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**INTERNAL AUDITORS COMMITTEE MANDATE  
AND  
AUDIT CHARTER FOR THE  
EUROSYSTEM /ESCB AND THE SINGLE SUPERVISORY MECHANISM**

With this Audit Charter, the Governing Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) defines and approves the authority, purpose, role and responsibility of the Internal Auditors Committee (IAC)<sup>1</sup> and its contribution to the governance of the Eurosystem, the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) and the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM).

The scope of the IAC's assurance and advisory services covers the performance of the Eurosystem/ESCB and SSM tasks and activities as defined in the Statute of the ESCB and the ECB and in Council Regulation (EU) No 1024/2013<sup>2</sup>, including their enabling processes and associated risks, and/or activities decided by the ECB Executive Board, Governing Council or General Council, hereafter referred to as "decision-making bodies". Further to the aforementioned scope, the IAC may propose audits on topics of common or topical interest to the decision-making bodies and may be requested to conduct investigations.

### **1. Role and purpose**

In line with the Institute of Internal Auditors' Global Internal Audit Standards<sup>TM</sup> (GIAS), internal auditing strengthens the organisation's ability to create, protect and sustain value by providing independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight. Internal auditing enhances the organisation's:

- successful achievement of its objectives;
- governance, risk management, and control processes;
- decision-making and oversight; reputation and credibility with its stakeholders;
- ability to serve the public interest.

The internal audit function is most effective when:

- internal auditing is performed by competent professionals in conformance with the GIAS, which are set in the public interest;
- the internal audit function is independently positioned;
- internal auditors are free from undue influence and committed to making objective assessments.

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<sup>1</sup> Established by the Governing Council according to Article 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Central Bank (ECB)

<sup>2</sup> Council 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.

The IAC is the internal audit function of the Eurosystem/ESCB and the SSM. The IAC members, as a collective body, fulfil the role of the Chief Audit Executive (CAE) of the Eurosystem/ESCB and of the SSM respectively. Therefore, the appointed IAC members shall in principle be the CAEs of their respective National Central Banks and of the ECB (CBs) and National Competent Authorities (NCAs<sup>3</sup>) and, in case of the IAC in Eurosystem/ESCB composition, as appropriate, their appointed deputies.

The purpose of the IAC is to act as the third and independent line within the Eurosystem/ESCB and the SSM governance framework. It is the responsibility of the Eurosystem/ESCB Committees and of CBs' and NCAs' operational management to establish appropriate systems of internal controls. Thus, operational management acts as the first line. The risk management, control, compliance and oversight functions established and deployed by management represent the second line.

## **2. Independence, reporting relationships and organisational position**

The IAC reports to the decision-making bodies and, where appropriate, to the Supervisory Board as well as to the Audit Committee in line with its responsibilities. To ensure its independence the IAC performs its tasks under the direct responsibility of the decision-making bodies.

The internal audit function of each CB/NCA shall without delay report any impairment to its independence to the IAC and shall annually confirm its organisational independence to the IAC. Impairments to the independence of the IAC or of any internal audit function in the CBs/NCAs shall be reported to the decision-making bodies, Audit Committee and, where appropriate, to the Supervisory Board.

The IAC and its substructures are composed, in case of the IAC in Eurosystem/ESCB composition, of the internal auditors of the CBs and, in case of the IAC in SSM composition, of the internal auditors of the CBs as well as of the NCAs.

All CBs and NCAs shall maintain an internal audit function within the organisation that is positioned to exhibit the highest level of independence. Each of these internal audit functions shall have adequate resources to fulfil its responsibilities in line with this Audit Charter.

The IAC audit assurance is based on the consolidation and analysis of audits performed in the CBs/NCAs, the IAC audit work, and/or the work performed by the IAC substructures. Each IAC member assumes full responsibility for the management, performance and independent reporting of its respective parts of the IAC audit work. The IAC is responsible for planning, structuring, performing, coordinating and supervising the audit work at Eurosystem/ESCB and SSM level. Through joint audit work, the IAC fosters consistency and convergence of the CBs/NCAs' audit functions.

## **3. Objectivity**

The IAC and each internal audit function in the CBs/NCAs shall remain free from interference and all conditions that threaten the ability of internal auditors to carry out their responsibilities in an unbiased manner, including matters of audit selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing and communication, to maintain objectivity. Neither the IAC nor the local internal audit functions shall have authority over, or direct responsibility for the activities audited and shall avoid conflicts of interest in performing their tasks.

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<sup>3</sup> 'National competent authority' designated by a participating Member State in accordance with 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 (1) and Directive 2013/36/EU (cf. Council Regulation (EU) No 1024/2013).

Internal auditors shall without delay report any impairments to their objectivity to the CAEs of their respective CBs/NCAs.

#### **4. Authority**

The IAC shall have access to all auditee personnel, records, information, systems and property as deemed necessary to carry out its responsibilities. In this context, the IAC may also require ongoing access to information systems and data. All requested information is to be provided in a truthful and complete manner within a reasonable period of time. The IAC shall respect the value and ownership of information it receives and shall not disclose information without appropriate authority unless there is a legal or professional obligation to do so. All the above shall also apply for each internal audit function within their respective CB/NCA.

The IAC shall inform the decision-making bodies, Audit Committee and, where appropriate, the Supervisory Board of any attempt to hinder it or any of the internal audit functions in the performance of its duties.

#### **5. Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the IAC are to:

- define within the framework of this Audit Charter the operational principles for the performance of its work in an internal audit manual which is binding for all CBs and, as related to the SSM, all NCAs;
- prepare the Eurosystem/ESCB and SSM risk-based audit plan, including the related resource allocation by means of IAC substructures, at least annually for approval by the decision-making bodies and, as concerns the SSM tasks and activities, for prior endorsement by the Supervisory Board and, in both cases subject to the Audit Committee's opinion. The Eurosystem/ESCB Committees and the Supervisory Board are consulted during the preparation of the audit plan and receive the approved plan for information. The audit plan may be subject to review and modification, and significant changes are to be communicated to the aforementioned stakeholders in line with their respective roles;
- implement the Eurosystem/ESCB and SSM audit plan by conducting assurance and advisory services;
- upon request of the decision-making bodies, conduct investigations;
- communicate the results of the assurance and advisory activities as well as of the investigations, as appropriate, to the decision-making bodies and the Audit Committee, to the Eurosystem/ESCB Committees concerned and, as regards the SSM tasks and activities, to the Supervisory Board;
- monitor, assess and report on the implementation status of audit recommendations to the decision-making bodies and the Audit Committee, to the Eurosystem/ESCB Committees concerned and, as regards SSM tasks and activities, to the Supervisory Board;
- define common methodologies and procedures for the audit work in the Eurosystem/ESCB and SSM, and exchange best practices and technical expertise within the audit community;

- report periodically to the decision-making bodies and Audit Committee and, where appropriate, to the Supervisory Board on the fulfilment of the Eurosystem/ESCB and SSM audit plan and other activities; and
- report to the decision-making bodies and the Audit Committee on the IAC quality assurance and improvement program, including the internal audit functions' status of achieving the conformance with the mandatory elements of the Institute of Internal Auditors' (IIA) International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), which are the Global Internal Audit Standards and Topical Requirements.

The IAC may undertake ad-hoc audits and other activities authorised or requested by the decision-making bodies. The IAC may exceptionally launch such ad-hoc engagements at its own initiative and inform the decision-making bodies, Audit Committee, and the Supervisory Board as appropriate, thereon without undue delay.

## **6. Ethics and professionalism**

The IAC and the internal audit functions in the CB/NCAs abide by the mandatory elements of the IIA's IPPF. The IAC and CAEs of the respective CBs/NCAs shall ensure that internal auditors perform their tasks with integrity, objectivity, competency, due professional care and confidentiality whilst ensuring compliance with applicable laws, regulations and codes of conduct.

In doing so, the internal audit functions shall ensure that they possess and develop the professional competency necessary for the performance of their responsibilities. The IAC shall support the internal audit functions through the exchange of expertise, training and development of internal auditors.

## **7. Relationship between IAC and Audit Committee**

Please refer to the [Audit Committee mandate](#)<sup>1</sup>.

## **8. Review of this Charter**

The IAC shall assess whether changes in circumstances justify revision of this Audit Charter including Mandate and inform the Audit Committee, the decision-making bodies and Supervisory Board accordingly. In any case, The IAC shall review this Audit Charter at least once every three years and report thereon to the decision-making bodies, the Audit Committee and the Supervisory Board.

## **9. Publication of this Charter**

This Audit Charter shall be published on each CB's and NCA's website.