

## REGULATORY INTELLIGENCE

**COUNTRY UPDATE-Portugal: Securities & Banking**

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Portuguese securities and banking markets legislation is mainly based on the European legislation (and therefore does not materially differ from the legal framework implemented in other EU member states) and the country's own experience further to the banking crisis, following the financial crisis of 2008-2009, which lead Portuguese authorities to test first-hand the new legislation set forth by the [Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive \(BRRD\)](#).

The Portuguese economy has been growing in the past few years and we have seen the sale of some banks in Portugal and the recapitalisation of other banks, there already being news of an IPO to be held during 2025 for the market distribution of Novo Banco's shares (the 4th largest Bank operating in the Portuguese market) — an operation estimated to be the biggest bank listing in years by Standard & Poors. The results of the AQR and stress tests make it possible to ascertain the resilience of Portuguese banks.

The Portuguese economy is expected to grow by 2.3% in 2025 (1.9% in 2024), slowing to 2.1% in 2026 and 1.7% in 2027. Economic growth in 2025-26 benefits from the easing of financial conditions and is underpinned by an acceleration in external demand and more concentrated implementation of European funds now in 2026. Lower growth in 2027 is largely the result of the end of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). Consumption and investment could benefit from an increase in confidence, but their realization requires a reduction in internal and external uncertainty. Employment is projected to increase, after peaking in 2024, and the unemployment rate is expected to stabilize. Inflation is expected to fall to 2.3% in 2025 and to stand at 2% in 2026-27. The Portuguese economy will continue to grow above the euro area, with the inflation differential remaining close to zero.

Additionally, Portugal held a snap-election on May 18, 2025, 14 months after the last parliamentary election was held. Following a year where a new centre-right-wing coalition defeated the ruling Socialist Party that had been in government for the last eight years, a polarized parliamentary disposition — following the rise of the Portuguese far-right party — resulted in the new executive having to rule without a majority support. This resulted in a political landscape where the two biggest parties in Portugal — the incumbent Socialist Party and the Center-Right coalition, both the only parties to ever win elections in democratic history — being forced to negotiate the ruling of the country on a policy-by-policy basis.

Consequently, 2024's state budget was the result of a long negotiation process between the two biggest parties in Portugal, where opposing views were forced to compromise on middle-ground measures that ultimately resulted on the lack of reforming policies being adopted.

The 2025 election, which followed the parliamentary rejection of a motion of confidence summoned by the elected government following social turmoil surrounding the prime minister, due to the holding of a company by his nuclear family for the provision of data protection services to companies having close connections to local and central state bodies, resulted on the victory and reinforcement of the previously elected center-right coalition, with the Socialist Party having its biggest defeat since the 1980s and ending up tied in elected deputies with the far-right party.



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It is yet to be seen how the winning coalition will be able to form a majority in parliament, considering that the prime-minister has expressly been rejecting alliances with the far-right party and that the center-right coalition does not hold majority even if aligned with the Portuguese liberal party. As it happened in 2024, it seems that the most probable scenario for stability will be reached through negotiation between the Socialist Party, whose incumbent leader has already announced resignation and is expected to summon internal elections in the party, and the center-right coalition.

Notwithstanding this political scenario, 2024 was an important year for Portugal in terms of decision-making on structural projects for the country. It was the year in which major infrastructure projects were approved by the state, particularly the construction of a new high-speed railroad connecting Lisbon to Oporto (the two biggest and major demographic and economic hubs of the country), with two public tendering procedures already in course; the construction of a new Lisbon airport; and the construction of a new bridge over the Tagus river. These projects are sure to draw the attention of foreign players to the country in the years to come, promising to dynamise the local economy, which has been able to demonstrate its resilience in counter cycle with what has been observed in the biggest European economies.

During 2024, the Portuguese banking sector presented record profit results, claiming next to 6.3 billion euros in profit, a 13% rise compared with 2023. Several factors contributed to the Portuguese bank's historic profits last year, including the income generated by interest and commissions, but also the reversal of provisions and impairments, among other factors. Banks kept costs relatively under control, with the cost-to-income ratio rising slightly to 39.7%, 2.7 percentage points more than a year earlier, but almost 20 percentage points below the levels recorded in 2020.

In terms of asset quality, the non-performing loans ratio fell again to 2.4% in December, down 0.3 percentage points on the previous year. Even so, banks' balance sheets still had 7.8 billion euros in non-performing loans, 700 million less than a year ago. Toxic loans net of impairments totalled 3.48 billion.

A new Portuguese state-owned bank, the *Banco Português de Fomento* (BPF), was created in November 2020. The BPF is Portugal's new national development bank, focused on promoting the growth of the Portuguese economy and providing financing to companies in the event of lack of available financing. This new bank competes with existing banks and other types of alternative lending, especially in the framework of the Resilience and Recovery Programme, and it has already started to attribute proceedings to qualifying companies, thus contributing to the revamping of the Portuguese economy.

It should also be noted that Portugal is still implementing a legislation package which is expected to change existing regulation considerably — in particular, on October 29, 2020, BoP put a draft of the Banking Activity Code out for public discussion. The main purpose of this amendment is to consolidate and simplify the banking legislation into a single code. Although it was expected that the Banking Activity Code would be approved during 2022 — replacing the "old" General Regime of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies (RGICSF) and several different sector laws — this diploma has yet to be approved.

Nevertheless, [Directive \(EU\) 2019/878](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 20, 2019 amending Directive 2013/36/EU and [Directive \(EU\) 2019/879](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 20, 2019 amending both Directive 2014/59/EU and Directive 98/26/EC have already been transposed into the Portuguese legal system through Law 23-A/2022 of December 9, incorporating these transpositions into RGICSF.

In addition, as a way to align the national legal framework with that of the European Union and respond to the needs of companies and investors, several amendments to the Securities Code were published on December 31, through Law 99-A/2021, which comprised a transversal revision of the diploma by strengthening competitiveness and the development of the Portuguese capital market.

Finally, within the framework of the European Green Deal and in line with the European Union regime on sustainability-related disclosures in the financial sector that came into force with the [Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation 2019/2088](#) and ESG-driven or sustainable products, the European Commission published its "strategy for financing the transition to a sustainable economy" on July 6, 2021, as well as the approval of the [Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2631](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a voluntary EU green bond standard (GBS) to issuers (private and sovereigns) to help financing sustainable investments.

In December 2024, the stock of ESG-categorised debt securities in Portugal totalled 13.8 billion euros, representing a 27.9% increase on the end of the previous year, according to data from the Bank of Portugal. However, this is a slowdown when compared with the 49% increase recorded in 2023.

Considering the subcategories of the market, 9.6 billion (or 70%) were green, while 18.5% were linked to sustainability, 3.8% sustainability and 7.8% social. As for the issuers, the banking supervisor indicates that 76% (or more than 10.4 billion euros) concern non-financial companies, while the financial sector accounts for the remaining 3.36 million euros, since public administrations remain at zero.

## Regulators

The supervisory authority within the banking markets is the Portuguese central bank, the Bank of Portugal (hereinafter the BoP), which is responsible for the conduct and prudential regulation of credit institutions and financial companies. BoP is regulated by its Organic Law approved by Law 5/98 of January 31 (as amended from time to time).



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The BoP is a public-law legal entity, with administrative and financial autonomy and own property. The corporate bodies of the Bank are the governor, the board of directors, the board of auditors and the advisory board. The two core missions of the BoP are maintaining price stability and promoting the stability of the financial system.

The Securities Markets Commission (in Portuguese, *Comissão do Mercado de Valores Mobiliários*, or CMVM) is the supervisory authority in Portugal which regulates the securities markets. CMVM is an independent, public institution with administrative and financial autonomy whose primary role is to oversee the activities of the securities and derivatives markets. Among others, the following individuals and entities, among others, are subject to the supervision of the CMVM:

- securities issuers;
- financial intermediaries;
- independent investment advisors;
- markets, settlement and centralised systems managing entities and the entities whose object is the clearing of operations on commodities in derivatives markets;
- professional investors;
- investment funds;
- holders of qualifying holdings in public companies;
- auditors and risk rating companies;
- risk capital companies and funds;
- securitisation companies and funds and also the managing companies of said funds;
- other individuals that pursue, professionally or not, activities related with securities.

Whenever credit institutions or financial companies also pursue financial intermediation activities, such entities will also be subject to the supervision of the CMVM.

Both entities are integrated within the European supervisory authorities, the European System of Financial Supervision and, in the case of BoP, the Eurosystem and the European System of Central Banks, the single supervisory mechanism and the single resolution mechanism.

The two financial sectors — securities and banking — are regulated autonomously, being subject to the supervision of different entities; however, they intersect and complement each other, as financial entities are subject to both entities' supervision where financial intermediation services are also provided (prudential supervision by the BoP and conduct of business supervision by CMVM).

This intersection has gained form in the setting up of a council between these two supervisory bodies (together with the Portuguese Insurance and Pension Funds Supervisory Authority supervisory entity) forming the National Council of Financial Supervisors (established in 2000) which presents legislative proposals within the financing regulation, often preceded by public consultation proceedings.

The regulators have legislative and sanctioning powers, issuing regulations and applying penalties in case of breach of the applicable rules, as better detailed below.

### **Permission to operate**

The following activities are regulated activities subject to licensing in Portugal:

- a) acceptance of deposits and other repayable funds;
- b) lending, including the provision of security and other undertakings, financial leasing and factoring;
- c) provision of payment services;
- d) issue and management of other payment instruments;
- e) trading of financial instruments;
- f) participation and placement of securities and provision of related services;
- g) acting in the inter-banking markets;
- h) consulting, safe keeping and management of securities portfolios;
- i) management and consulting services in the management of other portfolios;
- j) issue of electronic currency;
- k) other similar operations that the law allows the banks to carry out.

Only authorised credit institutions and financial companies may carry out the activities above described, with the exception of the deposit taking from the public for use in own account which may only be carried out by authorised credit institutions (only banks).

*Credit institution* — The definition of "credit institution" covers banks (retail and investment banks), saving banks (*caixa económica*), Central Mutual Agricultural Credit Bank and mutual agricultural credit banks, financial credit institution, mortgage finance institution and



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other institutions that may be legally qualified as such. There is only one state-owned bank ( *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*) but the bank crisis led to the Portuguese State becoming owner of shareholdings in other banks.

*Financial companies* — the definition of "financial companies" covers companies whose main activity is to carry out at least one of the banking activities described above, including investment firms, financial leasing firms, factoring firms, investment funds managing companies, among others.

To be authorised as a credit institution or financial company the entity must either: (i) be incorporated in Portugal; or (ii) have a branch in Portugal which would be subject to rules regarding conduct of business. In the case of credit institutions incorporated in other European Union member states, such services may also be carried on in Portugal under the freedom to provide services principle, also known as "EU passporting" regime.

Credit institutions not authorised to carry out regulated activities in Portugal may set up a representative office in Portugal, registered with the Bank of Portugal. The activities carried out by the representative will depend on the credit institution it represents, and the scope of activity of the office will be limited to protect the interests of similar institutions in Portugal (representative offices may not carry on the activities of credit institutions, purchase shares in Portuguese companies or real estate assets in Portugal — with the exception of the representative office's own premises).

A novelty worth mentioning in the context of the lending market is the possibility of affirmation of loan funds as an alternative lending source to the market, following years where access to credit has become ever tighter for institutional and non-institutional borrowers.

Having been implemented into national law in 2019, its adoption by the market has been delayed by legal uncertainty regarding the tax treatment given to these entities, as the tax regime applicable to collective investment undertakings has not yet been amended to include these entities.

However, in 2023, a new Asset Management Regime was approved by Decree-Law no. 27/2023, of April 28, setting a domestic unitary and coherent regime for the various types of collective investment undertakings in existence, revoking the previously existing legislation (the Legal Regime of Venture Capital, Social Entrepreneurship and Social Investment — "RVCSESI" — and the General Regime of Collective Undertakings — "GRCU").

In an economic context in which access to bank credit was conditioned by the accelerated rise in interest rates in 2023 and an increase in requirements regarding the criteria for granting credit and its guarantees, this reformulation of the regime previously in force enhances the role that Credit UCIs can take on as an alternative source of financing for companies and institutional lenders.

At the end of March 2024, the outgoing government presented a law proposal which would expressly extend the tax regime applicable to venture capital UCIs to credit UCIs, thus manifesting its agreement with the position widespread between legal practitioners and market participants since the introduction of these UCIs in our legal framework.

As such, we anticipate that loan funds may start to attract the interest of management companies nationwide, with 2024 being the year in which the Portuguese market was introduced to the first Credit UCIs.

#### **Authorisation of credit institutions with head office in Portugal**

The authorisation for setting up a credit institution in Portugal (as part of the single supervisory mechanism) falls under the exclusive competence of the European Central Bank, which decides based upon the proposal of the BoP.

The authorisation for setting up a credit institution must be addressed to the BoP. The request must contain information regarding the type of credit institution to be set-up, its activity program, identification of the shareholders, suitability of the shareholders' structure to the stability of the credit institution, solid corporate governance mechanisms, identification of the members of the board of directors and supervisory corporate body.

The BoP must notify the applicant with the decision of granting or refusing authorisation within 6 months counting from the date when the BoP received the request or after receiving additional information that may have been requested, which should never be more than 12 months after the initial authorisation request. If no decision is notified within this deadline, the request is deemed refused.

#### **Credit institution with head office in an EU member state**

Credit institutions with head office in another EU member state may operate in Portugal within the same terms they are authorised to operate in their home country, by setting up a branch in Portugal or providing the services on a cross-border basis under the freedom to provide services regime (EU passport). In both cases, the home supervisory entity must notify and provide the relevant information on the authorised entity and services to be provided to the BoP.

The BoP should notify the supervisory authority of the home member-state within two months after receiving the relevant information from that supervisory authority. From the moment when the supervisory authority of the home member state is notified, or in case the BoP does not act within such time (deemed consent), the branch may start operating in Portugal.

#### **Credit institution with head office in a third country**

A credit institution authorised in a non-EU member state may operate in Portugal by setting up a branch. An authorisation request must be addressed to the BoP together with information regarding, notably, the activity program, address, identification of the persons



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responsible for the branch, equity, solvency ratio and detailed information on the deposit guarantee scheme and investors' guarantee scheme on which the institution participates on and also proof of security of the funds that are trusted to it, the localisation of the branch, provision financial accounts for three years, copy of the bylaws of the institution.

The authorisation is notified by the BoP to the European Commission, the European Banking Authority and the European Banking Committee.

Further to the authorisation of the BoP being granted, the institution must be registered before the BoP within 30 days thereof.

Furthermore, where the activity of the credit institution involves the provision of financial intermediation services, the BoP notifies the granting of the authorisation to CMVM. Financial intermediaries must be registered with CMVM for each one of the intermediation services the applicant intends to provide.

The registry is granted by CMVM within 30 days (with the possibility that this deadline may be postponed if further documentation is required by CMVM). If no decision is notified within this deadline, the request is deemed refused. The authorisation request must be sent together with information attesting that the applicant possesses the human, material and technical resources required for the credit institution to provide the intended services. Specific information will apply differently for each one of the financial intermediation services to be provided by the applicant.

### **Other authorisations**

Payment service providers and electronic money institutions must also be authorised by the BoP, being subject however to a specific legal regime (Legal Framework applicable to the Payment Service Providers and Electronic Money Institutions approved by Decree Law 91/2018, dated November 12, which, among others, implemented PSDII).

The setting up of financial companies, investment firms and collective investment undertaking management companies must also be authorised by the Bank of Portugal, following the above with certain amendments, with certain particularities — such as the fact that these entities are not subject to the requirement on deposit guarantee scheme and in certain cases the notifications are made, or also made, by the home countries to the CMVM.

### **Capital reserve requirements**

In prudential matters, the BoP legal framework reflects, in general, the rules in place in the European Union, which was based on the standards defined by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision in the Basel II and Basel III Agreements. In this matter, the primary source is the Capital Requirements Regulation ([Regulation 575/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated June 26, 2013, the CRR), directly applicable in Portugal, and the Capital Requirements Directive ([Directive \(EU\) 2019/878](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, the CRD V).

Under the CRR, institutions must maintain a Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) capital of at least 4.5% of their risk-weighted assets (RWAs), a Tier 1 capital of at least 6% of their RWAs and a total capital of at least 8% of their RWAs.

Furthermore, the BoP requires a minimum registered share capital for the incorporation of regulated entities, depending on their nature (Decree 95/94 dated February 9, as amended from time to time), which sets forth, among others, the following minimum registered share capital:

- Banks: 17,500,000 euros
- Investment companies: 5,000,000 euros
- Financial credit institutions: 10,000,000 euros
- Financial credit companies: 7,500,000 euros
- Leasing companies: 3,000,000 euros (moveable assets only)/5,500,000 euros (in all other cases)
- Broker-Dealers: 3,500,000 euros
- Factoring companies: 1,000,000 euros
- Brokerage firms: 350,000 euros
- Asset management companies: 250,000 euros
- Collective investment undertaking management companies: 125,000.00 euros.

### **Global legislation applicable to country**

As a member of the European Union, the primary source of legislation applicable in Portugal is the European Union legislation: please refer below to "Applicable European legislation".

### **Applicable European legislation**

In general, Portuguese Law reflects closely European Law. European Directives are subject to implementation by the Portuguese legislator to be enforceable in Portugal; differently, European regulations are directly applicable to all member-states and thus Portugal.

Please find below a non-exclusive list on the main directives — some pending implementation — and regulations applicable in Portugal within the banking and securities sectors.

### **Directives**



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[Directive \(EU\) 2015/2366](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 25, 2015 on payment services in the internal market, amending Directives 2002/65/EC, 2009/110/EC and 2013/36/EU and Regulation (EU) No 1093/2010, and repealing Directive 2007/64/EC, complemented by Regulation (EU) 2015/751 (PSD II). This Directive was transposed into Portuguese law by Decree Law No. 91/2018 of November 12.

[Directive \(EU\) 2019/878](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 20, 2019, amending Directive 2013/36/EU as regards exempted entities, financial holding companies, mixed financial holding companies, remuneration, supervisory measures and powers and capital conservation measures (CRD V). This Directive has been transposed into Portuguese law in the latest amendment to RGICSF.

[Directive \(EU\) 2019/879](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 20, 2019, amending Directive 2014/59/EU as regards the loss-absorbing and recapitalisation capacity of credit institutions and investment firms and Directive 98/26/EC (BRRD II). This Directive has been transposed into Portuguese law by the latest amendment to RGICSF.

[Directive \(EU\) 2019/1160](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 20, 2019 amending Directives 2009/65/EC and 2011/61/EU with regard to cross-border distribution of collective investment undertakings and the Commission Delegated Directive (EU) 2021/1270 of April 21, 2021 amending Directive 2010/43/EU as regards the sustainability risks and sustainability factors to be taken into account for Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities (UCITS), transposed into Portuguese Law by Decree Law 109-F/2021, dated December 9.

[Directive \(EU\) 2024/1640](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 31, 2024 on the mechanisms to be put in place by Member States to prevent the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937, and amending and repealing Directive (EU) 2015/849 (the Directive (EU) 2024/1640);

### *Securities*

[Directive 2011/61/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 8, 2011 on Alternative Investment Fund Managers and amending Directives 2003/41/EC and 2009/65/EC and Regulations (EC) No 1060/2009 and (EU) no 1095/2010 and Directive 2013/14/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 21, 2013 amending Directive 2003/41/EC on the activities and supervision of institutions for occupational retirement provision, Directive 2009/65/EC on the coordination of laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS) and Directive 2011/61/EU on Alternative Investment Funds Managers in respect of over-reliance on credit ratings. These Directives were transposed into Portuguese Law by Law No. 16/2015, dated February 24, which was now amended by Law 99-A/2021, dated December 31.

[Directives 2013/36/EU](#) and [\(EU\) 2019/878](#) as regards their application to investment firms, to help the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, transposed into Portuguese Law by Decree-law 109-H/2021, dated December 10.

Directive (EU) 2017/828 of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 17, 2017 amending Directive 2007/36/EC as regards the encouragement of long-term shareholder engagement. This Directive was transposed into Portuguese law by Law No. 50/2020 of August 25.

[Directive \(EU\) 2019/2034](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 27, 2019, on the prudential supervision of investment firms and amending Directives 2002/87/EC, 2009/65/EC, 2011/61/EU, 2013/36/EU, 2014/59/EU and 2014/65/EU, transposed into Portuguese Law by Decree-law 109-H/2021, dated December 10.

[Directive \(EU\) 2020/1504](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of October 7, 2020 amending Directive 2014/65/EU on markets in financial instruments, transposed into Portuguese law by Decree Law 56/2021, dated June 30.

[Directive \(EU\) 2021/338](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of February 16, 2021 amending Directive 2014/65/EU as regards information requirements, product governance and position limits, transposed into Portuguese Law by Decree-law 109-H/2021, dated December 10.

[Directive \(EU\) 2024/2811](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of October 23, 2024 amending Directive 2014/65/EU to make public capital markets in the Union more attractive for companies and to facilitate access to capital for small and medium-sized enterprises and repealing Directive 2001/34/EC.

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/363, of October 31, 2022, amending and correcting the regulatory technical standards laid down in Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/1288 as regards the content and presentation of information in relation to disclosures in pre-contractual documents and periodic reports for financial products investing in environmentally sustainable economic activities.

### *Regulations*

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[Regulation \(EU\) 2015/847](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 20, 2015 on information accompanying transfers of funds.

[Regulation \(EU\) No 2013/575](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated June 26, 2013, on prudential requirements for credit institutions and investment firms.

Council Regulation (EU) No 1024/2013 of October 15, 2013 conferring specific tasks on the European Central Bank concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions.

[Regulation \(EU\) No 1092/2010](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 24, 2010 on European Union macro-prudential oversight of the financial system and establishing a European Systemic Risk Board.

Council Regulation (EU) No 1096/2010 of November 17, 2010 conferring specific tasks upon the European Central Bank concerning the functioning of the European Systemic Risk Board.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1624](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2024 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering or terrorist financing.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1620](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2024 establishing an Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Authority and amending Regulations (EU) No 1093/2010 and (EU) No 1093/2010 and (EU) No 1093/2010. 1093/2010 and (EU) 1095/2010 (the 'Regulation (EU) 2024/1620').

#### *Securities*

[Regulation \(EU\) No 600/2014](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 15, 2014 on markets in financial instruments.

[Regulation \(EU\) No 596/2014](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated April 16, 2014 on market abuse (market abuse regulation).

[Regulation \(EU\) No 1286/2014](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated November 26, 2014 on key information documents for packaged retail and insurance-based investment products (PRIIPs).

[Regulation \(EU\) No 648/2012](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 4, 2012 on OTC derivatives, central counterparties and trade repositories.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2017/1129](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 14, 2017 on the prospectus to be published when securities are offered to the public or admitted to trading on a regulated market, and repealing Directive 2003/71/EC.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2088](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 27, 2019 on sustainability related disclosures in the financial services sector.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2020/852](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 18, 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2631](#) of the European Parliament And Of The Council, of November 22, 2023, on European Green Bonds and optional disclosures for bonds marketed as environmentally sustainable and for sustainability-linked bonds.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2809](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2017/1129, (EU) No 596/2014 and (EU) No 600/2014 in order to make capital markets in the Union more attractive for companies and to facilitate access to capital for small and medium-sized enterprises

#### **Domestic laws (including proposals before parliament)**

The main legal source for banking activity in Portugal is laid in the Legal Framework of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies (approved by Decree Law 389/92, dated December 31, as amended from time to time), which sets forth the rules to access and carry out regulated activity by credit institutions and financial companies, as well as the supervision of these entities, and supervisory powers and instruments.

This Decree-Law is expected to be superseded soon, with the entry into force of the Banking Activity Code (CAB). BoP has in public consultation the preliminary draft CAB, which is considered the major reform of the Legal Framework of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies. As previously mentioned, among the objectives of the preliminary project are: (i) the consolidation of separate regimes; (ii) respond to regulatory needs, taking into account accumulated supervisory experience; (iii) consolidate what the White Paper on Regulation and Supervision of the Financial System says; (iv) absorb the experiences of parliamentary committees of inquiry in recent years on banking cases.

On its turn, the legal basis for the securities regulation is laid in the Securities Code (approved by Decree Law 486/99, dated November 13, as amended from time to time), which sets forth the rules applicable to the financial intermediaries and the carrying out of financial intermediation over securities.

One of the most relevant developments was the publication of Law 99-A/2021, dated December 31, which among other things, contains amendments to the Portuguese Securities Code, the Legal Framework for Audit Supervision and the Statutes of the



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Portuguese Securities Market Commission, with the intent to increase competitiveness and development of the Portuguese capital market, as well as promote a simpler, more objective, clearer, and proportional regulation.

In this sense, and with the purpose to align the national legal framework with that of the European Union, the 2% reference threshold for qualifying holdings was altered to 5%, which, in practical terms, means a shareholder will only have the obligation to communicate to CMVM if his position exceeds 5%, or falls below that threshold of the total capital.

In addition, the Securities Code now foresees the possibility of issuing shares with plural voting rights. Companies issuing shares admitted to trading on a regulated market, or on a multilateral system, may issue shares with special plural voting rights, up to a limit of five votes per share. Plus, it was clarified the framework applicable to market exit via opting-out from trading.

Another novelty of the Portuguese legal system is the now-implemented Asset Management Regime (RGA), which encompasses under one legal regime the rules applicable to collective investment undertakings and to alternative investment undertakings, while also aiming to harmonise the Portuguese legal framework with that of the European Union.

Under the many changes introduced by the RGA, we note the introduced changes in the types of collective investment undertakings ("CIU"), particularly at the level of alternative investment undertakings. Under this new regime, the previously existing types of CIUs (UCITS and AIUs— the latter being, either, venture capital AIUs loan AIUs or real estate AIUs are maintained, and a residual category of AIU is created.

This new residual category covers those AIU whose object is "the investment in transferable securities or in other financial or non-financial assets, including assets permitted for the types of AIU referred to in the preceding subparagraphs replacing the current AIU in transferable securities, investment undertakings in non-financial assets and social entrepreneurship funds. The issuance of bonds by AIU is now expressly foreseen — irrespective of its corporate or contractual form — by reference to the regime set forth in the Companies Code, with the adaptations set forth in the AMR, namely with the limits expressly provided for indebtedness.

Furthermore, the CMVM has later issued Regulation No 7/2023, regulating the activities of CIUs in line with the regime approved by the RGA. The Regulation focuses on safeguarding investors' interests by establishing rules that promote transparency and market integrity. At the same time, it seeks to boost the sustainable development of the financial markets, creating a favourable environment for innovation and investment.

Regarding the Regulation's impact on the market, incremental savings are expected in the medium term for management companies and CIUs, bearing in mind that the simplification of processes and greater clarity of the applicable regime — to which the Regulation's annexes strongly contribute — have the potential to reduce operational costs. However, there will exist adaptation costs caused by the introduction of these changes. This Regulation aims to align financial regulation and achieve principles of simplicity, objectivity and harmonisation of the regime.

By protecting investors, contributing to the development of financial markets and promoting competitiveness and efficiency, this Regulation is expected to provide lasting benefits for all involved, although there will be initial adaptation challenges.

In what specifically concerns public offers, we highlight the elimination of the double threshold for the exercise of the squeeze-out right, which becomes 90% of the capital.

Further to this, in what concerns successive transfers of control positions within the same family circle, it is now acceptable that the successor takes on the pre-existing control position without being confronted with the alternative of launching a Public Takeover Bid or reducing the participation in a position that does not confer control.

In order to reduce bureaucracy and intermediation costs in the process of admission to trading, the regime of mandatory intermediation public offers for admission to trading was also eliminated.

Still on this topic, and with the intent to provide more flexibility to the issuer that launched an offer, the revised Securities Code not only foresees an increase of the threshold below which the publication of prospectuses is not required, now being 8 million euros instead of the previous defined 5 million euros, but also allows for the prospectuses to be written in English, with summaries in Portuguese.

Furthermore, Regulation (EU) 2024/2809 has recently imposed some amendments to the Prospectus Regulation. The goal of such amendments is to simplify and standardize the form and content of the prospectus containing measures such as:

- (i) introducing new exemptions from the obligation to publish a prospectus and extends existing exemptions;
- (ii) introducing changes to the EU Growth Prospectus regime;
- (iii) creating the Complementary EU Prospectus, aimed at secondary issues of companies already admitted to trading on a regulated market or an SME growth market; and
- (iv) introducing new disclosure requirements regarding sustainability. These changes will be implemented in stages, with some applying immediately from 4 December 2024 and others from 5 March and 5 June 2026. Additionally, transitional provisions have been made for prospectuses approved before 4 March and 4 June 2026, respectively.

Finally, the CMVM has issued Regulation no. 1/2023, regulating reporting duties applied to securities issuers and to public offers. According to the CMVM, this "regulatory review continues to simplify duties and eliminate those that are redundant (...) or that are additional to EU Legislation, whenever there are no national nuances that justify maintaining them". Regarding Public Offers, we note the following novelties introduced by this regime: (i) notwithstanding duties inherent to the holding of qualified interests, Participants



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in the share capital of companies with shares admitted to trading on a regulated market shall immediately notify the company and the CMVM of any change in the cause of allocation that affects a percentage of voting rights that is indispensable for maintaining the threshold of one third or half of the voting rights; (ii) the establishment of minimum elements regarding the preparation of the expert report justifying the minimum price for a takeover bid have been defined in a Schedule to the Regulation; (iii) a set of formal requirements regarding the prospectus' structure is set in a Schedule to this Regulation.

It is also important to highlight the creation of the legitimisation certificates, as a way to promote an active intervention by shareholders in the affairs of companies, especially in what concerns the participation and voting at general meetings, as well as overcome the difficulties that have been referred to by investors who wish to exercise their voting rights in the general meetings of national listed companies as an alternative to their representation by the custodian banks. Therefore, the legitimisation certificates will allow for beneficial owners of shares who, under Portuguese law are not considered holders of those shares, to directly exercise their voting rights without incurring in additional registration fees for financial intermediaries and without affecting the safety of securities' circulation.

Lastly, CMVM — as the securities market regulator — is now endowed with powers to supervise the suitability, qualification and professional experience requirements for members of corporate bodies and the suitability of partners in auditing firms. CMVM will also supervise the public interest functions carried out in Portugal (e.g., the statutory auditor).

With regards to the protection of investors, the CMVM may require the disclosure of data on identified situations and on the conclusions regarding quality control whenever it considers it relevant for the public or for the effectiveness of supervision.

MIFID II has been implemented in Portugal by Law 35/2018, dated July 20, further to which, inter alia, the Legal Framework of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies and the Securities Code have been amended and new legal regimes were implemented, in particular the legal framework on the creation, marketing and provision of consulting services regarding structured deposits and PRIIPs, together with amendments to the derivatives market.

Furthermore, the rules of the Portuguese Companies Code (approved by Decree Law 262/86, dated September 2) also apply to regulated companies when incorporated as commercial companies, in what is not specially regulated within the specific legislation applicable to them.

Payment service providers and electronic money institutions are regulated in a separate legal regime (Decree Law No. 91/2018, dated November 12)

The regulators also have legislative powers which are binding to the entities subject to its supervision. The BoP issues notices (avisos) instructions (instruções) and circulars (cartas circulares) — the latter being of interpretative nature only - and CMVM issues regulations and instructions, which further regulate duties and obligations applicable to these entities.

BoP has issued Notice No. 2/2025, aiming to align local regulatory standards with international practices and amending, Notice No. 3/2020, of July 15, 2020, which regulates the organizational culture, internal governance, system of internal control and remuneration policies and practices of the institutions to which it applies and it is supplemented by Instruction No. 18/2020, of July 15, 2020, of the BoP.

This Notice aims to reinforce transparency and the solidity of the financial system, while liberalizing internal organizational structures, keeping consolidation in one single instrument of the regulatory provisions regarding institutions' internal control and governance, incorporating EBA guidelines on internal governance, EBA guidelines on outsourcing arrangements and EBA guidelines regarding sound remuneration policies.

The notice addresses some fundamental topics of internal control and governance, as follows:

- (i) organisational conduct and culture;
- (ii) internal governance, structure and strategic planning;
- (iii) internal control system and the risk management function;
- (iv) related parties and conflicts of interest;
- (v) whistle-blowing;
- (vi) outsourcing of functions;
- (vii) selection and appointment of external auditors;
- (viii) remuneration policies and practices;
- (ix) financial groups;
- (x) self-assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of organisational culture and internal governance systems; and
- (xi) documentation, systematization and dissemination of information to the public.

Furthermore, the obligation to produce an internal control report on an annual basis was replaced with the duty to submit, on an annual basis, a self-assessment report.



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A novelty presented with this Notice is the need for institutions to approve multi-annual formation plans to be attended by members of the supervisory and management bodies, in particular to ensure that such members are kept up-to-date with all risks to which institutions are exposed.

Institutions have six months to adapt to the provisions of the Notice, a period that ended on March 21, 2025.

BoP has published circular No. CC/2020/00000072 by means of which it is recommended that, until September 30, 2021, less significant institutions and investment firms refrain from or limit dividend distributions or repurchases of common shares that may affect their own funds, and should retain their capital to maintain their capacity to finance the economy and absorb potential losses. These recommendations of the BoP are in line with the approach defined by the European Central Bank for significant institutions in the context of the Single Supervisory Mechanism.

Institutions wishing to consider the decision to distribute dividends or buy back ordinary shares in order to remunerate their shareholders should first contact the Bank of Portugal, demonstrating compliance with these recommendations. Institutions that make a profit in 2020 and intend to distribute dividends should respect the limit corresponding to the lower of the following values: (i) 15% of the accumulated profit of 2019 and 2020, or (ii) reduction of Tier 1 capital of up to 20 basis points. No interim profits from 2021 shall be distributed.

Another notice from the BoP worth mentioning is Notice No 1/2022, establishing the conditions of exercise, procedures, instruments, mechanisms, enforcement formalities, reporting obligations and other aspects necessary to ensure compliance with the duties to prevent money laundering within the scope of activity of the financial entities subject to BoP's supervision according to the Portuguese AML/CF Law (Law no 3/2017). The goal of this notice is to ensure greater simplicity, clarity and flexibility to the regulatory provisions, without, however, disturbing the substance and stability of regulatory solutions, bearing in mind the expected approval, in the medium term, of a new European legal framework on the matter.

Lastly, and still in the AML/CF field, the BoP has recently issued Notice No. 1/2023 regarding Virtual Assets Service Providers establishing the necessary aspects to ensure compliance with the preventive duties regarding money laundering and terrorist financing, within the scope of the activity of entities that carry out activities with virtual assets.

Furthermore, on 5 June 2024, the Bank of Portugal published Instruction No. 8/2024, which approves the annual reporting model for the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing (the 'Instruction'), and Bank of Portugal Notice No. 3/2024, which amends article 83 of Bank of Portugal Notice No. 1/2022, of 6 June. The Instruction defines the elements of information to be reported annually to the BoP by financial entities subject to BoP supervision in terms of preventing money laundering and terrorist financing (the 'BCFT'), the respective model and the other terms of submission, while the Notice establishes the deadline for submitting this report.

## **Product-specific legislation**

### **Markets**

The overall rules regarding markets and trading are contained in the Securities Market, which regulates financial intermediation activity defined as comprising investment services in financial instruments, ancillary services, managing collective investment undertakings, together with the regulations and instructions issued by CMVM.

In addition, specific harmonised rules (Rule Book) applicable to trading are applicable to the members of Euronext Lisbon on trading and exchange rules.

Foreign exchange transactions are regulated in Portugal in Decree-Law 295/2003, dated November 21, as amended. Under Portuguese Law the sale and purchase of foreign currencies and transfers abroad in a foreign currency are considered as foreign exchange transactions.

The sale and purchase of foreign currency comprises, among others, spot and forward exchange contracts, currency swaps, futures and options, as per Notice of the Bank of Portugal 1/99, as amended. Certain foreign exchange transactions are considered as complex financial instruments, such as forward foreign exchange transactions, being subject to a specific legal regime (Regulation No. 2/2012 of the CMVM has been repealed by Regulation No. 8/2018 of the CMVM - however, complex financial instruments traded under Regulation No. 2/2012 and Instruction No. 3/2013 before January 1, 2018, are subject to the provisions of those same instruments.).

The regular purchase and sale of foreign currency with the intent of profit is deemed undertaking foreign exchange trade business. Only credit institutions or financial entities duly authorised to carry on foreign exchange trades are entitled to undertake such activity in Portugal.

In Portugal the legal regime applicable to short selling is set forth in the Securities Code and European regulation 236/2012 on short selling and certain aspects of credit default swaps, as amended by Regulation (EU) 909/2014, of July 23, implemented by Commission Implementing Regulation 827/2012, of June 29 and supplemented by Commission Delegated Regulations (EU)918/2012,919/2012, both of July 5.

As a general rule, in Portugal short selling is possible provided that the issuer of the sale order guarantees the acquisition of the securities until the order is issued. Furthermore, restrictions are applicable in shares and sovereign debt, and short positions in sovereign CDS are banned (although it might be lifted under certain conditions).



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These restrictions apply to any European market concerning any investor (regardless of their residence or the order's place of issue), including intraday short sale transactions (those wherein the investor plans to buy back securities in the session). No investor may carry out short selling without obtaining prior guarantees of the securities (e.g. on loan) or without at least a duly qualified third entity (financial intermediary that meets specific requirements) confirming the allocation of shares that are to be sold (known as "locate rule"). The investors should obtain and retain proof of obtaining the preliminary allocation statement.

The rules on trading derivatives are primarily set forth within the Securities Code, which defines them by referring to MIFID II. Services and investment activities over financial instruments, including derivatives, is deemed a regulated activity which may only be pursued by an entity duly licensed as financial intermediary.

In addition, reporting, clearing and portfolio reconciliation measures are regulated within the European regulation EMIR (European Markets Infrastructure Regulation, Regulation 648/2012, dated July 4, as now amended by MIFID II). Further to this regulation, Portugal has enacted the Decree Law 40/2014, dated March 18, which assures the enforceability of EMIR, naming the supervisory authorities (which are the BoP, the CMVM and the Insurance Supervisory Authority, depending on the regulated entity) and sets forth the sanctioning framework, as now amended pursuant to the implementation of Law 35/2018 (implementing the MIFID II).

The Securities Code also regulates bonds (included in the definition of securities). Public offer and private placement of bonds must comply with the rules set forth therein, which follows European Law and in particular the Prospectus Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/1129 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 14, 2017 on the prospectus to be published when securities are offered to the public or admitted to trading on a regulated market and Directive 2010/73/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated November 24, 2010)).

Public offer is defined as an offer of securities aimed at undetermined recipients, as well as an offer to an all shareholders of a listed company, when such offer is preceded by prospection of information gathering before undetermined investors or by marketing or an offer that is offered to more than 150 not professional investors.

When issued by a commercial company, the issue of bonds must also comply with the rules set forth in the Companies Code.

### ***Banking/credit institutions***

#### ***Mortgages***

The two most common types of security interests which may be created under Portuguese law are:

- (i) the mortgage, which entitles the beneficiary, in the event of default of an obligation, to be paid with preference to non-secured creditors from the proceeds of the sale of immovable assets (such as land) or rights relating thereto or of movable assets subject to registration (such as automobiles, ships, planes); and
- (ii) the pledge, which confers rights similar to those of the mortgage but is created in respect of moveable-registered assets or credits.

Portuguese rules on mortgage loans for consumers relating to immovable property have been amended dated as of January 1, 2018, pursuant to Decree-Law No. 74-A/2017, dated June 23, which partially implemented Directive 2014/17/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated February 4, 2014, also known as the Mortgage Credit Directive (the rules for credit intermediaries and credit intermediary activity was transposed by Decree Law 81-C/2017, dated July 7).

Mortgage loans are defined as loan agreements for the acquisition or construction of own house, secondary or for renting; loan agreements for the acquisition or maintain property rights over existing fields or buildings and loan agreements that, irrespective of the purpose, are secured by a mortgage or equivalent security usually used over immovable assets or secured by a right respecting property.

The new rules introduced amendments in the information to be provided to the consumer, contractual proposal and reflection period granted to the consumer and guarantor and to the commission's calculation, preventing the application of floors to the applicable interests (relevant in the current context of negative interest rates). In addition, Law 32/2018, dated July 18 has implemented the obligation of the banking entities to reflect entirely the decrease of the Euribor rate (or other indexes used) in these contracts, amending said Decree-Law 74-A/2017, matter that has been under discussion following the variable component of some interest rates reaching a negative value that is higher than the contractually agreed margin (in case of variable interest rates).

Recently, through Decree-Law No. 31/2022, the Legal Regime for Covered Bonds was created, according to which credit institutions are able to issue bonds which are secured by mortgage loans credits. While this is no novelty in the Portuguese legal framework, this regime may become increasingly significant as the secondary market for NPLs and RPLs promises to be an attractive asset for banks in the current economic landscape. CMVM's Regulation no 2/2023 further regulates the Legal Regime for Covered Bonds, establishing and implementing the transmission of supervising competence to the CMVM (as per the Legal Regime for Covered Bonds), simplifying the issuers' reporting obligations in order to ensure the stability and quality of Portuguese covered bond programmes, and establishing the criteria to be met when requiring authorisation or securitisation programs to the regulator.

Finally, Portugal is yet to approve internal legislation for the national implementation of [Directive \(EU\) 2021/2167 on credit servicers and credit purchasers](#). While a law proposal to be approved by parliament has already been drafted, approval has been postponed due to the snap election held on May 18th 2025, Portugal already being in delay regarding the transposition deadline imposed by the Directive. The proposal of law is expected to amend local laws on:



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- a) The regulation of the assignment of credits and of the contractual position in credit agreements;
- b) The definition and regulation of the requirements for access to and exercise of the activity of
- b) The definition and regulation of the requirements for access to and exercise of the activity of credit management subject to assignment under the terms of the previous paragraph;
- c) Defining the system for supervising the activity of credit managers, assignors and assignees; and
- d) Defining the applicable sanctioning regime.

### **Securities firms**

#### *Enforcement and investigation*

The breach of rules under the Securities Code and related legislation may qualify as a crime or administrative offence

In case of criminal offences, CMVM must notify the public attorney (ministério público) which has the jurisdiction to conduct the criminal proceeding (e.g., insider trading and market manipulation).

In case of administrative offences the competence is of the CMVM, which may investigate and apply penalties to the offender.

In accordance with the current framework, fines are applicable to the offender, which may range between 5,000 euros and 5,000,000 euros depending if the offender is a natural or legal person and on the severity of the offence

The maximum limits may be increased in the following cases: (i) to the triple of the economic benefit obtained; (ii) in the specific case of very serious offences to an amount corresponding to 10% of the total annual turnover, if higher, according to the last available accounts; and (iii) in case of usage or channelling of privileged information and market manipulation, to an amount corresponding to 15% of the total annual turnover.

Ancillary penalties may also apply, which comprise loss of the gains obtained with the infraction, interdiction applicable to carrying out of certain management functions, publishing of the decision, amongst others.

#### *Complaints and redress*

CMVM has a department for the relation with the investor (Departamento de Supervisão Comportamental e do Investidor), which receives and analyses complaints filed by non-professional investors regarding the activity, operations of entities subject to its supervision or regarding the financial instruments in general. CMVM also provides mediation services to investors.

Further to the evaluation conducted by CMVM an opinion is issued which is sent to the envisaged entity. In case of suspect of breach of the applicable rules, CMVM may open an investigation against such entity. In case such breach is confirmed, the envisaged entity may be obliged to compensate the investor.

In case of insufficiency of assets of the financial intermediary, non-professional investors may benefit of the investors' protection scheme (SII) to which all authorised financial intermediaries are participants.

### **Creditor hierarchy**

#### *Insolvency*

Regulation (EU) 848/2015 of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 20, 2015 (the EU Insolvency Regulation 2017), which became effective as of June 26, 2015, but which applies to insolvency proceedings opened after June 26, 2017 (the EU Insolvency Regulation remaining applicable to insolvency proceedings opened before that date) applies directly to Portugal as a EU member state.

Insolvency proceedings available in Portugal are regulated by the Portuguese Insolvency and Recovery Code (CIRE) approved by Decree-Law No. 53/2004 and most recently amended by Decree-Law No. 79/2017.

As a general rule insolvency proceedings governed by the CIRE are applicable to all persons and entities, subject to certain exceptions, such as public entities, state-owned companies and insurance companies, credit institutions, financial companies, investment companies, which render services related with the holding of funds or securities on behalf of third parties, and collective investment schemes to the extent that the submission to the insolvency proceeding would be contradictory/incompatible with the special legal frameworks of such entities.

These proceedings may lead either to the restructuring of the business (by the approval of an insolvency plan) or to the liquidation of the assets of the debtor.

Upon a filing for insolvency proceedings, the court issues an insolvency declaration, and the creditors of the insolvent debtor (including secured creditors) have to claim the acknowledgement of all debts owed to them by the debtor, providing documentation to justify such debts, within a period of up to 30 days.

Based on the documentation provided by the creditors and documentation held by the debtor, the insolvency administrator draws up a list of acknowledged creditors and classifies them according to the categories established under law:



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(a) *Secured credits*: credits secured by in rem guarantees (garantias reais) including special statutory liens (privilégios creditórios especiais), e.g.:

- Real estate special statutory liens (e.g., state credits related with real estate property tax IMI)
- Third parties credits (e.g., mortgage, income assignment, pledge)
- Movable assets special statutory liens (e.g., credits resulting of justice expenses incurred in the interest of the creditors)

(b) *Privileged credits*: credits secured by general statutory liens (privilégios creditórios gerais) over assets integrated in the insolvency estate up to the amount corresponding to the value of the assets granted in guarantee or the general statutory liens, e.g.:

- Labor, tax and social security debts;
- Real estate general statutory liens.

(c) *Common credits*: all credits not included in any other category.

(d) *Subordinated credits*: (classified as such by virtue of the underlying credit agreement or pursuant to law). Subordinated credits include, among others, credits held by parties in special relationships with the debtor, such as, in the case of an individual, credits held by his/her relatives; in the case of a legal entity, credits held by the administrators, group companies and controlling shareholders or shareholders in a group relationship. Certain subordinated creditors are not entitled to vote on the restructuring arrangement and usually subordinated creditors have very limited chances of collection, as a result of the ranking established by law.

The payment will be performed according to the credit ranking, being firstly paid the secured credits, followed by privileged credits (in the event of liquidation, they are the first to collect payment against the assets on which their debt is secured or over which they have privileges in the order established by law), common credits and finally subordinated credits. If the assets of the insolvency estate are insufficient to fully pay all creditors, the payment to common creditors will be made by apportionment amongst all creditors and in proportion of their credits. The payment of subordinated credits will only take place after full payment of common credits.

Credit institutions and financial companies with head office in Portugal and its branches set up in another member state have a special regime of liquidation and recovery procedures established in Decree Law 199/2006, dated October 25, which implemented in Portugal Directive 2001/24/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated April 4.

### **Banking resolution**

Banking resolution rules are set forth in the Legal Framework of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies and follow in general the EU Banking Recovery and Resolution Directive, the BRRD II(Directive 2019/879/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council dated May 20, 2019 establishing a framework for the recovery and resolution of credit institutions and investment firms was implemented in Portugal in 2015 (Law 23-A/2022, dated December 9).

The BoP may apply resolution measures whenever the supervised entities may need to cease to be duly authorised or the pursuit of a banking activity or present a 'serious risk' of non-compliance.

According to the "no creditor worse-off principle", no creditor can be put in a worse situation resulting from a resolution measure than it would be in a winding-up procedure.

The resolution measures applicable under Portuguese Law are (i) the transfer, in full or partial, of the activity of the entity in distress; (ii) the transfer, in full or partial, of the activity of the entity in distress to a bridge bank; (iii) segregation and partial transfer of the activity of the entity in distress to an asset management vehicle and (iv) internal recapitalisation of that entity.

The BoP may apply corrective measures over the entity in financial distress — not necessarily having to apply a resolution measure as a measure of first instance.

This may happen in case of a credit institution that is undercapitalised and may consist — among a vast array of corrective tools available to the Bank of Portugal — of a restructuring plan presented by the credit institution, setting out recovery measures such as (i) a share capital increase, a reduction thereof or the disposal of shareholdings or other assets; (ii) the suspension or replacement of one or more members of its management and supervisory corporate bodies; or (iii) performing certain transactions under the approval of the BoP.

### **Data protection**

CNPD ( *Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados* is the Portuguese Data Protection Authority, an independent body endowed with the powers to regulate, supervise and monitor compliance with the laws and regulations regarding personal data protection, mainly the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Portuguese data protection Act, throughout the national territory.

The CNPD has investigative powers, having access to any data processing activities and powers of authority, particularly those of ordering the restriction, erasure, or imposing a temporary or permanent ban on the processing of personal data, as well as powers to impose fines for any violation of data protection laws.

Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is applicable in Portugal as of May 25, 2018.



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The GDPR seeks the strengthening and setting out in detail of the rights of natural persons related to their personal data (e.g., rights to information, data portability, access to and rectification or erasure of data), determines the legal grounds for the processing and the obligations of those who gather, process and control the processing of personal data, as well as equivalent powers for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the rules for the protection of personal data and equivalent sanctions for infringements in the Member States. On 2019 the implementation of the GDPR was finally concluded through the publication of Law No. 58/2019, of August 8 (Portuguese Data Protection Act).

The Securities Code includes sector specific data protection rules, mainly reverting to the rules stipulated in the Portuguese Data Protection Act and the GDPR, namely, the information regarding the categorization of investors, systems of notice and registry of infractions or non-compliance, as well as information concerning complaints or claims lodged with this market authority,

### **Financial promotion**

The promotion of any banking or security activity or services in Portugal will be qualified as marketing and an unlicensed activity (unless already licensed in Portugal). Please note however that article 42 of MIFID II has been pretty much reflected into domestic law and therefore, in case the activity or service is requested at the own exclusive initiative of the prospect, a licensing exemption shall apply.

Publicity of financial products and services are subject to a special regime set forth by Notice 10/2008, applicable to the credit institutions and financial companies in marketing material respecting financial products and services subject to the supervision of the BoP. The regime imposes to the entities duties of information and transparency, determining fixed minimum requirements irrespective of the mean of communication used.

Furthermore, rules on marketing on funds distribution may be found in the Legal Regime applicable to Collective Investment Undertakings, approved by the Law 16/2015 dated February 24, amended by Law 99-A/2021 dated December 31, and related Regulation 2/2015, which defined marketing as any activity aimed to investors with the purpose of advertising subscription or to offer subscription of participation units in a collective investment undertaking, by any mean of advertising or communication.

General rules on publicity (set forth in the Publicity Code, approved by Decree Law 330/90, dated October 23) are also applicable to the marketing of regulated products, in what it is not specially regulated in specific legislation.

### **Market abuse**

The Securities Code sets forth the prohibition of market manipulation and the use and transmission of privileged information, including the applicable safe harbours by reference to the Regulation (EU) 596/2014/EU of the European Parliament and Council of April 16, repeals and replaces the Market Abuse Directive (2003/6/EC) and implementing legislation, directly applicable in Portugal.

In addition, CMVM imposes several information duties in the context of the prevention of market abuse (notably Regulation 5/2008 regarding the information on relevant facts by the listed companies, including voting rights) publishing guidelines on what is considered as acceptable or not acceptable market practices.

### **Corporate governance**

#### *Remuneration and bonuses*

Portuguese legislation, as in the other matters, follows closely the European rules on corporate governance matters.

In particular, in the banking sector, it implemented Directive 2013/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 26, 2013 on access to the activity of credit institutions and the prudential supervision of credit institutions and investment firms (through Decree-law 157/2014, dated October 24) following the international guidelines issued on the matter - in particular of the European Banking Authority and Committee of European Banking Supervisors Guidelines on Remuneration Policies and Practices.

In this sense, through Decree-law 109-H/2021, dated December 10, besides implementing Directive (EU) 2019/2034 of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 27, 2019, on the prudential supervision of investment firms and amending Directives 2002/87/EC, 2009/65/EC, 2011/61/EU, 2013/36/EU, 2014/59/EU and 2014/65/EU, it also implemented Directive (EU) 2021/338 of the European Parliament and of the Council of February 16 2021 amending Directive 2014/65/EU as regards information requirements, product governance and position limits, and Directives 2013/36/EU and (EU) 2019/878 as regards their application to investment firms, to help the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis

The Legal Framework of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies sets forth the general rules applicable to corporate governance, in particular the rules on the separation of functions within the corporation and the avoidance of the conflict of interests and remuneration policy, in particular, the legal framework includes the provisions of the Capital Requirements Regulation (CRR) and the Capital Requirements Directive of May 20, 2019 (CRD V) in what concerns putting in place remuneration policies that are consistent with their risks.

In general terms, the remuneration policy must comply with the following principles in a manner and to the extent that is appropriate to its size, internal organisation and the nature, scope and complexity of their activities:

a) To promote sound and effective risk management and not to encourage risk-taking that exceeds the level of tolerated risk of the institution;



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- b) To be in line with the business strategy, objectives, values and long-term interests of the institution, and to incorporate measures to avoid conflicts of interest;
- c) Staff engaged in control functions to be independent from the business units they oversee, have appropriate authority, and be remunerated in accordance with the achievement of the objectives linked to their functions, independent from the performance of the business areas they control;
- d) To establish that the remuneration of the senior officers in the risk management and compliance functions is directly overseen by the remuneration committee or, if such a committee has not been established, by the management body in its supervisory function;
- e) To make a clear distinction between criteria for setting basic fixed remuneration, which should primarily reflect relevant professional experience and organisational responsibility as set out in an employee's job description as part of the terms of employment, and variable remuneration, which should be based on sustainable and risk-adjusted performance as well as fulfilment of tasks beyond what is required as part of the terms of employment.

Credit institutions that are significant in terms of their size, internal organisation and the nature, scope and complexity of their activities shall establish a remuneration committee composed of members of the board of directors who do not perform any executive function.

This committee is responsible for preparing decisions regarding remuneration, including the decisions implying risk and risk management in respect to the credit institution. When performing the aforementioned tasks, the remuneration committee must observe the long-term interests of the shareholders, of the investors and other stakeholders of the credit institution, as well as public interest.

In particular, the determination of the variable remuneration, it should be taken into the account the following rules:

- a) The total amount of remuneration is based on a combination of the assessment of the performance of the individual, taking into account financial and non-financial criteria, and of the business unit concerned and of the overall results of the credit institution;
- b) The assessment is set in a multi-year framework to ensure that the assessment process is based on longer-term performance and that the actual payment of performance-based components of remuneration is spread over a period which takes account of the underlying business cycle of the credit institution and its business risks;
- c) The measurement of performance used to calculate variable remuneration components includes an adjustment for all types of current and future risks and takes into account the credit institution's cost of capital and liquidity required.

The remuneration policy must be subject to approval of the general meeting of shareholders on an annual basis. Furthermore, the remuneration committee must revise the implementation of such policy at least on an annual basis.

Members of the management and supervisory boards, senior management and key function employees must comply with the requirements set forth in the Legal Framework of Credit Institutions and Financial Companies, and the regulations issued by the BoP on suitability, professional qualification, independence and availability. Additionally, members of the management and supervisory boards of credit institutions that are significant in size may not hold more than four non-executive positions simultaneously, or one executive position with two non-executive positions, with the exception of positions in management and supervisory boards of entities included in the same banking supervision consolidated scope.

In addition to the above, general rules on corporate governance set forth in the Companies Code are also applicable if the entity is set up in the form of a commercial company.

In the securities market, the CMVM and the IPCG (the Portuguese Institute of Corporate Governance) entered into a cooperation protocol, further to which it has been implemented a corporate governance code that entered into force in January 2018.

Furthermore, Decree-Law 58/2020, of August 25, which amends the Securities Code, establishes that companies issuing shares admitted to trading on a regulated market remunerate the directors and supervisory bodies in accordance with a policy of remuneration, approved every four years by the shareholders

Together with the corporate governance code and provisions of Securities Code, CMVM has established mechanisms of monitoring in order to assess the level of compliance of the issuers with the corporate governance code. The principle comply or explain is applicable herein, whereby the regulated companies that do not comply with the code must explain their reasons for not doing so.

The code will be updated on an annual basis in order to be updated with the best market practices in place.

The transposition of MIFID II also introduced changes to the organizational duties of financial intermediaries, in particular with respect to matters of governance and approval or production and/or distribution of financial instruments produced directly or by third parties (product governance), with the financial intermediaries that provide such investment services or activities required to identify, prior to the marketing and/or distribution of such services or activities, the risks associated with such market and their suitability to the characteristics of customers for which the product is intended. Additionally, a more restrictive regime to the benefits, remuneration and commissions (inducements) received from third parties, namely under portfolio management or investment advice services.

The following rules have now been included in the Securities Code with respect to the duties of conduct on the part of financial intermediaries:



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- a) The provisions that define the list of instruments considered as non-complex for purposes of the "simple execution" regime, which expands the range of situations in which verification of the operation's suitability for the customer's profile is required.
- b) The provisions governing the possibility of a financial intermediary offering to or receiving non-pecuniary remuneration, commission or benefit (inducements) from third parties relating to the provision of a financial intermediation activity are amended, strengthening the duties to inform customers and establishing requirements for a benefit not to be considered illegitimate.
- c) Duties to inform customers and the public about best execution needs include the requirement of annual disclosure of the five mostly commonly used trading venues and the results obtained.
- d) Financial intermediaries must ensure that employees who provide financial intermediation services have the necessary professional qualifications and experience and that their remuneration and evaluation policy is defined in order to safeguard the duty to act in the interest of their customers.

### **Sustainable finance**

CMVM and the Bank of Portugal, together with 18 other entities, have signed the Letter of Commitment for Sustainable Finance in Portugal on July 15, 2019. This Letter establishes different commitments for the different entities involved, which are mainly segmented by groups: regulators, financial institutions and the Portuguese stock exchange, bank associations, insurers, issuers and funds, the Ministry of Environment and Energy Transition, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry for Finance.

For BoP and CMVM the commitments are to collaborate within their remit, analysing the role of the financial system in identifying and managing environmental risks, in the financing and investment in green and low-carbon projects within a broader context of sustainable development and in line with regulation and supervision at European level, and monitor and participate in future works arising from the Sustainable Finance Reflection Group.

Furthermore, Bank of Portugal published in March 2020 its commitment to sustainability and sustainable finance. The commitment sets out priorities for Bank of Portugal's conduct within its mandate of price stability, financial stability and economic advice, as well as in terms of its internal management. Bank of Portugal's defines as key areas: identifying and assessing climate-related risks, implementing internal sustainability practices, participating in national and international fora where measures with a potential impact on the financial system are discussed, and establishing partnerships and communicating on these issues.

Considering the importance of sustainable finance, the following legislation was recently enacted in Portugal:

- Decree-Law No. 63/2020, of July 7 regulates the activity and operation of Banco Português de Fomento (BPF) and approves its bylaws. BPF's activities include improving access to finance for projects in research and innovation, sustainable infrastructure, social investment and skills.
- Law No. 3/2020 of March 31, which approves the Major Planning Options. As for promoting sustainable financing, the document notes that Portugal's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and a more efficient economy in the use of resources requires finding financing for projects that allow these objectives to be achieved. For this purpose, the Government proposes to elaborate a national strategy for sustainable financing, mobilizing the most appropriate financial instruments to promote a green economy, in line with the European Commission's Action Plan for Financing Sustainable Growth, with the participation of the banking system, other financial companies and supervisory entities;
- Decree-Law No. 89/2017, of July 28, on the disclosure of non-financial information and diversity information on diversity by large undertakings and groups, transposing Directive 2014/95/EU.
- Law 98/2021, of December 31, establishing the Climate basis-law.

In December 2019, the European Commission presented the European Green Deal, a growth strategy aiming to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. As part of the Green Deal, the Commission presented the European green deal investment plan. The European Green Deal Investment Plan of January 14, 2020 announced that the Commission will establish an EU Green Bond Standard (GBS).

As part of the action plan on sustainable finance, the Taxonomy Regulation was approved by [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/85](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 18, 2020. It establishes the framework for the EU taxonomy by setting out four overarching conditions that an economic activity has to meet in order to qualify as environmentally sustainable. The Taxonomy Regulation establishes six environmental objectives, namely:

- climate change mitigation
- climate change adaptation
- the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- the transition to a circular economy
- pollution prevention and control
- the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems
- different means can be required for an activity to make a substantial contribution to each objective.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2088](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 27, 2019 on sustainability related disclosures in the financial services sector was also approved.



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Finally, close attention is to be provided to the "omnibus" packages of proposals adopted by the European Commission aiming to simplify EU rules and boost competitiveness, and unlock additional investment capacity on sustainable finance reporting, sustainability due diligence, EU Taxonomy, carbon border adjustment mechanism, and European investment programs.

In late February, the European Commission introduced a series of targeted measures aimed at simplifying regulatory processes and easing administrative burdens to stimulate fresh investment. These proposals are designed to reduce bureaucracy while upholding sustainability goals, thereby fostering a more supportive environment for business growth, innovation and employment. By aligning climate ambitions with economic competitiveness, the Commission intends to enable companies to fulfil their sustainability obligations more effectively without compromising their environmental or social commitments.

As announced by the European Commission, "The proposed changes:

- Increase the EU's investment capacity through the use of returns from past investments, as well as optimised use of funds still available under the legacy instruments, thus allowing for more funding to be made available to businesses. This is expected to mobilise around 50 billion euros in additional public and private investments. The increased InvestEU capacity will be mainly used to finance more innovative activities in support of priority policies, such as the Competitiveness Compass and the Clean Industrial Deal.
- Make it easier for member states to contribute to the programme and support their own businesses and mobilise private investments.
- Simplify administrative requirements for our implementing partners, financial intermediaries and final recipients, notably SMEs. The simplification measures proposed are expected to generate 350 million euros in cost savings."<sup>[1]</sup>

The proposals will now proceed to the European Parliament and the Council for further evaluation and approval. In response to feedback from businesses and stakeholders, key measures such as the deferral of CSRD reporting obligations and the adjusted timeline for sustainability due diligence have been prioritised. Meanwhile, the draft Delegated Act amending the EU Taxonomy Regulation will undergo a public consultation process prior to its formal adoption.

Through this more nuanced regulatory approach, the European Commission aims to strike a balance between advancing sustainability objectives and supporting economic growth. Attention will now turn to implementation, with policymakers and industry participants expected to collaborate closely to shape the final provisions.

[1] Credit institutions and financial entities incorporated in Portugal, branches of credit institutions, financial institutions and investment businesses incorporated in third-countries and holding companies subject to the supervision of the BoP.

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