



**BANK ĊENTRALI TA' MALTA**  
**EUROSISTEMA**  
**CENTRAL BANK OF MALTA**

**CENTRAL BANK OF MALTA**

**DIRECTIVE NO 11**

*in terms of the*

**CENTRAL BANK OF MALTA ACT  
(CAP. 204)**

**MACRO-PRUDENTIAL POLICY**

*Ref: CBM/11*

# **DIRECTIVE NO 11 ON MACRO-PRUDENTIAL POLICY**

Issued on 3 May 2013

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. In terms of article 17A of the Central Bank of Malta Act (Cap. 204) (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”), the Central Bank of Malta (hereinafter referred to as “the Bank”) is empowered to issue directives in order to implement macro-prudential policy and tools.
2. In terms of the Central Bank of Malta Act (Appointment of Designate Authority to implement Macro-Prudential Instruments) Regulations, 2014 (L.N. 29 of 2014), the Bank has been appointed as a designate authority to implement a number of macro-prudential instruments, including the systemic risk buffer, the countercyclical capital buffer, a buffer for global systemically important institutions (G-SIIs), and other systemically important institutions (O-SIIs) jointly with the competent authority, and to identify changes in the intensity of macro-prudential or systemic risk in the financial system.
3. This Directive implements the following:
  - (a) the Recommendation of the European Systemic Risk Board of 22 December 2011 on the macro-prudential mandate of national authorities (ESRB/2011/3), hereinafter referred to as “the ESRB Recommendation on macro-prudential mandate”,
  - (b) the Recommendation of the ESRB of 4 April 2013 on intermediate objectives and instruments of macro-prudential policy (ESRB/2013/1), hereinafter referred to as “the ESRB Recommendation on intermediate objectives and instruments”,
  - (c) provisions of Directive 2013/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on access to the activity of credit institutions and the prudential supervision of credit institutions and investment firms, amending Directive 2002/87/EC and repealing Directives 2006/48/EC and 2006/49/EC, hereinafter referred to as "the CRDIV Directive", and
  - (d) provisions of Regulation (EU) No 575/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on prudential requirements for credit institutions and investment firms and amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012, hereinafter referred to as "the Regulation".

For the purposes of this Directive, unless otherwise provided or made clear from the context, terms used in this Directive shall have the same meaning as is assigned to them under the Act, the CRDIV Directive and the Regulation.

## SCOPE AND APPLICATION

4. This Directive lays down the objective of macro-prudential policy and the way the Bank intends to implement macro-prudential policy.
5. In accordance with the powers conferred to the Bank by the Central Bank of Malta Act (Appointment of Designate Authority to implement Macro-Prudential Instruments) Regulations, 2014 (L.N. 29 of 2014), this Directive shall apply to credit institutions and investment firms.

Provided that this Directive shall not apply to investment firms that are not authorised to provide the investment services listed in points 3 and 6 of Section A of Annex I to Directive 2004/39/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on markets in financial instruments amending Council Directives 85/611/EEC and 93/6/EEC and Directive 2000/12/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directive 93/22/EEC.

## DEFINITIONS

6. In this Directive, unless the context otherwise requires –

“credit institution” means credit institution as defined in point (1) of Article 4(1) of the Regulation;

"EEA State" means a State which is a contracting party to the agreement on the European Economic Area signed at Oporto on 2 May, 1992 as amended by the Protocol signed at Brussels on 17 March, 1993 and as amended by any subsequent acts;

"institution" means a credit institution or an investment firm;

“investment firm” means investment firm as defined in point (2) of Article 4(1) of the Regulation excluding the investment firms referred to in the proviso to paragraph 5 of this Directive;

“Member State" means a Member State of the European Union and includes an EEA State;

"third country" means a country that is not a Member State or an EEA state.

## OBJECTIVE

7. In accordance with the ESRB Recommendation on macro-prudential mandate, the objective of macro-prudential policy shall be to contribute to the safeguard of the stability of the financial system as a whole, primarily by strengthening the resilience of the financial system and decreasing the build-up of systemic risk, thereby ensuring a sustainable contribution of the financial sector to economic growth. Systemic risk shall mean the risk of widespread disruptions to the

provision of financial services that potentially may have serious negative consequences for the economy at large.

8. Macro-prudential policy shall limit systemic and system-wide financial risk through the deployment of macro-prudential instruments. It shall thus minimise the incidence of disruptions in the provision of key financial services by reducing any accumulation of financial imbalances, introducing measures that limit the velocity and magnitude of subsequent adverse economic effects and identifying and addressing any exposures, risk concentrations, linkages, and interdependencies that may be a source of contagion, as well as any spill-over risks that may be detrimental to the functioning of the system as a whole. The scope of macro-prudential policy shall be the financial system as a whole, or particular sectors of the system as opposed to individual components within sectors of the financial system.
9. In accordance with the ESRB Recommendation on intermediate objectives and instruments, the Bank shall define and pursue intermediate objectives of macro-prudential policy for the financial system as a whole. The Bank shall assess the need for further intermediate objectives on the basis of underlying market failures and the specific structural characteristics of the country and/or European Union financial system that could give rise to systemic risk.
10. Intermediate policy objectives shall as a minimum aim:
  - (a) to mitigate and prevent excessive credit growth and leverage;
  - (b) to mitigate and prevent excessive maturity mismatch and market illiquidity;
  - (c) to limit direct and indirect exposure concentrations;
  - (d) to limit the systemic impact of misaligned incentives with a view to reducing moral hazard;
  - (e) to strengthen the resilience of financial infrastructures.
11. In accordance with the ESRB Recommendation on intermediate objectives and instruments, the Bank shall periodically assess, whether the macro-prudential instruments under its direct control or recommendation powers are sufficient to effectively and efficiently pursue the ultimate objective of macro-prudential policy as established in the ESRB Recommendation on macro-prudential mandate, as well as the intermediate objectives as defined in paragraphs 9 and 10. If the assessment indicates that the available instruments are not sufficient, the Bank shall include additional macro-prudential instruments. The Bank shall duly inform the ESRB in case of any change in the set of intermediate objectives and macro-prudential instruments.

## **MACRO-PRUDENTIAL INSTRUMENTS**

12. To fulfil the ultimate objective of macro-prudential policy and increase the resilience of the financial system, the Bank shall develop, issue and apply macro-prudential instruments as appropriate. Generally these shall include:
  - (a) instruments aimed to prevent cyclicity in the financial system on both the asset and liability sides of financial institutions;

- (b) instruments that increase the resilience of the financial system including those linked to leverage, liquidity, intra-financial system exposures; and maturity mismatches; and
- (c) instruments that mitigate structural vulnerabilities in the system and limit systemic spillovers in times of stress.

**13.** Without prejudice to other paragraphs in this Directive, in issuing macro-prudential instruments, the Bank shall as appropriate take into account the views of the competent authority, the Joint Financial Stability Board, the European Central Bank, the European Banking Authority (hereinafter referred to as ‘the EBA’), the European Systemic Risk Board (hereinafter referred to as ‘the ESRB’) and any other national or international authority or institution.

## **SYSTEMIC RISK BUFFER**

**14.** The Bank may introduce a systemic risk buffer of Common Equity Tier 1 capital for the financial sector or one or more subsets of that sector, in order to prevent and mitigate long term non-cyclical systemic or macro-prudential risks not covered by the Regulation, in the meaning of a risk of disruption in the financial system with the potential to have serious negative consequences to the financial system and the real economy.

**15.** For the purpose of paragraph 14, the Bank may require institutions to maintain, in addition to the Common Equity Tier 1 capital maintained to meet the own funds requirement imposed by Article 92 of the Regulation, a systemic risk buffer of Common Equity Tier 1 capital of at least 1 % based on the exposures to which the systemic risk buffer applies in accordance with paragraph 20, on an individual, consolidated, or sub-consolidated basis, as applicable in accordance with Part One, Title II of the Regulation. The Bank may require institutions to maintain the systemic risk buffer on an individual and on a consolidated level.

**16.** Institutions shall not use Common Equity Tier 1 capital that is maintained to meet the requirement under paragraph 15 to meet any requirements imposed under Article 92 of the Regulation and Articles 129 and 130 of the CRDIV Directive and any requirements imposed under Article 102 and 104 of the CRDIV Directive. Where a group which has been identified as a systemically important institution which is subject to a G-SII buffer or an O-SII buffer on a consolidated basis in accordance with paragraphs 33 to 52 is also subject to a systemic risk buffer on a consolidated basis in accordance with this paragraph, the higher of the buffers shall apply. Where an institution, on an individual or sub-consolidated basis, is subject to an O-SII buffer in accordance with paragraphs 33 to 52 and a systemic risk buffer, the higher of the two shall apply.

**17.** Notwithstanding paragraph 16, where the systemic risk buffer applies to all exposures located in Malta, but does not apply to exposures outside Malta, that systemic risk buffer shall be cumulative with the O-SII or G-SII buffer that is applied in accordance with paragraphs 33 to 52.

**18.** Where paragraph 16 applies and an institution is part of a group or a sub-group to which a G-SII or an O-SII belongs, this shall never imply that that institution is,

on an individual basis, subject to a combined buffer requirement that is lower than the sum of the capital conservation buffer, the countercyclical capital buffer, and the higher of the O-SII buffer and systemic risk buffer applicable to it on an individual basis.

- 19.** Where paragraph 17 applies and an institution is part of a group or a sub-group to which a G-SII or an O-SII belongs, this shall never imply that that institution is, on an individual basis, subject to a combined buffer requirement that is lower than the sum of the capital conservation buffer, the countercyclical capital buffer and the sum of the O-SII buffer and systemic risk buffer applicable to it on an individual basis.
- 20.** The systemic risk buffer may apply to exposures located in Malta and may also apply to exposures in third countries. The systemic risk buffer may also apply to exposures located in other Member States subject to Article 133 (15) and (18) of the CRDIV Directive.
- 21.** The systemic risk buffer shall apply to all institutions, or one or more subsets of those institutions, for which the Bank and the competent authority are competent in accordance with the CRDIV Directive and shall be set in gradual or accelerated steps of adjustment of 0.5 percentage point. Different requirements may be introduced for different subsets of the sector.
- 22.** When requiring a systemic risk buffer to be maintained the competent authority or the designated authority shall comply with the following:
  - a) the systemic risk buffer must not entail disproportionate adverse effects on the whole or parts of the financial system of other Member States or of the Union as a whole forming or creating an obstacle to the functioning of the internal market;
  - b) the systemic risk buffer must be reviewed by the competent authority or the designated authority at least every second year.
- 23.** Before setting or resetting a systemic risk buffer rate of up to 3 %, the Bank shall notify the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Commission’), the ESRB, the EBA and the competent and designated authorities of the Member States concerned one month before the publication of the decision referred to in paragraph 26. If the buffer applies to exposures located in third countries the Bank shall also notify the supervisory authorities of those third countries. That notification shall describe in detail:
  - (a) the systemic or macroprudential risk;
  - (b) the reasons why the dimension of the systemic or macroprudential risks threatens the stability of the financial system at national level justifying the systemic risk buffer rate;
  - (c) the justification for why the systemic risk buffer is considered likely to be effective and proportionate to mitigate the risk;
  - (d) an assessment of the likely positive or negative impact of the systemic risk buffer on the internal market of the European Union, based on the available information;

- (e) the justification for why none of the existing measures in this Directive, the CRDIV Directive or in the Regulation, excluding Articles 458 and 459 of that Regulation, alone or in combination, will be sufficient to address the identified macroprudential or systemic risk taking into account the relative effectiveness of those measures;
- (f) the systemic risk buffer rate.

**24.** Before setting or resetting a systemic risk buffer rate of above 3 %, the Bank shall notify the Commission, the ESRB, EBA and the competent and designated authorities of the Member States concerned. If the buffer applies to exposures located in third-countries the Bank shall also notify the supervisory authorities of those third-countries. That notification shall describe in detail:

- (a) the systemic or macroprudential risk;
- (b) the reasons why the dimension of the systemic or macroprudential risks threatens the stability of the financial system at national level justifying the systemic risk buffer rate;
- (c) the justification for why the systemic risk buffer is considered likely to be effective and proportionate to mitigate the risk;
- (d) an assessment of the likely positive or negative impact of the systemic risk buffer on the internal market, based on the available information;
- (e) the justification for why none of the existing measures in this Directive, the CRDIV Directive or in the Regulation, excluding Articles 458 and 459 of that Regulation, alone or in combination, will be sufficient to address the identified macroprudential or systemic risk taking into account the relative effectiveness of those measures;
- (f) the systemic risk buffer rate.

**25.** The Bank may from 1 January 2015 set or reset a systemic risk buffer rate that applies to exposures located in Malta and may also apply to exposures in third countries of up to 5 % and follow the procedures set out in paragraph 22. When setting or resetting a systemic risk buffer rate above 5 % the procedures set out in paragraph 23 shall be complied with.

**26.** Where the systemic risk buffer rate is to be set between 3 % and 5 % in accordance with paragraph 24, the Bank shall always notify the Commission thereof and shall await the opinion of the Commission before adopting the measures in question.

Where the opinion of the Commission is negative, the Bank shall comply with that opinion or give reasons for not so doing.

Where one subset of the financial sector is a subsidiary whose parent is established in another Member State, the Bank shall notify the authorities of that Member State, the Commission and the ESRB. Where the authorities of that Member State disagree with the measures taken by the Bank in accordance with this paragraph and in the case of a negative recommendation of both the Commission and the ESRB, the Bank may refer the matter to the EBA and request its assistance in accordance with Article 19 of the Regulation (EU) No 1093/2010. The decision to set the buffer for those exposures shall be suspended until the EBA has taken a decision.

**27.** The Bank shall announce the setting of the systemic risk buffer by publication on the Bank's website. The announcement shall include at least the following information:

- (a) the systemic risk buffer rate;
- (b) the institutions to which the systemic risk buffer applies;
- (c) a justification for the systemic risk buffer;
- (d) the date from which the institutions must apply the setting or resetting of the systemic risk buffer; and
- (e) the names of the countries where exposures located in those countries are recognised in the systemic risk buffer.

If the publication referred to in point (c) could jeopardise the stability of the financial system, the information under point (c) shall not be included in the announcement.

**28.** Where an institution fails to meet fully the requirement of the systemic risk buffer to be introduced under paragraph 14, it shall be subject to the restrictions on distributions set out in Article 141 (2) and (3) of the CRDIV Directive.

Where the application of those restrictions on distributions leads to an unsatisfactory improvement of the Common Equity Tier 1 capital of the institution in the light of the relevant systemic risk, the Bank and the competent authority may take additional measures in accordance with Article 64 of the CRDIV Directive.

**29.** Following notification as referred to in paragraph 22, the Bank may apply the buffer to all exposures. Where the Bank decides to set the buffer up to 3 % on the basis of exposures in other Member States, the buffer shall be set equally on all exposures located within the European Union.

**30.** The Bank may recognise the systemic risk buffer rate set by other Member States in accordance with Article 133 of the CRDIV Directive and may apply that buffer rate to institutions for the exposures located in the Member State that sets that buffer rate.

**31.** If the Bank recognises the systemic risk buffer rate set by other Member States for institutions in relation to the exposures located in the Member State that sets that buffer rate, it shall notify the Commission, the ESRB, the EBA and the Member State that sets that systemic risk buffer rate.

**32.** When deciding whether to recognise a systemic risk buffer rate set by another Member State, the Bank shall take into consideration the information presented by the Member State that sets that buffer rate in accordance with paragraphs 22, 23 or 24 of this Directive.

**33.** Should the Bank set a systemic risk buffer rate in accordance with paragraphs 14-28 of this Directive, the Bank may ask the ESRB to issue a recommendation as referred to in Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No 1092/2010 to one or more Member States which may recognise the systemic risk buffer rate.

## GLOBAL AND OTHER SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS

- 34.** The Bank shall, acting jointly with the competent authority, identify, on a consolidated basis, G-SIIs, and, on individual, sub-consolidated or consolidated basis, as applicable, O-SIIs, which have been authorised in Malta.
- 35.** G-SIIs shall be an EU parent institution, an EU parent financial holding company, an EU parent mixed financial holding company or an institution and shall not be an institution that is a subsidiary of an EU parent institution, of an EU parent financial holding company or of an EU parent mixed financial holding company.
- 36.** O-SIIs can either be an EU parent institution, an EU parent financial holding company, an EU parent mixed financial holding company or an institution.
- 37.** The Bank shall, acting jointly with the competent authority, identify G-SIIs on the basis of the following criteria:
- (a) size of the group;
  - (b) interconnectedness of the group with the financial system;
  - (c) substitutability of the services or of the financial infrastructure provided by the group;
  - (d) complexity of the group;
  - (e) cross-border activity of the group, including cross border activity between Member States and between a Member State and a third country.

Each category shall receive an equal weighting and shall consist of quantifiable indicators.

This methodology shall produce an overall score for each entity assessed as referred to in paragraph 33, which allows G-SIIs to be identified and allocated into a sub-category as described in paragraph 43.

- 38.** O-SIIs shall be identified in accordance with paragraphs 33 and 35. Systemic importance shall be assessed on the basis of at least any of the following criteria:
- (a) size;
  - (b) importance for the economy of the European Union or of Malta;
  - (c) significance of cross-border activities;
  - (d) interconnectedness of the institution or group with the financial system.
- 39.** Each G-SII shall, on a consolidated basis, maintain a G-SII buffer which shall correspond to the sub-category to which the G-SII is allocated. That buffer shall consist of and shall be supplementary to Common Equity Tier 1 capital.
- 40.** The Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, may require each O-SII, on a consolidated or sub-consolidated or individual basis, as applicable, to maintain an O-SII buffer of up to 2 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation, taking into account the criteria

for the identification of the O-SII. This buffer shall consist of and shall be supplementary to Common Equity Tier 1 capital.

**41.** When requiring an O-SII buffer to be maintained the Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, shall ensure that:

- (a) the O-SII buffer must not entail disproportionate adverse effects on the whole or parts of the financial system of other Member States or of the European Union as a whole forming or creating an obstacle to the functioning of the internal market;
- (b) the O-SII buffer is reviewed at least annually.

**42.** Before setting or resetting an O-SII buffer, the Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, shall notify the Commission, the ESRB, the EBA, and the competent and designated authorities of the Member States concerned one month before the publication of the decision referred to in paragraph 39. That notification shall describe in detail:

- (a) the justification for why the O-SII buffer is considered likely to be effective and proportionate to mitigate the risk;
- (b) an assessment of the likely positive or negative impact of the O-SII buffer on the internal market, based on information which is available to the Member State;
- (c) the O-SII buffer rate to be set.

**43.** Without prejudice to paragraphs 14 to 28 and paragraph 39, where an O-SII is a subsidiary of either a G-SII or an O-SII which is an EU parent institution and subject to an O-SII buffer on a consolidated basis, the buffer that applies at individual or sub-consolidated level for the O-SII shall not exceed the higher of:

- (a) 1 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) the Regulation; and
- (b) the G-SII or O-SII buffer rate applicable to the group at consolidated level.

**44.** The Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, shall establish a minimum of five subcategories of G-SIIs. The lowest boundary and the boundaries between each subcategory shall be determined by the scores under the identification methodology. The cut-off scores between adjacent sub-categories shall be defined clearly and shall adhere to the principle that there is a constant linear increase of systemic significance, between each sub-category resulting in a linear increase in the requirement of additional Common Equity Tier 1 capital, with the exception of the highest sub-category. For the purposes of this paragraph, systemic significance is the expected impact exerted by the G-SII's distress on the global financial market. The lowest sub-category shall be assigned a G-SII buffer of 1 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation and the buffer assigned to each sub-category shall increase in gradients of 0.5 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation up to and including the fourth sub-category. The highest sub-category of the G-SII buffer shall be subject to a buffer of 3.5 % of

the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation.

**45.** Without prejudice to paragraphs 33 and 43, the Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, may, in the exercise of sound supervisory judgment:

- (a) re-allocate a G-SII from a lower sub-category to a higher sub-category;
- (b) allocate an entity as referred to in paragraphs 33 to 35 that has an overall score that is lower than the cut-off score of the lowest sub-category to that sub-category or to a higher sub-category, thereby designating it as a G-SII.

**46.** Where the Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, takes a decision in accordance with paragraph 44(b), it shall notify the EBA accordingly, providing reasons.

**47.** The Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, shall notify the names of the G-SIIs and O-SIIs and the respective sub-category to which each G-SII is allocated, to the Commission, the ESRB and EBA, and shall disclose their names to the public by means of publication in the Bank's website. The Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, shall disclose to the public the sub-category to which each G-SII is allocated by means of publication in the Bank's website. The Bank, acting jointly with the competent authority, shall review annually the identification of G-SIIs and O-SIIs and the G-SII allocation into the respective sub-categories and report the result to the systemically important institution concerned, to the Commission, the ESRB and EBA and disclose the updated list of identified systemically important institutions to the public by means of publication in the Bank's website and shall disclose to the public the sub-category into which each identified G-SII is allocated by means of publication in the Bank's website.

**48.** Systemically important institutions shall not use Common Equity Tier 1 capital that is maintained to meet the requirements under paragraphs 38 and 39 to meet any requirements imposed under Article 92 of the Regulation and Articles 129 and 130 of the CRDIV Directive and any requirements imposed under Articles 102 and 104 of the CRDIV Directive.

**49.** Where a group, on a consolidated basis, is subject to the following, the higher buffer shall apply in each case:

- (a) a G-SII buffer and an O-SII buffer;
- (b) a G-SII buffer, an O-SII buffer and a systemic risk buffer in accordance with paragraphs 14 to 28.

Where an institution, on an individual or sub-consolidated basis is subject to an O-SII buffer and a systemic risk buffer in accordance with paragraphs 14 to 28, the higher of the two shall apply.

**50.** Notwithstanding paragraph 48, where the systemic risk buffer applies to all exposures located in Malta to address the macro-prudential risk, but does not

apply to exposures outside Malta, that systemic risk buffer shall be cumulative with the O-SII or G-SII buffer.

- 51.** Where paragraph 48 applies and an institution is part of a group or a sub-group to which a G-SII or an O-SII belongs, this shall never imply that that institution is, on an individual basis, subject to a combined buffer requirement that is lower than the sum of the capital conservation buffer, the countercyclical capital buffer, and the higher of the O-SII buffer and systemic risk buffer applicable to it on an individual basis.
- 52.** Where paragraph 49 applies and an institution is part of a group or a sub-group to which a G-SII or an O-SII belongs, this shall never imply that that institution is, on an individual basis, subject to a combined buffer requirement that is lower than the sum of the capital conservation buffer, the countercyclical capital buffer, and the sum of the O-SII buffer and systemic risk buffer applicable to it on an individual basis.
- 53.** The G-SII buffer shall be implemented as follows:
  - a)** 25% of the G-SII buffer, set in accordance with paragraph 38, in 2016;
  - b)** 50% of the G-SII buffer, set in accordance with paragraph 38, in 2017;
  - c)** 75% of the G-SII buffer, set in accordance with paragraph 38, in 2018;
  - d)** 100% of the G-SII buffer, set in accordance with paragraph 38, in 2019.

## **COUNTERCYCLICAL CAPITAL BUFFER**

- 54.** The Bank shall calculate for every quarter a buffer guide as a reference to exercise its judgment in setting the countercyclical buffer rate in accordance with paragraph 54. The buffer guide shall reflect, in a meaningful way, the credit cycle and the risks due to excess credit growth and shall duly take into account specificities of the Maltese economy. It shall be based on the deviation of the ratio of credit-to-GDP from its long-term trend, taking into account, inter alia:
  - (a) an indicator of growth of levels of credit and, in particular, an indicator reflective of the changes in the ratio of credit granted to GDP;
  - (b) any current guidance maintained by the ESRB in accordance with Article 135(1)(b) of the CRDIV Directive.
- 55.** The Bank shall assess and set the appropriate countercyclical buffer rate on a quarterly basis, and in so doing shall take into account:
  - (a) the buffer guide calculated in accordance with paragraph 53;
  - (b) any current guidance maintained by the ESRB in accordance with Article 135(1)(a), (c) and (d) of the CRDIV Directive and any recommendations issued by the ESRB on the setting of a buffer rate;
  - (c) other variables that the Bank considers relevant for addressing cyclical systemic risk.
- 56.** The countercyclical buffer rate, expressed as a percentage of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation of

institutions that have credit exposures in Malta, shall be between 0 % and 2.5 %, calibrated in steps of 0.25 percentage points or multiples of 0.25 percentage points. Where justified on the basis of the considerations set out in paragraph 54, the Bank may set a countercyclical buffer rate in excess of 2.5 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation for the purpose set out in Article 140(2) of the CRDIV Directive.

- 57.** Where the Bank sets the countercyclical buffer rate above zero for the first time, or where, thereafter, the Bank increases the prevailing countercyclical buffer rate setting, it shall also decide the date from which the institutions must apply that increased buffer for the purposes of calculating their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer. That date shall be no later than 12 months after the date when the increased buffer setting is announced in accordance with paragraph 58. If the date is less than 12 months after the increased buffer setting is announced, that shorter deadline for application shall be justified on the basis of exceptional circumstances.
- 58.** If the Bank reduces the existing countercyclical buffer rate, whether or not it is reduced to zero, it shall also decide an indicative period during which no increase in the buffer is expected. However, that indicative period shall not bind the Bank.
- 59.** The Bank shall announce the quarterly setting of the countercyclical buffer rate by publication on its website. The announcement shall include at least the following information:
- (a) the applicable countercyclical buffer rate;
  - (b) the relevant credit-to-GDP-ratio and its deviation from the long-term trend;
  - (c) the buffer guide calculated in accordance with paragraph 53;
  - (d) a justification for that buffer rate;
  - (e) where the buffer rate is increased, the date from which the institutions must apply that increased buffer rate for the purposes of calculating their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer;
  - (f) where the date referred to in point (e) is less than 12 months after the date of the announcement under this paragraph, a reference to the exceptional circumstances that justify that shorter deadline for application;
  - (g) where the buffer rate is decreased, the indicative period during which no increase in the buffer rate is expected, together with a justification for that period.

The Bank shall take all reasonable steps to coordinate the timing of that announcement.

The Bank shall notify each quarterly setting of the countercyclical buffer rate and the information specified in points (a) to (g) to the ESRB.

- 60.** Where in accordance with Article 136(4) of the CRDIV Directive a designated authority in another Member State or a relevant third country authority has set a countercyclical buffer rate in excess of 2.5 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation, the Bank may

recognise that buffer rate for the purposes of the calculation by institutions of their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffers.

- 61.** Where the Bank in accordance with paragraph 59 recognises a buffer rate in excess of 2.5 % of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation, it shall announce that recognition by publication on its website. The announcement shall include at least the following information:
- (a) the applicable countercyclical buffer rate;
  - (b) the Member State or third countries to which it applies;
  - (c) where the buffer rate is increased, the date from which the institutions must apply that increased buffer rate for the purposes of calculating their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer;
  - (d) where the date referred to in point (c) is less than 12 months after the date of the announcement under this paragraph, a reference to the exceptional circumstances that justify that shorter deadline for application.
- 62.** Where the Bank considers that a countercyclical buffer rate which has been set and published by the relevant third-country authority for a third country is not sufficient to protect European Union institutions appropriately from the risks of excessive credit growth in that country, it may notify the ESRB that it considers that buffer rate to be insufficient for that purpose, and the ESRB may, in accordance with Article 138 of the CRDIV Directive, issue a recommendation to designated authorities on the appropriate countercyclical buffer rate for exposures to that third country.
- 63.** Irrespective of any recommendation issued by the ESRB pursuant to Article 138 of the CRDIV Directive, if a countercyclical buffer rate has not been set and published by the relevant third-country authority for a third country to which one or more European Union institutions have credit exposures, the Bank may set the countercyclical buffer rate that institutions must apply for the purposes of the calculation of their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer for exposures to that third country.
- 64.** Where a countercyclical buffer rate has been set and published by the relevant third-country authority for a third country, the Bank may set a different buffer rate for that third country for the purposes of the calculation by institutions of their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer if it reasonably considers that the buffer rate set by the relevant third country authority is not sufficient to protect those institutions appropriately from the risks of excessive credit growth in that country.

When exercising the power under the first subparagraph, the Bank shall not set a countercyclical buffer rate below the level set by the relevant third country authority unless that buffer rate exceeds 2.5 %, expressed as a percentage of the total risk exposure amount calculated in accordance with Article 92(3) of the Regulation of institutions that have credit exposures in that third country.

In order to achieve coherence for the buffer settings for third countries the Bank shall take into account any recommendations of the ESRB for such settings.

- 65.** Where the Bank sets a countercyclical buffer rate for a third country pursuant to paragraph 62 or 63 which increases the existing applicable countercyclical buffer rate, the Bank shall decide the date from which institutions must apply that buffer rate for the purposes of calculating their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer. That date shall be no later than 12 months from the date when the buffer rate is announced in accordance with paragraph 65. If that date is less than 12 months after the setting is announced, that shorter deadline for application shall be justified on the basis of exceptional circumstances.
- 66.** The Bank shall publish any setting of a countercyclical buffer rate for a third country pursuant to paragraph 62 or 63 on its website, and shall include the following information:
- (a) the countercyclical buffer rate and the third country to which it applies;
  - (b) a justification for that buffer rate;
  - (c) where the buffer rate is set above zero for the first time or is increased, the date from which the institutions must apply that increased buffer rate for the purposes of calculating their institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer;
  - (d) where the date referred to in point (c) is less than 12 months after the date of the publication of the setting under this paragraph, a reference to the exceptional circumstances that justify that shorter deadline for application.

- 67.** The countercyclical capital buffer shall apply from 1 January 2016 subject to the transitional periods prescribed in Article 160 (1), (2), (3) and (4) of the CRDIV Directive.

In accordance with Article 160(6) of the CRDIV Directive, the Bank, in consultation with the competent authority, may implement the countercyclical capital buffer prior to 1 January 2016:

Provided that where the Bank, in consultation with the competent authority, imposes a shorter transitional period for the countercyclical capital buffer, such shorter period shall only apply for the purposes of the calculation of the institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer by credit institutions licensed in terms of the Banking Act (Cap. 371).

In line with Article 160(6) of the CRDIV Directive, where the Bank, in consultation with the competent authority, imposes such a shorter transitional period, it shall inform the relevant parties, including the European Commission, the ESRB, the EBA and the relevant supervisory colleges, accordingly.

## **GENERAL**

- 68.** Notwithstanding the rules outlined above, in accordance with article 5(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1024/2013 of 15 October 2013 conferring specific tasks on the European Central Bank concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions ‘hereinafter referred to as “the SSM Regulation”’, the ECB may, if deemed necessary, instead of the competent authority or the Bank, apply higher requirements for capital buffers than applied

by the competent authority or the Bank to be held by credit institutions at the relevant level in accordance with relevant EU law in addition to own funds requirements referred to in point (d) of Article 4(1) of the SSM Regulation, including countercyclical buffer rates, subject to the conditions set out in paragraphs 4 and 5 of Article 5 of the SSM Regulation, and apply more stringent measures aimed at addressing systemic or macro-prudential risks at the level of credit institutions subject to the procedures set out in the Regulation and the CRDIV Directive in the cases specifically set out in relevant EU law. The Bank shall publish such higher requirements applied by the ECB on its website.

- 69.** Any institution shall have the duty to transmit any document and any other information which is requested by the Bank from time to time and to comply with any request made by the Bank under article 23 of the Act, without invoking any professional or other secrecy restrictions.
- 70.** Any macro-prudential decision, its motivation, and any statements on systemic risk shall be made public on the Bank's website in a timely manner, unless there are risks to financial stability in doing so. Furthermore, the Bank shall set out and publish any relevant macro-prudential strategies. The Bank shall make private statements by communicating directly with any institution on any macro-prudential decision, any statement on systemic risk or any matter affecting financial stability which is related to that institution where necessary.