

Ship inspection organisations – member states approve agreement with Parliament on amendment related to Brexit preparedness

The EU is adapting its legislation to ensure **legal certainty for ship operators when the United Kingdom leaves the EU**. Today, member states' ambassadors meeting in the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee approved amended rules on the assessment of ship inspection organisations, whose task it is to ensure the safety of ships and prevent marine pollution. The presidency reached a provisional agreement with the European Parliament on 21 January.

EU flag states can delegate surveys and certification of their ships to classification societies recognised by the EU. Each of these classification societies has a 'sponsor' member state, meaning the country which initially submitted the request for recognition of the organisation.

Under the current rules, the Commission assesses recognised classification societies at least every two years, and the 'sponsor' country must participate in the assessment.

The UK is the initial sponsor of two organisations recognised by the EU. Following Brexit, it will no longer be in a position to participate in the assessments for those two organisations.

The amended rules will replace the requirement that only the initial sponsor country is to participate in the assessment, with a provision allowing for the participation of any EU country which has authorised one of the recognised organisations. This will allow organisations for which the UK has acted as sponsor to continue to carry out inspections on behalf of member states.

Next steps

The agreed text will now undergo legal and linguistic finalisation. It must then be formally adopted, first by the Parliament and then by the Council. Following adoption, the regulation will be published in the EU's Official Journal. It will become applicable the day after EU law ceases to apply to the UK.

[Download as pdf](#)

Indicative programme – Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 28 January 2019

Your request will be handled by the Press Office of the General Secretariat of the Council in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Your data will be stored in the database until you unsubscribe from the service.

Certain data (name, e-mail address, preferred language, media name, media type) may be disclosed to the press offices of the European institutions, the Permanent Representations of the Member States and to European Union agencies, under the conditions laid down in Articles 7 and 8 of Regulation 45/2001.

If there is data which you would not like to be stored, please let us know at: [\[email protected\]](#)

Joint statement by President Jean-Claude Juncker, High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn on the adoption of the Prespa agreement by the Hellenic Parliament

We warmly welcome the next crucial step in the ratification of the Prespa agreement, taken with today's vote by the Hellenic Parliament.

From the very beginning, the European Union has strongly supported the historic agreement signed by Prime Ministers Tsipras and Zaev, following negotiations under the auspices of the UN. It took political courage, leadership and responsibility on all sides to resolve one of the most entrenched disputes in the region. Both countries have seized this unique opportunity which sets an example of reconciliation for Europe as a whole and will give a further boost to the European perspective of the region.

While we look forward to the next procedural steps leading towards the full implementation of the agreement, we can already say with confidence today that Athens and Skopje have, together, written a new page of our common EU future.

[EU set to adopt new rules to prevent misuse of personal data in EP elections](#)

Press contacts

[Liis Jaansalu](#)

Press officer

+32 (0)2 281 38 71

+32 (0)470 89 08 50

The EU is bringing in new rules to prevent the misuse of personal data in EP elections.

EU ambassadors today endorsed an agreement reached between the Council presidency and the European Parliament last week on changes to the 2014 regulation governing the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations.

The new rules will allow for financial sanctions to be imposed on European political parties and foundations that deliberately influence, or attempt to influence, the outcome of EP elections by taking advantage of breaches of data protection rules.

The EU institutions are working rapidly to have the rules in place before the EP elections this spring.

Misuse of personal data to influence elections cannot be allowed. This is essential for electoral processes and the future of our democracies. Member states are determined to ensure that this year's European elections will be fair and protected from the malicious use of data breaches.

George Ciamba, Romanian Minister Delegate for European Affairs

The Commission submitted its proposal for amendments to the 2014 regulation

on 12 September 2018 as part of the 'Securing free and fair European elections' package.

According to the agreement endorsed today, a verification procedure will be put in place for determining whether a breach of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, established by a national supervisory authority, is linked to the political activities of a European political party or foundation in the context of EP elections.

The sanctions are imposed by the Authority for European Political Parties and Foundations after receiving an opinion from the committee of independent eminent persons established under the 2014 regulation. They would amount to 5% of the annual budget of the European party or foundation concerned. In addition, the European party or foundation subject to a sanction would not be able to receive funding from the EU budget the following year.

The new rules still have to be formally approved by the Parliament and adopted by the Council before they can enter into force. The vote in the EP plenary is scheduled for March. The Council is expected to adopt the amendments to the 2014 regulation in April.

Background

European political parties are political alliances registered under EU law. They can have national and regional parties, as well as individuals, as members and they must meet a number of requirements and conditions, including representation in at least a quarter of the member states. The EU funding is intended to help them finance their activities at European level and their campaigns in the EP elections.

In 2018, 10 European political parties and 10 European political foundations received funding from the EU budget.

[Download as pdf](#)

[EIOPA calls for improvements to the assessment of the propriety of board members and qualifying shareholders of insurance companies](#)

Press Release

- *The peer review examines how national competent authorities (NCAs) assess the propriety of those responsible for managing insurance companies and, when relevant, the companies' shareholders*
- *In general, NCAs dedicate considerable resources to the initial assessment, but very few NCAs perform any ongoing assessments as part of their supervisory activities*
- *Diverging assessment practices continue to exist among NCAs, which can lead to different outcomes in different countries for the same individual*
- *The review resulted in 80 recommended actions for 29 NCAs*

Frankfurt, 25 January 2019 – Today, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) published the findings of its [peer review](#) examining how national competent authorities (NCAs) assess the propriety of administrative, management or supervisory body (AMSB) members and qualifying shareholders.

EIOPA reviewed national regulatory frameworks and supervisory practices followed by NCAs to assess the propriety of AMSB members and qualifying shareholders at solo and group level, both at the moment of authorisation and on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, EIOPA assessed the effectiveness of cross-border cooperation.

A key requirement of Solvency II is for insurers to be owned and run by persons of integrity. The primary responsibility to ensure the fitness and propriety of AMSB members at all times rests with insurers, with NCAs carrying out their assessment following the assessment by insurers. Similarly, any acquisition of or changes to qualifying shareholders are subject to review and approval by NCAs.

This report presents the overall findings of the peer review, including identified best practices, case studies and recommended actions. The findings are published on a named basis.

In general, NCAs invest considerable resources in the initial assessment of AMSB members and qualifying shareholders. However, these tend to be seen as a one-off task with few NCAs undertaking any ongoing assessments as part of their supervisory activities. Ongoing assessment should involve proactive, risk-based and proportionate engagement resulting from the NCAs' own initiative, as part of its supervisory activities.

Other areas requiring action from NCAs were related to the national legislation or regulatory framework; propriety assessment questionnaires; as well as guidance and supervisory records.

The review was initiated following a number of cross-border cases indicating a lack of harmonisation in relation to the propriety assessment across the European Economic Area, leading to potentially divergent outcomes in different countries in relation to the same person. The review found that complex cross-border cases of propriety assessment can take a long time, hampered by cumbersome information sharing processes. In relation to the

definition of propriety of ASMB members, a significant variation with respect to whether and when to consider ongoing prosecution and pending investigations for criminal and administrative offences became apparent. As a result of this peer review, EIOPA will seek to strengthen and support processes of cross-border assessments.

A shorter [Executive Summary](#), [the full report](#) and the [methodology](#) applied in the conduct of the peer review can be obtained via EIOPA's Website.

Gabriel Bernardino, Chairman of EIOPA, said: *"Behaviour steers business. Character influences governance. Conduct dictates the integrity of financial health and reporting of business. Behaviour, character and conduct often contribute to the likelihood of failure and unfair treatment of consumers. Therefore, propriety is an essential element of the governance and supervision framework of Solvency II. This peer review highlights differences in national legal and regulatory frameworks as well as in supervisory processes in relation to propriety assessments. In addition to improvements that NCAs are already implementing, EIOPA will further strengthen convergence of practices by supporting the process for information gathering and, where necessary, sharing, processes related to complex cross-border cases as well as identify possible ways to strengthen the legal powers of NCAs. In this way, we can protect both the integrity of the internal market and consumers across Europe."*

Background

The European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) regularly conducts peer reviews of supervisory practices, working in close cooperation with national competent authorities (NCAs) to strengthen supervisory convergence and the capacity of NCAs to conduct high-quality and effective supervision. Peer reviews are conducted in the context of EIOPA's oversight work on the basis of the Methodology for Conducting Peer Reviews. NCA representatives for part of the peer review team.

The reference period for this peer review was 1 January 2016 to 15 May 2017. Any improvements implemented by NCAs after the end of the reference period were outside the scope of this peer review.