformation trends.

However, experience also highlights a persistent challenge: misinterpreting temporary volatility as structural change. This reinforces the growing importance of scenario-based thinking and disciplined judgment at board level. From a forward-looking perspective, Cansen Başaran further frames risk as a strategic input for transformation rather than merely a factor to be mitigated, underscoring its role in shaping future value creation.

An expanding and increasingly interconnected risk landscape

The scope of risk committees has broadened significantly. Geopolitical developments now directly affect core business variables such as access to materials, supply chain continuity, and financing conditions, elevating previously operational issues to board-level priorities.

At the same time, risks are no longer independent variables. As emphasized by Cansen Başaran, geopolitical, technological, and socio-economic dynamics are increasingly

intertwined, generating systemic outcomes that require integrated rather than siloed approaches.

From an operational standpoint, Gür Çağdaş identifies key priority areas including supply chain fragmentation, constrained access to capital, cybersecurity, data integrity, and reputational exposure - while also underlining that climate and sustainability risks have shifted from long-term considerations to near-term financial drivers influencing investment decisions.

Digitalization further expands this landscape. Cybersecurity and data integrity have become core governance concerns, while artificial intelligence introduces a new layer of organizational complexity. Murat Yıldıran, Advisory Board Member and former CEO & Chairman bringing nearly 40 years of experience - with over 15 years in board roles across family businesses and institutional structures, built on the international roboust experience gained with European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - highlights a critical dimension of this shift: “The primary risk is not technological, but organizational.”

This perspective reinforces a key insight: successful adaptation to technological change depends less on technology itself and more on organizational alignment, capability building, and transformation readiness.

Effectiveness: discipline, challenge, and board engagement

While structures are evolving, effectiveness ultimately depends on execution. High-performing risk committees are characterized by active engagement, clear ownership, and a strong culture of constructive challenge. They are fully integrated into strategic discussions rather than operating as compliance-focused bodies.

A key differentiator is the ability to balance speed with discipline. In volatile environments, leading boards distinguish clearly between impulsive reactions and structured responses grounded in analysis and judgment.

Cihan Elbirlik captures this distinction by emphasizing disciplined response over reactive decision-making in fast-changing environments. In this context, scenario-based thinking has become increasingly central, enabling organizations to evaluate decisions against multiple possible futures rather than relying on linear forecasting.

Complementing this, Gür Çağdaş points to the growing importance of strengthening the forward-looking and challenge-oriented role of risk committees, ensuring they actively

test assumptions and enhance decision quality rather than merely validating existing views.

Governance, ownership, and the role of resilience

In Türkiye and across parts of EMEA, ownership structures - particularly family-controlled businesses - add an additional dimension to risk governance.

Drawing on extensive experience, Murat Yıldıran highlights that challenges such as succession planning, governance discipline, and strategic alignment remain consistent across organizations. However, he also emphasizes that resilience today is defined less by prediction and more by adaptability in the face of uncertainty.

From a structural perspective, Gür Çağdaş adds that building resilience increasingly depends on integrating data, analytics, and technology into risk frameworks - enabling real-time visibility and more informed, forward-looking decision-making across the organization.

Organizations that successfully combine professional governance structures with the long-term orientation inherent in ownership-based models are better positioned to sustain resilience and performance over time.

Toward a more effective risk function

Across all perspectives, a clear model emerges. Effective organizations maintain dynamic and continuously updated risk frameworks, integrate risk directly into strategic decision-making, empower executive leadership roles, and ensure continuous board engagement beyond formal governance cycles.

More fundamentally, there is a structural shift underway from managing risk as exposure toward building organizations that are continuously adaptive, interconnected, and aware. Reinforcing this, Gür Çağdaş frames modern risk management as a strategic discipline that enables organizations to take informed, calibrated risks and move with confidence under uncertainty - ultimately strengthening agility, resilience, and long-term value creation.

This evolution is further reinforced by Cansen Başaran, who emphasizes that strengthening financial capability and awareness across the broader ecosystem contributes meaningfully to systemic resilience.

Adding the missing human layer: From risk oversight to talent foresight

Without embedding talent plan into the core of risk governance, organizations risk building technically robust frameworks that ultimately fail at the point of execution. Risk is not managed in abstraction - it is interpreted and acted upon by people. Therefore, the absence of the right leadership capability, judgment, and organizational readiness is, in itself, one of the most critical risks. Strategic execution is the heart of the matter; and talent is what enables it. Failing to operationalize this linkage is not a gap - it is a structural vulnerability.

From this perspective, Ayşe Öztuna Bozoklar, Founding Partner of Odgers Türkiye, emphasizes that one of the most significant shortcomings in today's risk approach is the insufficient integration of talent strategy into board-level discussions. While financial, geopolitical, and technological risks are rigorously addressed, the human capability required to respond to these risks is often treated as a parallel, rather than embedded, agenda.

As Cansen Başaran-Symes also highlights in the context of evolving board priorities, human and talent risk is increasingly becoming a defining factor of organizational resilience. Exposure is

growing across critical skill shortages, leadership continuity, employee engagement, and organizational adaptability. The capacity not only to continuously learn, but also to deliberately unlearn outdated practices, is emerging as a core resilience driver. Burnout, disengagement, and misalignment with corporate purpose should no longer be viewed as soft indicators - they are leading signals of operational and strategic risk.

This disconnect is further exacerbated by the pace of change. Business strategies are now reviewed in much shorter cycles, yet talent plans are still too often treated as static, refreshed every few years. This is no longer viable. Talent strategy must be dynamic, continuously recalibrated, and directly aligned with evolving strategic priorities to ensure effective execution under uncertainty.

Accordingly, the board's mandate must expand. Beyond CEO succession, boards should ensure that a current, strategy-linked, and forward-looking talent plan is in place - and challenge whether both the leadership team and the board itself have the capabilities required for emerging risk conditions. This requires a mindset shift: talent is not a support function, but a core lever of risk management and strategic delivery.

At its core, an effective talent plan should be tightly anchored to business strategy, clearly define critical roles, transparently identify capability gaps, and enable the continuous deployment of top talent into the most value-creating positions. It must also be actionable under disruption - particularly in unexpected leadership scenarios.

The conclusion is straightforward: elevating the talent plan to the boardroom is not an enhancement. It is a prerequisite for resilient, execution-capable organizations. Without it, even the most sophisticated risk frameworks remain incomplete.

Conclusion

The evolution of risk committees across Türkiye and EMEA reflects a broader redefinition of governance itself. Risk management is no longer a backward-looking control mechanism; it is becoming a forward-looking strategic capability that shapes how organizations anticipate change, respond to disruption, and position themselves for the future. Yet, as risk frameworks grow more sophisticated, their effectiveness increasingly depends on an often underemphasized factor: the human capability required to interpret and act on risk in real time.

In this context, the integration of talent strategy into risk governance is no longer optional - it is foundational. Organizations that succeed will be those that not only build dynamic and data-driven risk systems, but also ensure they have the leadership depth, adaptability, and decision-making capacity to activate those systems under pressure. Talent, therefore, is not a parallel agenda; it is a core enabler of risk intelligence and strategic execution.

From our perspective at Odgers Türkiye, the direction is clear: moving from oversight to foresight must be accompanied by a parallel shift - from talent management to talent foresight. Boards that embed this dual transformation - integrating risk and talent into a single, forward-looking governance lens - will be significantly better positioned to navigate uncertainty, sustain resilience, and create long-term value.

In an increasingly volatile and interconnected world, the question is no longer whether organizations can identify risk, but whether they have the right people, capabilities, and leadership mindset to respond to it.