

KROLL BOND RATING AGENCY LLC'S CERTIFICATION STATUS WITHDRAWN

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's securities markets regulator, has [withdrawn](#) Kroll Bond Rating Agency LLC's (Kroll LLC) ability to certify its credit ratings for use in the European Union (EU).

The withdrawal decision follows the official notification sent to ESMA by Kroll LLC on 23 July 2020 of its intention to renounce its ability to certify credit ratings for use in the EU under the conditions set out in Article 20(1)(a) of the CRA Regulation. Following the removal of Kroll LLC's certification status, Kroll Bond Rating Agency EU will continue to issue credit ratings and will endorse some of the credit ratings of Kroll LLC for use in the EU.

Point (a) of Article 20(1) of the CRA Regulation provides that without prejudice to Article 24, ESMA shall withdraw the registration of a credit rating agency (CRA) where the CRA "expressly renounces the registration or has provided no credit ratings for the preceding six months". Article 5(8) of the CRA Regulation explains that Article 20 also applies to certified CRAs.

EMCDDA signs new agreement with Serbia

The EMCDDA and [Serbia](#) signed a [new Working Arrangement](#) this month, which will pave the way for greater cooperation on monitoring the drug phenomenon in Europe and beyond its borders. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the agreement was formalised through an exchange of letters between: Milan Pekić, Acting Director of the Office for Combating Drugs of the Government of Serbia; Prof. Dr Berislav Vekić, Secretary of State, Ministry of Health; Vladimir Rebić, General Police Director, Ministry of the Interior and Alexis Goosdeel, EMCDDA Director.

The Working Arrangement originates in a request, in April 2019, from the Serbian Office for Combating Drugs (OCD), the body in charge of coordinating drug policy in the Republic of Serbia. After receiving the favourable opinion of the European Commission on the draft text in December 2019, the EMCDDA Management Board mandated the Director to sign the agreement.

This Working Arrangement is the third to be signed between the EMCDDA and a partner from South-eastern Europe (the first being Albania in 2019 and the second being Kosovo* in September 2020). The new agreement provides for the exchange of expertise between the entities concerned, thus contributing to developing drug data-collection and reporting capacity in the region.

The EMCDDA began its cooperation with Serbia in 2007 in the framework of EU-funded technical assistance projects designed to prepare Western Balkan partners for accession to the EU (and for participation in the work of the EMCDDA and its [Reitox network](#)). Serbia is one of the six partners currently receiving assistance under the [EMCDDA IPA7 project](#), running from July 2019 to June 2022.

Serbia's cooperation with the EMCDDA operates through its National Drug Observatory (NDO), the National Monitoring Centre for Drugs, located within the Ministry of Health. Following an assessment by EMCDDA experts in June 2018, it was revealed that, in the past few years, progress has been made on the three core functions carried out by an NDO: data collection; monitoring, analysis and interpretation of the data collected; and reporting and dissemination.

The EMCDDA and Serbia are currently working together to consolidate Serbia's capacity to monitor the drug phenomenon through the use of evidence-based tools and knowledge built and promoted within the EU. This cooperation led to the production of a national drug report published in July 2017 on the EMCDDA website.

This new Working Arrangement, as well as the current EMCDDA–IPA 7 project, will also allow for the exchange of expertise and data on new psychoactive substances between the EMCDDA and Serbia, thanks to the Serbian national early-warning system.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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[Press release – Agreement on a Mandatory Transparency Register](#)



The agreement establishes principles and rules for a coordinated approach to transparent and ethical interest representation at EU level, building a common culture of transparency while taking into account the signatory institutions' respective specificities.

A wide scope

The reinforced Transparency Register will apply to all three institutions, including the Council for the first time. Other European Union institutions and bodies can voluntarily use it too, thereby increasing the potential for greater transparency at EU level. The member states' permanent representations will also take part through unilateral voluntary measures.

Activities aimed at influencing the decision-making processes or the formulation or implementation of policy or legislation at EU-level will fall within the Transparency Register's scope. The negotiators agreed on a non-exhaustive list that includes organising meetings or events, contributing to public consultations, communication campaigns, and preparing position papers or amendments. The same types of activities by third countries will also be covered, when they are carried out by entities without diplomatic status or through intermediaries. Interest representatives will have to declare the interests and objectives they promote, as well as to specify the clients they represent. All registrants will need to provide information on the resources that they devote to interest representation activities, with a new focus on sources of funding.

Some activities will remain possible without registration, such as

spontaneous meetings, providing information at the request of the institutions, legal advice, and activities by social partners, political parties, intergovernmental organisations or public authorities of the member states. However, associations and networks of such public authorities engaging in interest representation activities can register, if they choose to do so. In order to avoid unnecessary administrative burden, activities carried out by interest representatives exclusively on behalf of an association or network of which they are a part will be considered to be activities of that network or association.

Conditionality and complementary transparency measures

Each signatory institution will make registration of interest representatives a precondition for certain activities, and may put in place complementary transparency measures to encourage registration. In doing so, the institutions will ensure that those measures are consistent with the agreement and contribute to a high standard of transparent and ethical interest representation. All measures must be made publicly available on a dedicated webpage. You can read more on this in the [relevant press release \(7.12.2020\)](#).

Code of conduct and operational structure

Applicants must observe a code of conduct in order to be eligible for registration. Stronger provisions on monitoring and investigations ensure that effective action can be taken if the code of conduct is not observed, potentially resulting in the removal of registrants. The existing Joint Transparency Register Secretariat in charge of these processes will evolve into a tripartite operational structure, in which the three institutions will be represented on an equal footing. A Management Board will oversee the overall implementation of the Agreement. Find out more in the

Press conference

A press conference (at 15.45 on 15 December, in Parliament's Anna Politkovskaya press conference room) will be held with the negotiators, Parliament's Vice-President [Katarina Barley](#) and Constitutional Affairs Committee Member [Danuta Hübner](#), German Minister of State for Europe [Michael Roth](#) for the Presidency of the Council, and Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency [Věra Jourová](#). Follow live or on VOD on [EbS](#) and [Parliament's Multimedia Centre](#).

Quotes

EP negotiator Katarina Barley (S&D, DE) said: "I am confident that the newly evolved Transparency Register will be effective, balanced, and increase citizens' trust in the EU institutions. Our objectives have been achieved in this agreement: the EU will have a stronger Transparency Register, we have avoided unnecessary administrative burden for registrants, and the free mandate of European citizens' elected representatives has been safeguarded. The improved rules provided in the code of conduct for interest representatives will also undoubtedly make a big positive impact."

EP negotiator Danuta Hübner (EPP, PL) said: “I am pleased that the new agreement expands the scope of the register to the Council. In addition, we have broadened the scope of the new transparency register. These, among other improvements, now allow us to monitor interest representation throughout the EU’s decision-making procedures in a more coherent manner. This agreement signals a new chapter for transparency in the EU.”

Next steps

The agreement will have to undergo internal adoption procedures in each institution, after which it can be signed and enter into force. For Parliament, this means it will be referred to the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, and then tabled for a vote by the full House. In the Council, it will be submitted for approval by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and afterwards adopted at Council level. The College will need to formally adopt the Agreement and empower Vice-President Jourová to sign it on behalf of the Commission.

Background

The Commission presented its proposal for a new inter-institutional agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register for interest representatives covering the Parliament, Council and the Commission in 2016. Since 2011, the Parliament and the Commission have jointly operated a [public register for interest representatives](#). The Council has been an observer since 2014. More information can be found on the [dedicated EP webpage](#).

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