

Financial supervision: powers of the European Banking Authority, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority and the European Securities and Markets Authority

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution under the consultation procedure amending the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives 1998/26/EC, 2002/87/EC, 2003/6/EC, 2003/41/EC, 2003/71/EC, 2004/39/EC, 2004/109/EC, 2005/60/EC, 2006/48/EC, 2006/49/EC and 2009/65/EC in respect of the powers of the European Banking Authority, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority and the European Securities and Markets Authority. The amendments are the result of a compromise agreement between Parliament and Council. The main points are as follows:

Objectives: the objectives of the directive should include the sustainability of the financial system, the protection of the real economy and the safeguard of public finances.

Technical standards: the text recalls that the Regulations establishing the ESFS provide that, in the areas specifically set out in the relevant legislation, the ESA may develop draft technical standards, to be submitted to the Commission for adoption in accordance with Articles 290 and 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) by means of delegated or implementing acts. **This Directive identifies a first set of such areas** and should be without prejudice to inclusion of other areas in the future. The relevant legislation should define those areas where the ESA are empowered to develop draft technical standards and how they should be adopted. The relevant legislation should lay down the elements, conditions and specifications as detailed in Article 290 TFEU in the case of delegated acts. The identification of areas for technical standards should strike an appropriate balance between building a single set of harmonised rules and avoiding unduly complicated regulation and enforcement. The only areas selected should be those in which consistent technical rules will contribute significantly and effectively to the achievement of the objectives of the relevant legislation, while ensuring that policy decisions are taken by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in accordance with their usual procedures.

Members state that **matters subject to technical standards should be genuinely technical**, where their development requires the expertise of supervisory experts. The technical standards adopted as delegated acts should further develop, specify and determine the conditions for consistent harmonisation of the rules included in basic instruments adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, supplementing or amending certain non-essential elements of the legislative act. On the other hand, technical standards adopted as implementing acts should set conditions for the uniform application of legally binding EU acts. Technical standards should not involve policy choices.

The compromise text notes that the European Council endorsed the four-level 'Lamfalussy' approach to make the regulatory process for Union financial legislation more efficient and transparent. The Commission is empowered to adopt level-2 measures in many areas, and a large number of level-2 Commission regulations and directives are in force. In cases where the technical standards are designed to further develop, specify or determine the conditions of application of such level-2 measures, they should be adopted only once the relevant level-2 measures has been adopted and should respect the content of that level-2 measure.

Binding technical standards contribute to a single rulebook for financial services legislation as endorsed by the European Council in its conclusions of June 2009. To the extent that certain requirements in Union legislative acts are not fully harmonised, and in accordance with the precautionary principle on supervision, binding technical standards developing, specifying or determining the conditions of application for those requirements should not prevent Member States from requiring additional information or imposing more stringent requirements. Technical standards should therefore allow Member States to do so in specific areas, when those legislative acts provide for such discretion.

Settlement of disagreements: the regulations establishing the ESA require that the cases where the mechanism to settle disagreements between competent national authorities may be applied are to be specified in the sectoral legislation. **This Directive identifies a first set of such cases** and should be without prejudice to adding further cases in the future. This Directive should not prevent the ESA from acting in accordance with other powers or fulfilling tasks specified in their establishing regulations, including non-binding mediation and contributing to the consistent, efficient and effective application of legal acts of the Union. Moreover, in those areas where some form of non-binding mediation is already established in the relevant legal act, or where there are time limits for joint decisions to be taken by one or more competent national authorities, amendments are needed to ensure clarity and minimum disruption to the process for reaching a joint decision, but also that where necessary, the ESA should be able to resolve disagreements. The binding procedure for the settlement of disagreements is designed to solve situations where competent supervisors cannot resolve, among themselves, procedural or substantive issues relating to compliance with legal acts of the Union.

This Directive therefore identifies situations where a procedural or a substantive issue of compliance with Union law may need to be resolved and the supervisors may not be able to resolve the matter on their own. In such a situation, one of the supervisors involved should be able to raise the issue with the competent European Supervisory Authority. That European Supervisory Authority should act in accordance with the procedure set out in its establishing regulation and in this Directive. It should be able to require the competent authorities concerned to take specific action or to refrain from action in order to settle the matter and to ensure compliance with Union law, with binding effects on the competent authorities concerned. In cases where the relevant legal act of the Union confers discretion on Member States, decisions taken by a European Supervisory Authority should not replace the exercise of discretion by the competent authorities in compliance with Union law.

Comitology: in order to give full effect to the new framework provided for in the TFEU, it is necessary to adapt and replace the implementing powers designed under Article 202 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (EC Treaty) with the appropriate provisions in accordance with Articles 290 and 291 TFEU. That review should be finalised within three years from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the remaining powers conferred under Article 202 EC Treaty should cease to apply on that date. The alignment of comitology procedures to the TFEU should be effected on a case-by-case basis. In order to take account of the technical developments in the financial markets and to specify the requirements laid down in the directives amended by this Directive, the Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 290 TFEU.

The European Parliament and the Council have three months from the date of notification to object to a delegated act. At the initiative of the European Parliament or the Council, it should be possible to prolong that period by three months in regard to significant areas of concern. It should also be possible for the European Parliament and the Council to inform the other institutions of their intention not to raise objections. Such early approval of delegated acts is particularly appropriate when deadlines need to be met, for example where there are timetables in the basic act for the Commission to adopt delegated acts.

Confidentiality: confidential information transmitted to or exchanged between competent authorities and the European Securities and Markets Authority or the European Systemic Risk Board should be covered by the obligation of professional secrecy, to which the persons employed or formerly employed by the competent authorities receiving the information are subject.

Report: the Commission should, by 1 January 2014, report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the submission by the ESA of the draft technical standards provided for in this Directive and present any appropriate proposals.