

Questions and Answers

On MiFID II and MiFIR investor protection and intermediaries topics

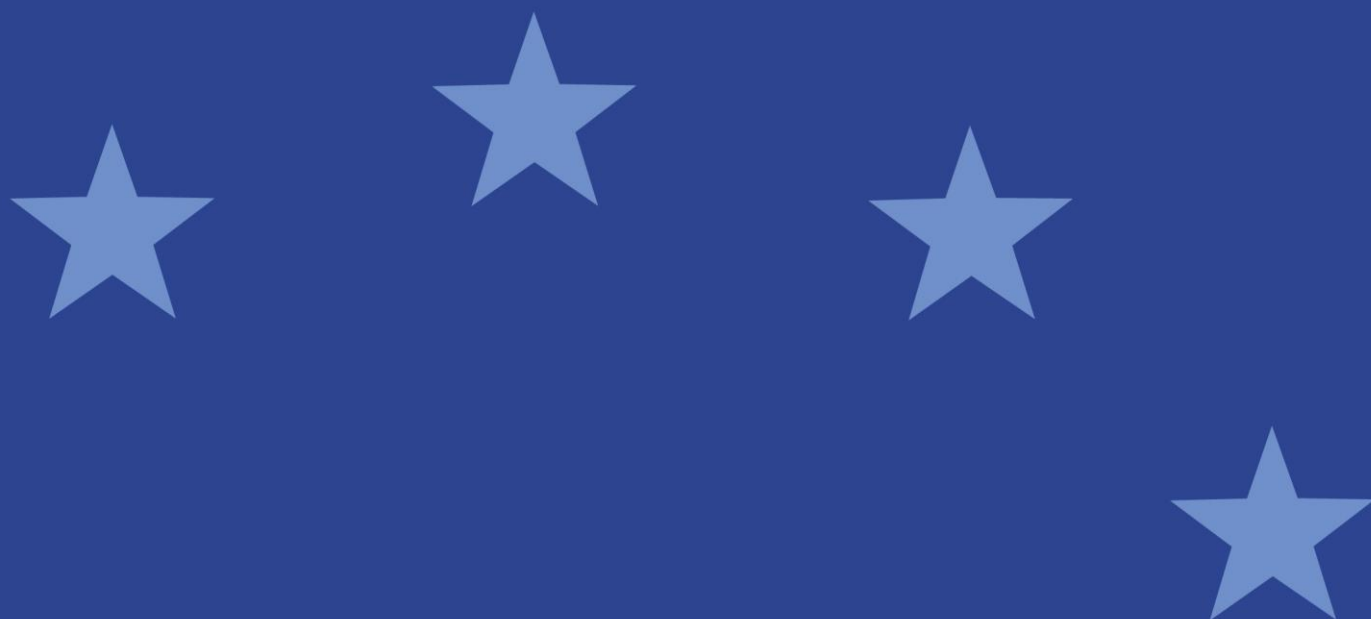


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Acronyms and definitions used

AIF	Alternative Investment Funds
ESMA	The European Markets and Securities Authority
ITS	Implementing Technical Standards
KID	Key Information Document
MiFID I	Markets in Financial Instruments Directive – Directive 2004/39/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council
MiFID II	Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (recast) – Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council
MiFIR	Markets in Financial Instruments Regulation – Regulation 600/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council
MTF	Multilateral Trading Facility
OTC	Over The Counter
OTF	Organised Trading Facility
Q&A	Question and Answer
PRIIPs	Package Retail and Insurance-based Products
RPA	Research Payment Account
RTS	Regulatory Technical Standards
SFTs	Securities financing transactions
UCITS	Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities

Table of questions

	Topic of the Question	Level 1/Level 2	Last Update
Best Execution	1 "Reasonable steps" Vs "sufficient steps"	Art. 27 of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	2 Checking fairness of prices when executing orders or decisions in OTC products	Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 64(4) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	3 Use of a single venue	RTS 27 ¹ Art. 24(1) of MiFID II Art. 27 of MiFID II	16/12/2016
	4 Accessibility of reports	RTS 27, RTS 28 ² Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65 (6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	5 Latest date for publication of reports	RTS 28 Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	6 MiFID II and timing of publication of reports	RTS 27, RTS 28 Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	4/4/2017
	7 Reports for services of order execution and reception and transmission of orders	RTS 28 Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	8 Disclosure of reports to public	RTS 27, RTS 28 Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2019
	9 Venue disclosure of costs	RTS 27 Art. 27(3) of MiFID II	16/12/2016
	10 Summary of the analysis and conclusions from a firm's execution monitoring	RTS 28 Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016

¹ , RTS 27 refers to the regulatory technical standards under Article 27(10)(a) of MiFID II adopted by the EC on 08/06/2016, Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/575

² RTS 28 refers to the regulatory technical standards under Article 27(10)(b) of MiFID II adopted by the EC on 08/07/2016, Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/576

11	Information to be published on entities within a group	Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation RTS 28	4/4/2017
12	Transactions with eligible counterparties and RTS 27	RTS 27 Art. 27 of MiFID II	4/4/2017
13	Execution policies for investment firms or market operators operating OTFs	Art. 20 of MiFID II Art. 27 of MiFID II	4/4/2017
14	Information on passive and aggressive orders in the context of portfolio management and RTO	Art. 27 of MiFID II Art. 65(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation RTS 28	4/4/2017
15	Securities Financing Transactions (SFTs)	RTS 27 Art. 1(5)(a) of MiFIR	10/07/2017
16	Application of best execution to OTF operators	Art. 27 of MiFID II	3/10/2017
17	Disclosure of quality of execution when using direct electronic access	Art. 27 of MiFID II RTS 28	3/10/2017
18	Definition of 'other liquidity provider'	RTS 27	25/05/2018
19	Reporting for firms using a venue's RFQ system to agree a trade	RTS 28	3/10/2018
20	RTS 27 reporting requirements for market makers and other liquidity providers	RTS 27	28/03/2019
21	Reporting for venues on the 'trading mode' according to RTS 27	RTS 27	29/05/2019
22	Reporting for venues and firms on template fields of RTS 27 and 28 if the required content is not applicable to their activities	RTS 27 and 28	29/05/2019
23	Reporting on 'passive' and 'aggressive' orders for firms using quote-driven systems to have client orders executed	RTS 28	29/05/2019
24	RTS 28 reporting and third-country execution venues	RTS 28	29/05/2019
25	Classification of financial instruments under RTS 27 if ESMA has not published any calibrated market sizes	RTS 27	11/07/2019

Suitability and Appropriateness	1	Suitability report: advice leading or not to a transaction	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II Article 54(12) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	2	Suitability report: record of when the advice is given	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	3	Suitability report: availability on firm's website	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II Art. 3 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
	4	Suitability report: provision to the client together with the report due when carrying out an order on behalf of a client other than for portfolio management	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	5	Suitability report: advice not to buy or sell a financial instrument	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	6	Transactions on unsuitable products	Art. 25(2) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	7	Disclosure of information by the client on his/her financial situation	Art. 25(2) of MiFID II Art. 54 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	8	Record keeping obligations related to investment advice	Art. 16(6) of MiFID II Art. 16(7) of MiFID II Art. 25(6) of MiFID II	16/12/2016
	9	Periodic reporting of how the investment meets the client's preferences, objectives and other characteristics of the retail client	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II Art. 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	18/12/2017
	10	Suitability report: Use of generic statements	Art. 25(6) of MiFID II Art. 54(12) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
Recording of telephone conversations and electronic communications	1	Recording of internal telephone conversations and electronic communications	Art. 16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	2	Charging clients for access to recordings	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	3	Monitoring of records	Art.16(7) of MiFID II Art. 76(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	4	Period of record keeping	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	5	Types of electronic communications in scope of the requirements	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016

	6	Monitoring of records: control function	16(7) of MiFID II Art. 76 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	7	Recording of telephone conversations and electronic communications: critical or important operational function	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	8	Recording of telephone conversations and electronic communications from start to end	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	9	Client access to relevant internal conversations	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/10/2016
	10	Use of mobile devices	Art.16(7) of MiFID II Art. 76 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	11	Telephone conversations and electronic communications that should be recorded	Art.16(7) of MiFID II Art. 76 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	12	Scope of activities covered by the requirements in Article 16(7) of MiFID II (1)	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	10/07/2017
	13	Scope of activities covered by the requirements in Article 16(7) of MiFID II (2)	Art.16(7) of MiFID II	3/10/2017
Record keeping	1	Encryption	Arts. 16(6), 16(7) of MiFID II Art. 72 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	2	Securities financing transactions (SFTs)	Art. 16(6) of MiFID II	10/11/2017
Investment advice on an independent basis	1	Assessment and comparison of a sufficient range of financial instruments	Arts. 24(4), 24(7)) of MiFID II Arts. 52, 53 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	2	'Look-through' approach	Art. 24(7) of MiFID II	3/10/2018
Underwriting and placing	1	Various funding alternatives	Art. 38(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/10/2016
	2	Information on investor clients to be provided to issuer clients	Art. 38(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	3	Record Keeping	Art. 43 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016

	4	Obligations relating to advice on corporate finance strategy	Art. 38(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
Inducements (research)	1	Use of a Research Payment Account for more than one client's portfolio or account	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	10/10/2016
	2	Status of client money held in a Research Payment Account	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	16/12/2016
	3	Unrequested research provided "free of charge"	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	16/12/2016
	4	Research from third-country providers	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	16/12/2016
	5	Research from another group entity	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	16/12/2016
	6	Minor non-monetary benefit vs. research	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 12(3) and Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	16/12/2016
	7	"Corporate access"	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 12(3) and Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	4/4/2017
	8	Macro-economic analysis	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 12(3) and Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	23/3/2018
	9	Research related to fixed-income, currencies or commodities	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 12(3) and Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	23/3/2018
	10	Budgeting, allocation of the research budget, determination and assessment of payments made from it	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	4/4/2017
	11	Disclosure of client research charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	4/4/2017
	12	Free trial periods	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 12(2), 12(3) and 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	12/7/2018

Post-sale reporting	1	Reporting on the depreciation of the overall value of a client's portfolio	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	2	Cash withdrawals by the client	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	3	Reporting on the depreciation of leveraged financial instruments or contingent liability transactions	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	4	Reporting on portfolio depreciation in case of client additions to the portfolio	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
	5	Reporting on the depreciation of financial instruments with no secondary market or daily price reference	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
	6	Value and commencement of reporting requirement	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
	7	Reporting on the depreciation : choice of value for the threshold calculation	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
	8	Flexibility allowed by client agreement (1)	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
	9	Flexibility allowed by client agreement (2)	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
	10	Reporting to retail and professional clients	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	10/11/2017
	11	Holding a retail client account	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	23/3/2018
	12	Reporting on the depreciation: exceeding same threshold during a reporting period	Art. 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	23/3/2018
Information on costs and charges	1	Ex-post disclosure of total costs and charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	2	Illustration of the cumulative effect of costs on return	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
	3	Ex-post disclosure of the cumulative effect of costs on return	Art. 24 of MiFID II	16/12/2016

		Art. 50(10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	
4	Periodicity of ex-post information on total costs and charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
5	Voluntary periodical ex-post information on total costs and charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	16/12/2016
6	Cost components of products and PRIIPs calculation methodology	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
7	Use of products' costs presented in the PRIIPs KID	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
8	PRIIPs calculation methodology for instruments outside the scope of PRIIPs	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
9	Cost calculation: access to relevant data	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
10	Cost of products falling within the PRIIPs transition period	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
11	Unavailability of manufacturer data on costs	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
12	Cost of transactions initiated in the provision of an investment service	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
13	Aggregation of costs and charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
14	Ex-ante disclosure and unavailability of actually incurred costs	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
15	Calculation of ex-ante transaction costs	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
16	Price of the position of the investment firm	Art. 24 of MiFID II	3/10/2017

17	Identification and disclosure of mark-ups and structuring costs	Art. 24 of MiFID II	3/10/2017
18	Eligible counterparties not intending to offer financial instruments to clients	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
19	Specific limitations to cost disclosure for eligible counterparties and professional clients	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
20	Disclosure in case of zero costs and charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II	3/10/2017
21	Timing of first annual ex-post reports on costs and charges	Art. 24 of MiFID II Art. 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
22	Level of individualisation of ex-ante information	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
23	Conditions to be met to use costs grids/tables for ex-ante information	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50(2) and (6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
24	Ex-ante information for the service of portfolio management	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50(2) and (5) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
25	Terminology	Article 24 of MiFID II Annex II of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
26	Taxes to be included in the ex-ante and ex-post costs and charges information	Article 24 of MiFID II Annex II of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
27	Ex-ante information in case of sell orders	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50(6) and (10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	29/05/2019
28	Ex-ante information in case of telephone trading	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	29/05/2019
29	Use of assumed investment amounts for ex-ante information in relation to investment services and/or products with non-linear charging structures	Article 24 of MiFID II Recital 78 and Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	29/05/2019

	30	Use of ranges and maximum amount/percentages for ex-ante information	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50(2) and (8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	29/05/2019
	31	Information on costs and charges: Ex-post information for the service of portfolio management	Article 24 of MiFID II Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	4/12/2019 *new*
	32	Ex-post information under Article 50(9) of the Delegated Regulation and its relationship with information under Article 60 of the Delegated Regulation	Articles 24 and 25 of MiFID II Articles 50(9) and 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	4/12/2019 *new*
Appropriateness / complex financial instruments	1	Financial instruments complex per se: non-UCITS collective investment undertakings	Art. 25(4) of MiFID II Art. 57 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	6/6/2017
Client categorisation	1	Information to clients on categorisation	Art. 45(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2017
	2	Clients who may be treated as professionals on request (1)	Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II	25/05/2018
	3	Clients who may be treated as professionals on request (2)	Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II	25/05/2018
	4	Clients who may be treated as professionals on request (3)	Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II	25/05/2018
	5	Clients who may be treated as professionals on request (4)	Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II	25/05/2018
	6	Clients who may be treated as professionals on request (5)	Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II	25/05/2018
Inducements	1	Payments made to a third party in relation to the provision of independent advice of portfolio management	Art. 24(9) of MiFID II	10/11/2017
	2	Status of client money	Article 12(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive	10/11/2017
	3	Performance of the function of investment management or portfolio management of one or more investment funds for a UCITS management company or an AIF Manager	Art. 24(7)(b) of MiFID II Art. 24(8) of MiFID II Art. 24(9) of MiFID II	18/12/2017

	4	Performance of marketing function for a UCITS management company or an AIF Manager	Art. 24(7)(b) of MiFID II Art. 24(8) of MiFID II Art. 24(9) of MiFID II	18/12/2017
	5	Performance of administration function for a UCITS management company or an AIF Manager	Art. 24(7)(b) of MiFID II Art. 24(8) of MiFID II Art. 24(9) of MiFID II	18/12/2017
	6	Application of inducements rules to financial instruments in which the firm has invested on behalf of the client before 3 January 2018	Art. 24(8) of MiFID II	23/3/2018
Provision of investment services and activities by third country firms	1	Reverse solicitation (1)	Art. 42 of MiFID II Art. 46 of MiFIR	25/05/2018
	2	Reverse solicitation (2)	Art. 42 of MiFID II Art. 46 of MiFIR	25/05/2018
	3	Reverse solicitation (3)	Art. 42 of MiFID II Art. 46 of MiFIR	12/7/2018
	4	Reverse solicitation (4)	Art. 42 of MiFID II	28/3/2019
Application of MiFID II after 3 January 2018, including issues of 'late transposition'	1	Authorisations granted before 3 January 2018	Art. 5 of MiFID II Art. 21 of MiFID II	18/12/2017
	2	Passport notifications made before 3 January 2018	Art. 34 of MiFID II Art. 35 of MiFID II	18/12/2017
	3	Late transposition and passporting of investment services (1)	Art. 34 of MiFID II Art. 35 of MiFID II	18/12/2017
	4	Late transposition and passporting of investment services (2)	Art. 34 of MiFID II Art. 35 of MiFID II	18/12/2017
	5	Late transposition and passporting of investment services (3)	Art. 34 of MiFID II Art. 35 of MiFID II	18/12/2017
Other issues	1	Understanding of the term "ongoing relationship"	Art. 27(7) of MiFID II Art. 50(9) of MiFID II Delegated Regulation Art. 54(7) of MiFID II Delegated Regulation	3/10/2019
	2	Provision of investment services by UCITS management companies or alternative investment fund	Art 35(8) of MiFID II	25/05/2018

		managers through branches in host Member States		
	3	Durable medium	Art 3 of MiFID II Delegated Regulation	28/3/2019
Product governance	1	Target market of CoCo-bond funds	Art. 24(2) of MiFID II	28/3/2019
Product intervention	1	Cross-border provision of services	Art. 42 of MiFIR	4/12/2019 *new*

Introduction

Background

The final legislative texts of Directive 2014/65/EU³ (MiFID II) and Regulation (EU) No 600/2014⁴ (MiFIR) were approved by the European Parliament on 15 April 2014 and by the European Council on 13 May 2014. The two texts were published in the Official Journal on 12 June 2014 and entered into force on the twentieth day following this publication – i.e. 2 July 2014.

Many of the obligations under MiFID II and MiFIR were further specified in the Commission Delegated Directive⁵ and the Commission Delegated Regulations^{6 7 8}, as well as regulatory and implementing technical standards developed by the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA).

MiFID II and MiFIR, together with the Commission delegated acts as well as regulatory and implementing technical standards will be applicable from 3 January 2018.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to promote common supervisory approaches and practices in the application of MiFID II and MiFIR in relation to investor protection topics. It provides responses to questions posed by the general public, market participants and competent authorities in relation to the practical application of MiFID II and MiFIR.

The content of this document is aimed at competent authorities and firms by providing clarity on the application of the MiFID II and MiFIR requirements.

The content of this document is not exhaustive and it does not constitute new policy.

³ Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on markets in financial instruments and amending Directive 2002/92/EC and Directive 2011/61/EU (OJ L 173, 12.06.2014, p. 349).

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 600/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on markets in financial instruments and amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 (OJ L 173, 12.06.2014, p. 84).

⁵ Commission Delegated Directive (EU) 2017/593 of 7 April 2016 supplementing Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to safeguarding of financial instruments and funds belonging to clients, product governance obligations and the rules applicable to the provision or reception of fees, commissions or any monetary or non-monetary benefits (OJ L 87, 31.3.2017, p. 500-517).

⁶ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) of 25 April 2016 supplementing Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards organisational requirements and operating conditions for investment firms and defined terms for the purposes of that Directive (OJ L 87, 31.03.2017, p.1-83).

⁷ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/575 of 8 June 2016 supplementing Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on markets in financial instruments with regard to regulatory technical standards concerning the data to be published by execution venues on the quality of execution of transactions (OJ L 87, 31.03.2017, p.152-165).

⁸ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/576 of 8 June 2016 supplementing Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to regulatory technical standards for the annual publication by investment firms of information on the identity of execution venues and on the quality of execution (OJ L 87, 31.03.2017, p.166-173).



Status

The question and answer (Q&A) mechanism is a practical convergence tool used to promote common supervisory approaches and practices under Article 29(2) of the ESMA Regulation⁹.

Due to the nature of Q&As, formal consultation on the draft answers is considered unnecessary. However, even if Q&As are not formally consulted on, ESMA may check them with representatives of ESMA's Securities and Markets Stakeholder Group, the relevant Standing Committees' Consultative Working Group or, where specific expertise is needed, with other external parties.

ESMA will periodically review these Q&As on a regular basis to update them where required and to identify if, in a certain area, there is a need to convert some of the material into ESMA Guidelines and recommendations. In such cases, the procedures foreseen under Article 16 of the ESMA Regulation will be followed.

Questions and answers

This document is intended to be continually edited and updated as and when new questions are received. The date on which each section was last amended is included for ease of reference.

⁹ Regulation (EU) No 1095/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 establishing a European Supervisory Authority (European Securities and Markets Authority), amending Decision No 716/2009/EC and repealing Commission Decision 2009/77/EC Regulation, 15.12.2010, L331/84.

1 Best execution [Last update: 3 October 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

How should firms and competent authorities understand the difference between “reasonable steps” and “sufficient steps”?

Answer 1

MiFID I required firms to “take all reasonable steps to obtain, when executing orders, the best possible result for their clients taking into account price, costs, speed, likelihood of execution and settlement, size, nature or any other consideration relevant to the execution of the order”. MiFID II now instead requires firms to “take all sufficient steps to obtain, when executing orders, the best possible result for their clients taking into account price, costs, speed, likelihood of execution and settlement, size, nature or any other consideration relevant to the execution of the order”.

Whilst firms remain subject to the same overarching obligation to obtain the best possible results on a consistent basis when executing client orders, the requirement for “sufficient” steps sets a higher bar for compliance than “reasonable” steps.

When designing their execution policies and establishing their execution arrangements, firms will have to ensure that the intended outcomes can be successfully achieved on an on-going basis. This is likely to involve the strengthening of front-office accountability and systems and controls according to which firms will ensure that their detection capabilities are able to identify any potential deficiencies. This will require firms to monitor not only the execution quality obtained but also the quality and appropriateness of their execution arrangements and policies on an ex-ante and ex-post basis to identify circumstances under which changes may be appropriate. An example of ex-ante monitoring would be to ensure that the design and review process of policies is appropriate and takes into account new services or products offered by the firms. Accordingly, an ex-post monitoring may be to check whether the firm has correctly applied its execution policy and if client instructions and preferences are effectively passed along the entire execution chain when using smart orders routers or any other means of execution.

Firms’ processes might involve some combination of front office and compliance monitoring and could use systems that rely on random sampling or exception reporting.

There should be channels in place to ensure that the results of ongoing execution monitoring are escalated to senior management and/or relevant committees, and fed back into execution policies and arrangements to drive improvements in the firm’s processes.

This overarching requirement should not be interpreted to mean that a firm must obtain the best possible results for its clients on every single occasion. Rather, firms will need to verify on an on-going basis that their execution arrangements work well throughout the different stages of the order execution process. ESMA expects firms to take all appropriate remedial actions if any deficiencies are detected so that they can properly demonstrate that they have taken “all sufficient steps” to achieve the best possible results for their clients.

Question 2 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

What is meant by checking the fairness of the price proposed to the client when executing orders or decisions to deal in OTC products?

Answer 2

MiFID II strengthens the existing best execution standard in relation to OTC¹⁰ products. In this regard, Article 64 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation requires firms to check the fairness of the price proposed to the client when executing orders or taking decisions to deal in OTC products, including bespoke products, by gathering market data used in the estimation of the price of such products and, where possible, by comparing with similar or comparable products.

Firms, as a matter of practice, may be routinely taking account of external market data and externally verifiable reference prices (where available), when pricing or checking the price of OTC products (including bespoke instruments), in fulfilling their best execution obligations. However, MiFID II now imposes an explicit requirement on firms to ensure that such checks are undertaken on a systematic basis and embedded in their policies and practices. As a consequence, firms need to ensure that they have the necessary procedures and arrangements in place as well as appropriate valuation systems. With greater access to technology and data analytics, firms will be expected to scrutinise the methodologies and inputs underpinning any valuation processes and pricing models utilised with respect to OTC products in order to ensure that they are consistently checking the fairness of the price. Similarly, when placing orders resulting from decisions to deal in OTC products, firms will be expected to undertake the necessary checks on the fairness of the price and ensure that it is reflected in their arrangements.

This is an ex-ante assessment by the firm that takes place prior to the execution of the order. However, there is an expectation that any pre-trade checks or processes would be included in the firm's review and monitoring of its best execution arrangements. Firms would therefore need to have records, documentation in place, to evidence this as part of their ongoing monitoring of best execution.

¹⁰ For the purposes of this Q&A, a financial instrument is an Over The Counter or OTC product when it is: (i) not admitted to trading, or, (ii) not traded on a trading venue (i.e. a regulated market, an MTF or OTF).

The aim is for firms to be able to justify their pricing decisions, and have systems in place to ensure that any judgements or decisions are taken with the clients' best interests in mind and are not biased by conflicts of interest.

We expect that any checks or controls will be calibrated according to the nature of the financial instrument and the characteristics and circumstances of the individual trade.

Question 3 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Where firms use a single venue, how can they evidence that this has allowed them to obtain best execution?

Answer 3

MIFID II does not prohibit firms from selecting only one execution venue to execute client orders in a given class of financial instruments where they are able to demonstrate that such a choice enables them to consistently get the best results for their clients. Since MiFID I was implemented there has been a sharp proliferation of execution venues leading to an increased fragmentation of the market. ESMA expects firms to be aware of the evolving competitive landscape in the market for execution venues operators and therefore to take into consideration the emergence of new players, new venues functionalities or execution services to determine whether or not any of these factors would support to include only one execution venue in their execution policy.

In order to comply with the requirement under Article 24(1) of MiFID II to act in the best interests of its clients, firms will need to regularly assess the market landscape to determine whether or not there are alternative venues that they could use. This assessment will benefit from the new metrics available under RTS 27¹¹ and from any other relevant source of data. In particular, the reports generated pursuant to that RTS shall give firms information on trading conditions and quality of execution across different execution venues through a series of metrics such as volume, frequency of trading, resilience or execution price related information. The MIFID II Delegated Regulation sets out specific requirements relating to the content of the execution policy. According to this, firms have to include a list of the venues that the firm ordinarily uses, as well as a list of the quantitative and qualitative factors used to select the execution venues on that list.

Such an exercise involves a number of different actions. Specific analysis must be carried out to determine whether or not other suitable venues exist. In doing so, a firm may, for instance, benchmark the value of expected aggregate price improvements by adding a venue and comparing the expected outcomes against an assessment of any additional direct, indirect or

¹¹ RTS 27 refers to the regulatory technical standards under Article 27(10)(a) of MiFID II adopted by the EC on 08/06/2016, Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/575

implicit costs (to the extent that such costs would be directly or indirectly passed on to clients), counterparty or operational risks.

Finally, using a single venue should not lead firms to be “over-reliant” on the single venue. Using a single venue does not diminish a firm’s responsibility to monitor the quality of execution. Nor does it mean that merely executing client orders on that venue will allow the firm to discharge its best execution obligations. When using only a single venue, the specific way that the firm executes the order may be just as important in achieving best execution. Indeed, sending an order to be executed on the central order book using different order types (e.g. limit orders, fill or kill ‘FOK’, peg order, good till cancelled ‘GTC’), executing the order using a pre-trade waiver, or executing the order at a closing or opening auction may result in materially different outcomes. Different outcomes may also stem from the way in which Smart Order Routers and/or algorithms are calibrated. Similarly, entering an order in one block, versus splitting it into multiple child orders, may have a very different market impact and thus directly affect the cost to the client.

Also, in order to comply with the requirement under Article 24(1) to act in the best interests of its clients, a firm should consider transmitting client orders instead of executing them itself where that would deliver a better result for clients, provided the firm is authorised for reception and transmission of such orders.

Similar analysis and assessments should be undertaken by portfolio managers or receivers and transmitters of orders that intend to send orders to a single entity for execution.

Question 4 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Where execution venues and firms publish reports as required under RTS 27 and 28¹², how long should the reports be kept in the public domain and freely accessible?

Answer 4

The information published under RTS 27 is intended to provide the public and firms with relevant data to measure the quality of execution. These objectives are particularly important as the MIFID II Delegated Regulation requires, amongst other things, that firms assess whether the list of venues they ordinarily use for execution should be updated following a material change at a particular venue. ESMA considers that to achieve these outcomes, it is appropriate for execution venues to keep each report available in the public domain for a minimum period of two years.

RTS 28 is intended to enable the public and investors to evaluate the quality of a firm’s execution practices by requiring publication of valuable information about how and where the firm has executed client orders. It is important that these reports allow for a robust comparison

¹² RTS 28 refers to the regulatory technical standards under Article 27(10)(b) of MiFID II adopted by the EC on 08/07/2016, Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/576

between different firms and also to enable comparison of performance over time. Therefore, ESMA considers it suitable for firms to keep each report available in the public domain for a minimum period of two years.

Question 5 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

What is the latest date after year-end by which firms executing or transmitting client orders, or portfolio managers, should publish the report showing their top five execution venues or firms where they have sent client orders and information about the quality of the execution they obtained?

Answer 5

Reports published under RTS 28 or Article 65(5) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation are intended to provide the public with valuable data that will diminish information asymmetries and help investors select the firms they want to work with. To ensure those investors have up-to-date information, ESMA considers it suitable that the reports should be made public on or before the 30th of April following the end of the period to which the report relates.

Question 6 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

How soon after MiFID II comes into effect will venues and firms have to publish RTS 27 and 28 reports?

Answer 6

The data venues are required to collect and publish under RTS 27 are tied to several provisions stemming from MiFID II and MiFIR, such as the 'Size Specific to The Instrument' (SSTI) thresholds under the transparency regime and the transaction reporting requirements. ESMA therefore considers that the first report published under RTS 27 should cover a reporting period that is representative of the first quarter of 2018 and should be published by 30 June 2018.

The information that firms will be required to publish under RTS 28 is of a different nature. Along with the report on the top five venues where they have executed their client orders, it requires a summary of the outcomes achieved by firms when executing those orders. As best execution is not a new requirement under MiFID II, firms should already have implemented most of the necessary arrangements to conduct this analysis.

Therefore, ESMA considers that firms should release the first annual report (covering a full calendar year period) under RTS 28 by the end of the fourth month of the calendar year during which the legislation enters into force (i.e. April 2018). However, ESMA recognises that for the first set of RTS 28 reports, investment firms may not be able to fully report on information which is not available or applicable in relation to the preceding year e.g. where it is tied to new provisions stemming from MiFID II or MiFIR.

As a practical matter, this might mean that the first year's report may lack some of the detail that would be available for subsequent reports, given that firms may not have data published under RTS 27 for the preceding year. Specifically, ESMA wishes to clarify that unless the firm is using a specific tool or the services of a third party data provider to assess execution quality, it will most likely be unable to provide, in the first annual report, any information required under Article 3(3)(g) of RTS 28. Another possible example of where the first set reports required by RTS 28 may lack some granularity in comparison to subsequent reports is in relation to the lack of data on the identification of the subclasses of the classes of financial instruments based on liquidity, in accordance with the MiFID II tick size regime. Similarly, investment firms may not necessarily have complete information on the exact proportion of passive and aggressive orders executed on each of the execution venues it used in the previous year, since they may not have been collecting such detailed information under their existing MiFID I best execution obligations.

Nonetheless, information on the top five venues and a summary of the outcomes achieved, such as it is in line with investment firms' MiFID I best execution obligations, will still provide useful information to investors.

Question 7 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

If a firm provides both the services of order execution and transmission of orders to other firms (i.e. to a third party for execution), will they need to produce two sets of top-five reports, or will a single, consolidated report suffice?

Answer 7

For a given class of financial instruments, there may be many instances where the firm provides both services. If the firm is not a member of all trading venues where client orders need to be routed for execution, the firm will need to transmit some orders to other firms for execution alongside its execution activity as member of trading venues. It may also elect to use a broker instead of directly executing orders on an execution venue to minimise market impact and achieve a better outcome for the client.

ESMA considers that where firms provide both the services of order execution and reception and transmission of orders, they will need to provide two separate reports in relation to these services. It is important that these reports are distinct so that, investment firms disclose on one hand the top five execution venues and on the other hand the top five entities (brokers) to which client orders were routed during the relevant period. To note, this does not preclude firms from, in addition, providing a single consolidated report on the execution venues and entities the firms uses most frequently to execute client orders.

Question 8 [Last update: 3 October 2019]

How should the RTS 27 and RTS 28 reports be made available to the public?

Answer 8

Execution venues and firms are required to make the RTS 27 and 28 reports available to the public, without any charges, in a machine-readable electronic format.

In order to ensure that such reports are in the public domain and freely accessible, firms can publish these reports on their respective websites in an easily identifiable location on a page without any access limitations. ESMA notes that these reports should not be placed behind a firewall, registration page or be subject to password encryption or other restrictions.

Venues and firms should also ensure the readability and comprehensibility of these reports to provide the public with relevant data on execution quality. Therefore, venues and firms should provide the RTS 27 and 28 reports in an electronic format that allows for computerised calculations and mass processing that is compatible with standard and easily accessible machine-reading processes, to fulfil the requirements of (i) being 'machine-readable'¹³ and (ii) enabling the public to search, sort and analyse all the provided data.¹⁴ Standard formats, such as CSV or XML may be used for this purpose. Since RTS 28 reports should allow end investors, including retail clients, to better scrutinise execution quality and order routing practices, firms should ensure that the format they use is clear and easily readable for retail clients or offer alternative ways to visualise the data of the report.

Question 9 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Where RTS 27 (Article 5) requires a venue to disclose costs, can this report be aggregated and presented as venue-level information?

Answer 9

Article 27(3) of MiFID II requires that execution venues (regulated markets, MTFs, OTFs, SIs, market makers and other liquidity providers) make information on the quality of execution available to the public in relation to price, costs, speed and likelihood of execution for individual financial instruments. Consequently, Article 5 of RTS 27 requires venues to publish for each financial instrument quarterly information on the costs applied by the venue to its members or users.

It is worth clarifying that venues are expected to provide information on costs aggregated at the level of the venue and any market segment(s) they operate (e.g. standard, high growth, dark book, lit book etc.). This approach is supported by Recital 4 of RTS 27 which provides

¹³ Article 10 of RTS 27 and Article 4 of RTS 28

¹⁴ Recital 15 of RTS 27

that to avoid inappropriate comparison between execution venues and to ensure the relevance of collected data, execution venues should submit separate reports corresponding to segments that operate different order books or that are regulated differently or use different market segment identifiers. In addition, it may be relevant to differentiate cost information in relation to the business model or fee structure of the venue e.g. where venues apply different fees depending on the type of client or member e.g. maker taker fee models. In this way, venues should ensure that cost information is consolidated at the appropriate level so as to facilitate comparability between other execution venues.

Question 10 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Where RTS 28 Article 3(3) requires a summary of the analysis and conclusions from a firm's execution monitoring, does this require a separate summary for each class of financial instruments, or would it suffice to provide a consolidated summary covering all classes of financial instruments?

Answer 10

Firms are expected to provide a summary of the analysis and conclusions they draw from their detailed monitoring of execution quality in relation to each class of financial instrument. The aim is to provide clients with meaningful information in order to effectively assess and scrutinise the execution quality achieved by the firm during the year. This will enable clients to evaluate the firm's execution practices and compliance with its execution policy. It is worth noting that Recital 15 of RTS 28 clarifies that firms may provide more granular reporting in addition to the reporting requirements specified in RTS 28.

Differentiating such information according to class of instrument is particularly relevant given that execution quality could vary since a firm may employ different execution methods (e.g. different venues, execution strategies, or order routing practices) depending on the nature of the financial instrument. Providing a summary according to class of financial instrument also corresponds with the requirement to report on the top five entities used for the execution, placing or transmission of client orders, which also relates to each class of financial instrument (please see Q&A7).

While the summary of the analysis and conclusions drawn from firms' execution monitoring is required for each class of financial instrument, some of the information to be disclosed in the summary (as set out in clauses a – h of Article 3(3)) may be provided on a consolidated basis where such information is common to several or all classes of financial instruments. In this regard, information on close links, conflicts or common ownership as well as information on payments, rebates and benefits of venues may be disclosed on a consolidated basis, where such information is common across several or all classes of financial instruments.

Question 11 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

If portfolio managers or receivers and transmitters of orders use different entities within a single group to execute orders, should they list those entities separately, or aggregate them and list the group parent as a single entry for the purposes of the RTS 28 report that it is required to be published under Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation?

Answer 11

Where portfolio managers or receivers and transmitters send orders for execution to different brokers or entities within a common legal or corporate group, ESMA is of the view that, in line with Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation, the annual report on the top five entities chosen for execution should be provided at the level of the individual firm and not be aggregated or consolidated at the group level.

Where an investment firm's top five entities listed in the annual report are dominated by individual brokers or entities from a single group, thereby potentially displacing other third party brokers or entities that it uses on a regular basis, then, in these circumstances, the investment firm could consider providing additional information on these other third-party brokers or entities chosen for execution that it deems relevant to its order execution practices, so as to provide a complete picture of the various entities it selects for execution services (in line with Recital 15 of RTS 28).

Question 12 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

Are eligible counterparty transactions to be included in the data required to be published by execution venues under RTS 27?

Answer 12

In accordance with Article 27(3) of MiFID II, execution venues must publish quarterly reports on execution quality containing information on transactions executed on that venue, irrespective of the category of clients to which those transactions relate. Where an investment firm is also acting as an execution venue, Article 27(3) explicitly requires investment firms to publish its RTS 27 report in its capacity as an execution venue (rather than as an investment firm). This means that the client category is not relevant in this respect and that all transactions need to be included for the purposes of complying with RTS 27.

In this respect, the RTS 27 reporting obligation differs from the requirement concerning data to be published by investment firms under Article 27(6) of MiFID II or RTS 28 which requires reports on orders relating to retail and professional clients, but not eligible counterparties.

Question 13 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

When an investment firm operates an OTF, at which level should the best execution policy be set? At the level of the investment firm or at the level of the OTF or both? Would similar requirements apply to a market operator operating an OTF?

Answer 13

Where an investment firm operates an OTF, ESMA is of the view that the investment firm's best execution policy should cover how orders are executed both at the level of the investment firm and at the level of the OTF and, in particular, how discretion is exercised at each stage.

Firstly, an investment firm operating an OTF should, in the same way as other investment firms that execute client orders, have a firm-level execution policy setting out the various execution venues, including its own OTF, that it will be considering when receiving a client order and explain in which circumstances an execution venue would prevail over the others.

Secondly, the investment firm should have either a separate policy or an additional section in the firm-level execution policy governing how, when a client order is then sent to the OTF, the best possible result for the client is achieved taking into account the trading interests in the system and the different execution mechanisms that may be available on the OTF, such as voice execution, electronic RFQ or order book.

As the exercise of discretion by the investment firm in its OTF operator capacity is to be in compliance with its execution policy, the document should also set out in detail, the area(s) in which the OTF operator intends to exercise discretion and the basis on which such discretion will be exercised (Article 20(6) of MiFID II).

Equivalent requirements apply to a market operator operating an OTF. In this regard, a market operator would need to have a best execution policy in place, setting out the conditions under which an order received by a client may be executed on its OTF, as described above.

Question 14 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

How should passive and aggressive orders be understood in the context of portfolio management or of reception and transmission of orders for the purposes of the RTS 28 report to be published under Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation?

Answer 14

Investment firms providing portfolio management or reception and transmission of orders services are required to publish information that is consistent with the RTS 28 which includes, among others, data on passive and aggressive orders. The relevance of these descriptive terms in the context of portfolio managers will however vary according to the nature of the activities undertaken, the trading system used and the classes of financial instruments. If a portfolio manager, or a receiver and transmitter of orders, sends an order to an entity for execution (broker), the distinction between passive and aggressive orders as defined in Article 2 of RTS 28 is likely not relevant and will not need to be disclosed in the report to be published in accordance with Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation.

An exception to this is where the portfolio manager or transmitter of orders has attached a specific instruction to an order, and that instruction is understood to mean that the broker will

execute the order in a fashion that is either passive or aggressive within the meaning of the definition provided under RTS 28.

If a portfolio manager is executing orders directly on an execution venue then Article 27 of MiFID II and RTS 28 apply and the distinction between passive and aggressive will be relevant and should be disclosed in the report, where applicable.

Question 15 [Last update: 10 July 2017]

Do the RTS 27 reporting requirements apply to Securities Financing Transactions (SFTs)?

Answer 15

Article 1(5)(a) of MiFIR, subsequent to amending Regulation (EU) 2016/1033 of 23 June 2016, states that SFTs are not subject to the pre and post trade transparency obligations set out in Title II and III of MiFIR. While no specific exemption was included with respect to the RTS 27 best execution reporting obligations, Recital 10 of RTS 27 refers to the need for regulatory consistency between its requirements and those on post trade transparency. In this context, ESMA considers that the best execution reporting requirements set out in RTS 27 should not apply to SFTs.

ESMA wishes to make clear that, irrespective of the above clarification concerning the application of RTS 27 to SFTs, the MiFID II best execution requirements otherwise apply to investment firms when carrying out SFTs.

ESMA also wishes to clarify that while RTS 27 would not apply to SFTs, this would not lead to a complete absence of execution quality reports for SFTs, as RTS 28 explicitly requires investment firms to report, inter alia, on order routing behaviours specifically with respect to SFTs and to provide a summary on the quality of execution obtained. Investment firms should also note that RTS 28 already makes specific reference to how data concerning SFTs should be published.

Question 16 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

How do the OTF best execution obligations apply when third-party brokers are clients of the OTF or when these brokers provide Direct Electronic Access (DEA) to the OTF (see Article 4(1)(41) of MiFID II)?

Answer 16

When an investment firm or a market operator operating an OTF receives orders or indications of interest from a broker acting on behalf of its own clients, the operator of the OTF should be implementing its own best execution policy when executing the order from the broker as it

owes its user clients (the broker) the duty of best execution. The broker should determine that the OTF it selects allows it to comply with its best execution obligations towards its own clients. To that end, the broker should conduct a performance assessment of the OTF including how discretion is exercised.

In the specific case of DEA to an OTF, the DEA order is entered in the OTF client's name (the broker) and the OTF operator should execute the DEA order as it would for any OTF client order. Alternatively, the operator of the OTF may decide not to permit DEA to its system.

ESMA notes that a DEA order could be considered as a client specific instruction to the broker providing the DEA arrangements to its clients (see Q.16).

Question 17 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

Should an investment firm using direct electronic access (DEA) services provided by an intermediary firm (such as a broker) list the execution venue selected via the DEA arrangement (under the RTS 28 reporting obligation), or the broker providing the DEA service (under the report to be published under Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation)?

Answer 17

Article 4(1)(41) of MiFID II defines DEA as arrangements where a member or participant or client of a trading venue permits a person to use its trading code. ESMA considers that the provider of DEA is the firm executing orders. As such, an investment firm using DEA services to specifically direct an order to a particular venue would be expected to list the intermediary firm providing that service for the purposes of the report to be published under Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation (which is consistent with the RTS 28 report). In these instances, the investment firm would be considered as giving a specific instruction to the intermediary providing DEA regarding the choice of the execution venue. Correspondingly, the intermediary providing DEA service would still have an obligation to include trades executed via such access arrangements in its RTS 28 reports, although these trades could be classified as "directed orders" given the venue on which orders are executed is specified by the client (as set out in Article 2(c) of RTS 28). This differs from a situation where the intermediating broker retains discretion over some parameters of the execution of the order, particularly, the venue destination, including where a broker's smart order router determines where an order is executed.

While transactions are intermediated by the broker providing the DEA service, ESMA also recognises that the objective of the report to be published under Article 65(6) of the Delegated Regulation is to help clients understand the execution practices of investment firms transmitting or placing orders via DEA services and directing the choice of execution venues (as outlined above), and this objective is best served by the provision of information about the execution venues orders are routed to (where the investment firm is exercising discretion over the choice of execution venue). In order to ensure that the report provides a complete picture of the investment firm's order routing arrangements, ESMA considers that the investment firms should also disclose the identity of the main venues it commonly selects via DEA arrangements

and the existence of any close links and specific arrangements with such execution venues, in its summary of execution quality (which, as required by Article 65(6), must be consistent with the information to be provided in accordance with Article 3(3) of RTS 28).

Question 18 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

What constitutes 'other liquidity provider' under Recital 7 of RTS 27?

Answer 18

Recital 7 of RTS 27 sets out a broad definition for 'other liquidity provider'. It says: "other liquidity providers should include firms that hold themselves out as being willing to deal on own account, and which provide liquidity as part of their normal business activity, whether or not they have formal agreements in place or commit to providing liquidity on a continuous basis".

The definition under Recital 7 indicates that other liquidity providers include firms that act similarly to market makers whereby they deal on own account and provide liquidity to other market participants on an on-going basis, however do not necessarily have formal agreements in place for this activity. Accordingly, a liquidity provider may not commit to providing prices in an instrument under all market conditions.

The definition gives flexibility for ESMA and national competent authorities to determine when a firm is considered to provide liquidity as part of their normal business activity. In general, ESMA considers that a firm that regularly and consistently provides liquidity in an instrument would meet the definition of "other liquidity provider" under RTS 27. Accordingly, liquidity provision will be central to the firm's business model or trading activity.

For instance, ESMA considers that a CFD provider that deals on own account, and regularly quotes two-way pricing for an instrument would meet the definition of "other liquidity provider" under RTS 27. However, as set out previously, there is no expectation that a firm will need to be continuously willing to enter into transactions to buy and sell financial instruments at all times to be considered a liquidity provider.

ESMA would also like to point out that the definition of other liquidity provider can include both firms who provide liquidity on venue and over the counter. In addition, a firm will be classified as a liquidity provider on the basis of all their trades rather than on a trade by trade basis.

It is also worth noting that, as stated in Recital 6, other liquidity providers are only required to include in their RTS 27 reports data on orders executed or the price quoted for their clients in instruments not subject to the trading obligation.

Question 19 [Last update: 3 October 2018]

In some instances, investment firms use the RFQ system of a trading venue that allow firms to identify and select the different counterparties they wish to obtain quotes from, before concluding the trade with the selected counterparty on that trading venue's RFQ system.

Where an investment firm agrees a trade via such systems, should it identify the counterparty with whom the transaction was agreed with or the trading venue used to ultimately conclude the transaction for its RTS 28 reporting?

Answer 19

Sometimes, investment firms select and approach one or more potential counterparties, obtaining quotes from them using the non-anonymous request-for-quote (RFQ) systems of a trading venue and agree the trade with their selected counterparty on that trading venue's RFQ system.

This is common across asset classes, but is especially prevalent, for example, in bond markets, where some trading venues allow investment firms to identify different liquidity providers that the firm may wish to deal with in the transaction, and obtain quotes from them before executing the transaction with their selected counterparty on the trading venue.

ESMA considers that a transaction is deemed to be executed on a trading venue, where it is carried out under the rules of the trading venue. Correspondingly, a firm executing orders on behalf of clients or decisions to deal under the rules of a trading venue would need to identify the trading venue in question in its RTS 28 reports.

ESMA also recognises that the objective of RTS 28 is to make the sources of liquidity used as well as firms' order routing practices more transparent. ESMA is of the opinion that where investment firms use the RFQ systems of a trading venue that allow the investment firm to identify the counterparty they are dealing with, this objective is better achieved if an investment firm provides information about the counterparty it has approached for a quote and selected to execute the transaction through such systems, before concluding the trade on that trading venue's RFQ system.

For the RTS 28 reports to accurately reflect the investment firm's venue selection process and order execution policy and behaviour, and to provide an accurate picture of the investment firm's order routing practices and considerations,¹⁵ ESMA considers that as part of the summary of the quality of execution obtained on the different venues used (Article 3(3), Recital 11), the investment firm should also disclose the identity of the (five) counterparties it most commonly executes against where they have agreed the trade via an RFQ system of a trading venue that allows the firm to identify the counterparty they are dealing with. The firm should also disclose the proportion of volume traded with each of these counterparties as a percentage of the total in that class of financial instruments. This disclosure should also include information about the existence of any close links, conflicts of interest, common ownerships and specific arrangements with such counterparties in its summary of execution quality,¹⁶ and

¹⁵ Article 3(3)(a) of RTS 28.

¹⁶ Article 3(3)(b) of RTS 28.

for this information to be consistent with the information to be provided under Article 3(3) of RTS 28.

Question 20 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

What is the scope of the RTS 27 reporting requirements for market makers and other liquidity providers?

Answer 20

RTS 27 requires market makers and other liquidity providers to report on transactions in financial instruments not subject to the trading obligation. This includes transactions (i) that are conducted on an OTC basis or (ii) pursuant to the pre-trade transparency waivers in Articles 4 and 9 of MiFIR (except orders held in an order management facility of a trading venue pending disclosure). In the case of the latter, both trading venues and market makers and other liquidity providers will account for these transactions in their RTS 27 reports. This is because the scope of the RTS 27 reporting requirements for trading venues covers all transactions in financial instruments, including those that are subject to the pre-trade transparency waivers (Recital 6 of RTS 27).

The obligations set out in the previous paragraph require both (i) market makers and other liquidity providers (that facilitate the trade which is finally concluded on the trading venue) as well as (ii) trading venues (where the trade is finally concluded) to provide RTS 27 reporting. This is to ensure the provision of execution quality data in relation to both OTC trades as well as transactions pursuant to the pre-trade transparency waivers that are carried out on-book and off-book, but under the rules of the venue. This information allows to identify the quality of the liquidity provided by market makers and other liquidity providers.

For trading venues, the requirements under Article 7(2)(k) and (l) of RTS 27 identify among the reported information, the number and value of transactions that are subject to a pre-trade transparency waiver (excluding orders held in an order management facility). This approach ensures that the RTS 27 reports distinguish between (i) liquidity that is subject to a pre-trade transparency waiver and (ii) liquidity subject to pre-trade transparency requirements (and is truly visible).

Question 21 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

In accordance with the Annex (Table 3, 'trading mode' column) of RTS 27: The definition of trading mode as set out in Article 2 of RTS 27 does not provide for any continuous trading mode. How should the information on the 'trading mode' be inserted by an execution venue, which conducts continuous trading?

Answer 21

If an execution venue uses the trading system of a 'continuous order book' or a 'continuous quote driven system' to conduct continuous trading, it has to provide information on the trading system (as requested in the column of Table 3 entitled 'trading system' and based on the

typology and descriptions set out in Annex I of RTS 2). In order to fulfil this reporting obligation, it is sufficient to indicate in the respective RTS 27 reports that 'continuous trading' was conducted on the execution venue. In this case, execution venues should insert a 'N/A' (i.e. 'not applicable') reference in the 'trading mode' column of Table 3 of the Annex of RTS 27.

Question 22 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

What information should execution venues and investment firms report in the template fields of RTS 27 and 28, if the required content is not applicable to their activities?

Answer 22

As part of their respective reporting obligations related to the quality of execution, execution venues (RTS 27) and investment firms (RTS 28) should insert a 'N/A' (i.e. 'not applicable') reference in template fields which are not applicable to their activities.

For example, according to the relevant RTS 27 template, execution venues should insert 'N/A' in the respective field (e.g. in the field referring to 'scheduled auctions'), if the required content is not applicable to the activities of the execution venue.

Question 23 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

Does the categorisation of 'passive' and 'aggressive' orders apply to investment firms which use quote-driven trading systems to have client orders executed?

Answer 23

The definitions of Article 2(a) and (b) of RTS 28 for aggressive and passive orders both refer to "orders entered into an order book". However, quote-driven trading systems do not operate order books (see also the typology and descriptions set out in Annex I of RTS 2). Therefore, as part of their RTS 28 reporting, investment firms which use quote-driven trading systems to have client orders executed should insert a 'N/A' (i.e. 'not applicable') reference in the fields referring to passive and aggressive orders of the relevant reporting template.

Question 24 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

Do the RTS 28 reporting requirements of investment firms related to the execution of client orders through third-country execution venues only apply to third-country venues qualified as equivalent by the European Commission?

Answer 24

The wording in Recital 2 of RTS 28 on “any entity that performs a similar function in a third country” refers to execution venues located in third countries, irrespective whether or not the European Commission has made an equivalence decision on the third-country market.

Question 25 [Last update: 11 July 2019]

In accordance with the Annex (Table 3) and Articles 4 and 9 of RTS 27, how should execution venues classify financial instruments, which do not have calibrated market sizes (i.e. Standard Market Size (SMS), Large in Scale (LIS), Size Specific to the Instrument (SSTI)) and are traded on an EU trading venue?

Answer 25

In the case of financial instruments that (i) are traded on an EU trading venue and (ii) for which ESMA has not published on its website any respective Standard Market Size (SMS), Large in Scale (LIS) and Size Specific to the Instrument (SSTI) values, those instruments should be classified, according to the following criteria:

- (i) For SMS values related to equity instruments: Recital 10 of RTS 27 sets out that “for shares, exchange-traded funds and certificates deemed to be illiquid under Regulation (EU) No 600/2014, the standard market size threshold to be used is the minimum available standard market size for that type of financial instrument”, (see the smallest size in Table 3 of Annex II of RTS 1). The same approach should also be used for any other equity instruments in case temporarily, ESMA does not publish one or more of the parameters related to the transparency calculations, such as the SMS.¹⁷
- (ii) For (post-trade) LIS values related to equity instruments:
 - For shares, depositary receipts, certificates and other similar financial instruments: the LIS thresholds should be those related to the highest threshold available in the smallest average daily turnover (ADT) band (i.e. ADT < 50 000) provided in:¹⁸
 - Table 4 of Annex II of RTS 1 for shares and depositary receipts;
 - Table 6 of Annex II of RTS 1 for certificates and other similar financial instruments.
 - For exchange-traded funds (ETFs): the LIS thresholds should be the highest threshold specified in Table 5 of Annex II of RTS 1.

¹⁷ This approach follows closely Q&A 3 of the section “Equity transparency” of the ESMA Q&As on MiFID II and MiFIR transparency topics [Ref: ESMA70-872942901-35] and see: https://www.esma.europa.eu/sites/default/files/library/esma70-872942901-35_qas_transparency_issues.pdf

¹⁸ These thresholds for (post-trade) LIS values related to shares, depositary receipts, certificates and other similar financial instruments are in line with Q&A 3 of the section “Equity transparency” of the ESMA Q&As on MiFID II and MiFIR transparency topics [Ref: ESMA70-872942901-35].

- (iii) For (post-trade) LIS and Size Specific to the Instrument (SSTI) values related to bonds: See Q&A 15 in the section “Non-equity transparency” of the ESMA Q&As on “MiFID II and MiFIR transparency topics”¹⁹.

Those abovementioned criteria should also be used to classify financial instruments issued in non-EU countries that (i) are traded on an EU trading venue and (ii) for which ESMA has not published on its website any respective Standard Market Size (SMS), Large in Scale (LIS) and Size Specific to the Instrument (SSTI) values.

¹⁹ See ESMA Q&As on MiFID II and MiFIR transparency topics [Ref: ESMA70-872942901-35].

2 Suitability and appropriateness [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Does the suitability report only have to be provided if the investment advice leads to a transaction?

Answer 1

No. A suitability report must be provided to a retail client when that client has been provided with investment advice, regardless of whether or not the advice is followed by a transaction.

According to the second subparagraph of Article 25(6) of MiFID II, the firm shall, when providing investment advice, before the transaction is made, provide the client with a statement on suitability in a durable medium specifying the advice given and how that advice meets the preferences, objectives and other characteristics of the retail client.

Article 54(12) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation states that firms shall provide a suitability report when providing investment advice. The report shall, *inter alia*, include an outline of the advice given and how the recommendation is suitable for the retail client.

By outlining that the report shall be given when providing investment advice, the implementing measures clarify that the suitability report has to be provided to the client irrespective of whether or not the advice is followed by a transaction. In fact, investment advice, as defined in Article 4(2)(4) of MiFID II does not require a recommendation to be followed by a transaction.

The wording in MiFID “before the transaction is made”, is therefore a clarification of when the report has to be provided, but does not mean that the advice has to be followed by a transaction.

This is line with the purpose of the second subparagraph of Article 25(6) of MiFID II that states that the suitability report serves the purpose of proving whether the recommendation given was in fact suitable for the client.

Question 2 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Shall the suitability report contain the record of when the investment advice is given to the client?

Answer 2

Yes. The suitability report should contain the date and time of the day when the advice was given to the client. Firms should also keep a record of the date and time when the suitability

report was provided to the client (if these dates differ, as may be the case when the interaction with the client occurs through a means of distance communication).

Finally, firms must keep the respective suitability report according to MiFID II record keeping requirements.

To fulfil these reporting and documentation requirements, it may be useful to timestamp the suitability reports. However, if firms comply with the above in any other way, a timestamp may not be necessary.

Question 3 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Can the suitability report be made available to the client on the firm's website, with the client receiving a notification (via email or through any other means of communication) regarding the availability of this document?

Answer 3

Yes. According to Article 25(6) MiFID II, the suitability report has to be provided in a durable medium. In this regard, Recital 82 of MiFID II clarifies that a durable medium may also be in an electronic form. Websites and other media in electronic form are therefore not excluded so long as they fulfil the definition of 'durable medium' as set out in Article 4(1) point 62 of MiFID II and the requirements set out in Article 3 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. As to the possibility for a website to be regarded as being a 'durable medium', reference is also made to the Judgment of the European Court of Justice of 25 January 2017 (Case C-375/15).

Therefore, the suitability report can be made available to the client in a secured area of the firm's website, specifically dedicated to that client, with the client receiving a notification (via e-mail or through any other means of communication) of the availability of the document on the website, provided that the choice of that medium is compliant with MiFID II relevant requirements. In particular, it should be consistent with the type of interaction with the client (for example, if the interaction occurs through the telephone or another means of distance communication) and the client has to give his/her consent.

Question 4 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Can the suitability report be sent together with the report due when carrying out an order on behalf of a client other than for portfolio management?

Answer 4

According to Article 25(6) MiFID II, the suitability report has to be provided to the client before the transaction is made. Therefore, it cannot be sent together with the report that is due when

carrying out an order on behalf of a client, which has to be provided after the order was carried out.

Different requirements apply in situations described in the third subparagraph of Article 25(6) of MiFID II (i.e. when the agreement is concluded using a means of distance communication). In these cases the suitability report could be sent together with the report about the transaction, but without undue delay and all the relevant requirements have to be fulfilled.

Question 5 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Shall a suitability report be provided to the client when the advice given is not to buy or sell a financial instrument?

Answer 5

Yes. Firms providing investment advice are required to always provide the client with a suitability report, irrespective of the specific recommendation given, including the advice not to buy, hold or sell a financial instrument.

In this regard, Recital 87 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation specifically clarifies that *“investment firms should undertake a suitability assessment not only in relation to [when] recommendations to buy a financial instrument are made but for all decisions whether to trade including whether or not to buy, hold or sell an investment”*.

Question 6 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

What are the obligations on a firm when a specific financial instrument is unsuitable for a client, in particular also in situations when the client wishes to proceed with the transaction nonetheless?

Answer 6

When providing investment advice, firms are required under Article 25(2) of MiFID II to recommend to the client (or potential client) only the investment services and financial instruments that are suitable for him/her and, in particular, are in accordance with his risk tolerance and ability to bear losses. Recital 87 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation clarifies that a suitability assessment should be undertaken *“not only in relation to [when] recommendations to buy a financial instrument are made but for all decisions whether to trade including whether or not to buy, hold or sell an investment”*.

Therefore, firms should avoid any behaviour that might result in a breach of the rules on suitability. Examples of clearly incorrect behaviours (see, for example, Case 1 and Case 2 below) could be situations where the purchase of a specific financial instrument cannot be recommended to a client because that instrument is unsuitable for him and the firm influences

that client to proceed with the transaction at his/her own initiative (for instance, by emphasising only the positive aspects of the product); or where the firm purposely changes the client's profile (without there being any real change in the client's situation that would justify such a modification of the profile) in order to make suitable a financial instrument that is unsuitable for him/her, so as to be able to recommend it.

CASE 1: Client A has an ongoing relationship with Firm X for the provision of investment services, including investment advice. Firm X has a contractual relationship with a third party (e.g. Company Z) for selling products issued by Company Z itself.

Client A would like to make an investment and, in the context of his relationship with Firm X, asks for an advice from the firm. The firm, knowing that an investment in products issued by Company Z would be unsuitable for client B, deliberately raises his profile (although no changes in the clients' situation, that would justify such a change, have effectively occurred), so as to be able to recommend them.

CASE 2: Client B has an ongoing relationship with Firm Y for the provision of investment services, including investment advice. Firm Y is also the issuer of product Y and has a specific interest in placing it in order to meet its funding needs.

In the context of the relationship with client B, the firm, being aware that product Y would not be suitable given the client's financial situation, their investment objectives and their knowledge and experience, decides to influence him to buy product Y at his own initiative, for example by emphasising all possible advantages of such an investment. As a consequence, the client executes the transaction under the appropriateness test or execution only, without the protections afforded by the suitability assessment.

On the contrary, there might in practice also be situations (see, for example, Case 3 below) where the firm is confronted with clients who insist in taking a course of action that the firm has assessed as being unsuitable for him/her, therefore acting against the firm's advice (so called 'insistent clients').

CASE 3: Client C has an ongoing relationship with Firm W for the provision of investment services, including investment advice.

In the context of this relationship, client C contacts the firm at its own initiative, asking its advice about what investment he should choose between product A and product B. The firm, that does not have any specific interest in selling either of the mentioned products, undertakes a suitability test and assesses that only the investment in product B is suitable for client C, but despite the firm's recommendation, the client insists in buying product A. Client C will therefore execute the transaction under the appropriateness test (if the product is complex) or at his own risk, in execution-only (if the product is not complex and the transaction is regarded as being at the client's initiative), despite the firm's advice not to buy product A.

In situations where the client insists in proceeding with the transaction at his/her own initiative, against the firm's advice, that client should be clearly informed of the fact that the course of action that he/she wishes to undertake is not suitable for him/her, including a clear explanation of the potential risks he would incur into by doing so.

In order to ensure compliance with MiFID II framework, firms should in any case put in place arrangements enabling them to retrace and keep records of the steps of their interaction with clients, so as to be able to demonstrate whether the transaction executed was indeed originated by the client's initiative²⁰ or by the firm's initiative. Firms should periodically review these records to monitor that the interaction with their clients was correctly conducted and to identify potential practices and behaviours non-compliant with MiFID II rules. For example, recurring switches from investment advice to execution services at the client's initiative, or changes of client's profiles near the closing date of any transaction, not supported by a real modification of the client's situation that would justify such a change.

There are particular instances, such as firms selling their own financial instruments (or selling financial instruments issued by entities of the same group) or actively marketing products from within the firm's range, where there is a heightened risk that a firm might indeed act in accordance with its own interests, rather than in the best interests of its clients. In such circumstances, where there is a heightened risk of non-compliance with MiFID II rules due to the existence of significant conflicts of interests, firms may also decide, of their own accord and where compatible with national laws, to put in place processes and procedures that do not allow the client to proceed with a transaction under execution services in relation to a specific financial instrument if that instrument is unsuitable for him. Similar arrangements could also be adopted in relation to insistent clients.

Firms remain subject to all relevant MIFID II requirements and, in particular, to the overarching obligation of acting in accordance with the best interests of their clients.

Question 7 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

When a firm provides the investment service of advice or portfolio management to a client who is unwilling to fully disclose information on his/her financial situation, can the firm assess the suitability of the envisaged transaction? If yes, under which conditions?

Answer 7

When providing investment advice or portfolio management services, the firm must collect from the client all 'necessary information' required by Article 25(2) of MiFID II and Article 54(2) of

²⁰ Recital 85 of MiFID II states that "a service should be considered to be provided at the initiative of a client unless the client demands it in response to a personalised communication from or on behalf of the firm to that particular client, which contains an invitation or is intended to influence the client in respect of a specific financial instrument or specific transaction. A service can be considered to be provided at the initiative of the client notwithstanding that the client demands it on the basis of any communication containing a promotion or offer of financial instruments made by any means that by its very nature is general and addressed to the public or a larger group or category of clients or potential clients."

the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. Moreover, paragraph 8 of the aforementioned Article 54 clarifies that in cases where the investment firm does not obtain such information, it shall not recommend investment services or financial instruments to that client or potential client.

The required information has to be considered in light of all the features of the investment advice or portfolio management services. In any case, the firm has to be able to assess the client's ability to understand and financially bear the relevant risks associated with the investment. Nevertheless, the depth and detail of the required information are subject to the proportionality principle, for example they can vary depending on the complexity, risks and structure of the financial instrument and on the nature and extent of the service provided. In particular, it should be reminded that for more complex and risky products, as well as for the illiquid ones, the firm should consider whether more in-depth information may need to be collected, so as to be able to carry out the aforementioned assessment²¹.

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the firm to decide whether, in limited situations, the suitability of certain products could be assessed without getting full disclosure about a client's financial situation. That may be the case, for example, where a client discloses only a part of his/her assets but also provides adequate information to evidence all his/her existing liabilities (such as bank loans, outstanding debts, etc.), and that no further liabilities exist. In these situations, the information provided by the client about his/her liabilities needs to be comprehensive. The firm must be capable, on the basis of the information disclosed by the client, to assess whether the client's assets are sufficient for him/her to bear any related investment risks, including the possible losses that can occur when investing in the respective instrument.

In accordance with Article 54(7) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms are responsible for ensuring that the information collected from clients is reliable and need to take reasonable steps to this effect. They could, for example, check such information against other relevant sources that may be available to the firm itself²². This could be the case, for example, for a bank providing not only investment services, but also traditional banking services, that may have knowledge of an existing bank loan or other outstanding debts and liabilities. In any case, if the firm becomes aware that the information provided by the client about his/her existing liabilities is not accurate, it should refrain from giving investment advice or offering portfolio management services.

The fact that the suitability of the product/service was assessed without getting full disclosure about the client's financial situation should also be set out clearly in the suitability report provided to the client.

Question 8 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

²¹ This is in line with ESMA's 'Guidelines on certain aspects of MiFID suitability requirements' published in 2012 [Ref: ESMA/2012/387].

²² This is in line with ESMA's 'Guidelines on certain aspects of MiFID suitability requirements' published in 2012 [Ref: ESMA/2012/387].

Where a firm is subject to several record keeping and documentation obligations in connection with the provision of investment advice, is the firm required to draft distinct documents or would one document containing the requirements of all of these different documents be sufficient?

Answer 8

MiFID II requires firms to comply with the following record keeping and recording obligations:

- The requirement, included in Article 16(6) of MiFID II, to record all services, activities and transactions;
- The requirement, included in Article 25(6) of MiFID II, to provide clients with reports on all services provided and in particular to provide a statement on suitability in case of the provision of investment advice, regardless of whether or not the investment advice is followed by a transaction (see Q&A 1).

Furthermore, in accordance with Article 16(7) of MiFID II, face-to-face conversations that relate to, at least, transactions concluded when dealing on own account or in the provision of client order services that relate to the transmission and execution of client orders, including such conversations and communications that are intended to result in transactions, shall also be recorded. These conversations may include conversations in the context of the provision of investment advice, if that advice results or may result in the provision of the services of reception, transmission and execution of client orders. The content of these face-to-face conversations may be recorded by using written minutes or notes, according to Article 16(7) of MiFID II and Article 76(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

While the requirements²³ have to be complied with individually, it is reasonable to allow firms to draft one single document as long as:

- the content of such document is consistent with all corresponding requirements;
- a record of the document is kept by the firm for the prescribed period;
- when required by one of the corresponding MiFID II provisions the document is provided or made available to the client in the prescribed conditions.

Question 9 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

When providing portfolio management, how does investment firms' periodic reporting obligation under sub-paragraph 4 of Article 25(6) of MiFID II relate to the ex-post reporting obligations under Article 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation?

²³ Articles 16(6), 25(6) of MiFID II, and 16(7) of MiFID II in relation to records of face-to-face conversations.

Answer 9

In ESMA's view, when providing portfolio management to retail clients, investment firms should comply with their obligation under sub-paragraph 4 of Article 25(6) of MiFID II by providing the additional information on how the investment meets the client's preferences, objectives and other characteristics in the context of the periodic ex-post report required under Article 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

In particular, it would be reasonable to expect that investment firms should follow the deadlines specified in paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned Article 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, whereas regarding the format, it should be left to firms to decide whether or not to use one single document.

This periodic additional information should be updated when the report is issued and should be based on the assessment of the client's portfolio as a whole.

Question 10 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Are investment firms allowed to use a tick-the-box approach and/or generalizing phrases when stating how the advice meets the retail client's preferences, objectives and other characteristics in the suitability report?

Answer 10

No. When providing the suitability report according to Article 25(6) of MiFID II and Article 54(12) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms should state on an individualized basis how the recommendation given is suitable for the retail client.

The suitability report should enable a client to understand if and why the recommendations given are suitable for the client. Therefore the firm should explicitly set forth not only if but how the recommendation (including the recommendation not to sell, buy or hold a product) matches the client's investment objectives, including his risk tolerance, his financial situation including the ability to bear losses and his knowledge and experience and any other relevant client's characteristics. To enable the client to compare this explanation with the information submitted by him/her, firms should also refer in the suitability report to the relevant client information that was used for the assessment of the suitability and on which the recommended transaction is based.

Investment firms should avoid general statements such as "the recommended product is suitable because it matches your risk tolerance" or "the product is suitable because it matches the information you provided to us" as such phrases do not provide the client with information on how the firms has determined that the recommended product is in fact suitable for the client but rather only reflects that the recommended product is deemed suitable for the client.

Instead, firms should use phrases such as "The recommended product matches your risk tolerance: It is categorized as a risk class 3-product, this matches your risk tolerance which is level 3" (or alternatively in case of a portfolio diversification strategy, "the recommended

product matches your risk tolerance: It is categorized as a risk class 4 product, but, considering the composition of your portfolio as a whole, it brings your overall portfolio risk ratio to 3, which is consistent with your risk tolerance which is level 3”) or “your investment horizon of 5 years is in line with the recommended holding period of the product of at least four years.”²⁴

This does not prevent investment firms from using a standardized template for the suitability report. Where firms use pre-phrased statements they should ensure that they are granular enough to refer to the different aspects of the suitability assessment and to the different characteristics of the recommended product. Firms should in any case provide the option for advisers to add “further aspects” where they can include specific client information that may not be covered by the template. This is also necessary to cover information on “other client’s characteristics”, if expressed by the client.

²⁴ The above are only indicative examples. The content and wording of the suitability report should reflect the specific criteria and methodologies adopted for the assessment of suitability by the firm.

3 Recording of telephone conversations and electronic communications [Last update: 3 October 2017]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Which internal telephone conversations or electronic communications regarding the handling of orders and transactions need to be recorded?

Answer 1

Internal telephone conversations and electronic communications that “*are intended to result in transactions*” or “*relate to*” the reception and transmission of orders, execution of orders on behalf of clients and dealing on own account are subject to the MiFID II Article 16(7) recording requirement.

Recital 57 of MiFID II sets out that: “*such records should ensure that there is evidence to prove the terms of any orders given by clients and its correspondence with transactions executed by the investment firms, as well as to detect any behaviour that may have relevance in terms of market abuse, including when firms deal on own account*”.

As an example, such records should include conversations or communications by which the sales desk will request a quote from the trading desk on a financial instrument before concluding a transaction with a client. It may also include conversations or communications that are within scope and made to or from the sales and research desks.

Therefore, ESMA expects firms to record all internal telephone calls or electronic communications regarding the handling of orders and transactions. However, ESMA would not ordinarily expect persons carrying on back-office functions to be captured by the requirements.

To clarify, the records of any internal face-to-face conversations that relate to the reception and transmission of orders, execution of orders on behalf of clients and dealing on own account will be caught by the general record-keeping requirements under Article 16(6) of MiFID II.

Question 2 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Can firms charge their clients to access recordings?

Answer 2

MiFID II enables clients to request access to records of telephone conversations and electronic communications kept in accordance with Article 16(7) of MiFID II. ESMA considers that a decision on whether to charge a client for access to such records is within the discretion of the firm. There is no prohibition in MiFID II on this point. However, firms are expected to pay due

regard to the national laws in their respective jurisdiction on whether it is permissible to charge clients to access recordings²⁵.

ESMA therefore expects that, if a firm decides to charge its client, any charge must be reasonable in order not to deter clients from making such requests.

Question 3 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

The MiFID II Delegated Regulation requires firms to periodically monitor the records of transactions and orders subject to these requirements including relevant conversations and that the monitoring shall be risk based and proportionate. How should these requirements be applied?

Answer 3

The monitoring of records of relevant telephone conversations and electronic communications is necessary to assist the firm in ensuring that it is meeting the recording requirements and also adhering to its wider regulatory obligations under MiFID II. For example, it will assist the firm in meeting its wider regulatory obligations which include but are not limited to having policies and procedures in place in respect of its client order handling, best execution, own account dealing obligations and the deterrence and detection of market abuse.

In determining the firm's approach to monitoring the recording requirements, which includes the frequency and scope of such monitoring, ESMA expects firms to put in place arrangements which are appropriate to the nature, size and complexity of its business.

The approach should consider the likelihood of misconduct in relation to market manipulation or non-compliance with the obligation to act in the best interest of clients in connection with the reception, transmission and execution of client orders and when dealing on own account. In any case, the following criteria should be taken into account when determining the appropriate frequency and scope of monitoring the records: (i) volume and frequency of dealing on own account, (ii) volume, frequency and characteristics of client orders, (iii) characteristics of clients, (iv) financial instruments and services offered and (v) current market conditions with regard to specific securities. This list is non-exhaustive.

Furthermore, the results of any monitoring activities (including the risk assessment carried out by the compliance function) and of any relevant internal or external audit findings on the recording of conversations and electronic communications should be taken into account to determine the frequency and scope of the monitoring.

²⁵ Firms should bear in mind that the Article 12 of the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC states that every data subject should be guaranteed a right of access "without excessive delays or expense".

The monitoring should be conducted regularly and when necessary on an ad-hoc basis. Due regard should also be given to any emerging risks.

The monitoring should at least aim at:

- assessing compliance with recording procedures in place,
- assessing the adequacy of such procedures,
- ensuring that the records are readily accessible; and
- ensuring that the records accurately reconstruct the audit trail of a transaction.

Question 4 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Under Article 16(7) of MiFID II, competent authorities may request that a firm keeps the records for up to a period of seven years, rather than five years. In such cases, what are the expectations by competent authorities on the retention of records?

Answer 4

Firms are required to keep records produced under Article 16(7) of MiFID II for five years, with the extension to seven years, if requested by the competent authority. For example, extensions may occur when a competent authority undertakes complicated regulatory investigations in the course of exercising its supervisory powers. This can also occur, for instance, when the competent authority is conducting an investigation on an issue dating several years prior to the start of the inquiry. If a competent authority has not made a request to a firm to put aside recordings within five years from the beginning of the retention period, the firm does not have to keep those recordings for longer than five years from when the record was created. However, if within five years from when the record was created, a competent authority asks firms to retain the recordings, recordings should stop being deleted and should be retained until the competent authority needs them or the competent authority indicates that the recordings are no longer of interest.

Where a firm has been asked to preserve information which may be of interest and the competent authority subsequently concludes that they have no further interest in that information, the competent authority should inform the firms as quickly as possible. If a firm is unclear on whether it should continue to retain material, it should contact the competent authority for confirmation of the position. Nevertheless, no request from the competent authority can extend the retention period for firms beyond seven years.

Question 5 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

What types of electronic communications are within the scope of the new requirements?

Answer 5

Article 16(7) of MiFID II requires the recording of telephone conversations or electronic communications. Any electronic communications involving transactions when dealing on own account or in the provision of client order services that relate to the reception, transmission and execution of client orders will fall within the rules. The term “electronic communication” covers many categories of communications and includes amongst others video conferencing, fax, email, Bloomberg mail, SMS, business to business devices, chat, instant messaging and mobile device applications.

ESMA will not produce an exhaustive list of electronic communications because of the continuing innovation and advancement in technology which would mean the list frequently becomes out of date.

Question 6 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Is the compliance function sufficient to fulfil the requirement to periodically monitor the records of transactions and orders? Or should it be a separate, specifically organised function?

Answer 6

MIFID II, and its implementing measures, do not require the establishment of another control function on top of those already provided for by MIFID I: compliance function, risk management function and, where appropriate, internal audit function. Firms are reminded of their requirements under Article 9(3) of MiFID II and Article 76(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

Therefore, while not being necessarily another specific control function, the periodic monitoring of the records of relevant telephone conversations and electronic communications is an essential piece of the overall compliance and monitoring system a firm has to implement through governance arrangements.

Question 7 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Is the recording of telephone conversations and electronic communications a critical or important operational function for the purposes of the outsourcing rules?

Answer 7

Firms may use third-party recording services to meet the new requirement to record telephone conversations and electronic communication. However, ESMA considers that, for the purposes of the outsourcing rules, taping will be considered a critical or important operational function.



Question 8 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Do relevant telephone conversations and electronic communications need to be recorded by the firm from start to end?

Answer 8

In ESMA's view, the scope of the requirements require firms to record the entirety of telephone conversations and electronic communications. This is because it is impossible to appreciate upfront whether the conversation will lead to the conclusion of a transaction.

Therefore, ESMA expects firms to record all relevant telephone conversations or electronic communications from start to end.

Question 9 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

MiFID II enables clients to request access to records of their telephone conversations and electronic communications with the firm. Does this right also cover internal communications within the firm?

Answer 9

MiFID II states that records kept in accordance with Article 16(7) of MiFID II shall be provided to the client involved upon request. This extends to internal conversations and communications between employees and contractors of the firm which relate to the provision of the client's order.

Question 10 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Are employees or contractors permitted to use mobile devices to enable them to undertake activities relating to transactions concluded when dealing on own account and the provision of client order services?

Answer 10

Firms may permit relevant persons to use mobile devices to undertake activities relating to transactions concluded when dealing on own account and the provision of client order services. This includes devices owned by the firm which are expressly authorised for use and devices which are personally owned and used to make relevant conversations. Whatever the circumstance, a firm shall take all reasonable steps to prevent a relevant person from making, sending or receiving relevant telephone conversations and electronic communications on devices which the firm is unable to record or copy.

Firms are required to establish, implement and maintain an effective recording of telephone conversations and electronic communications policy. This policy should therefore cover the requirements relating to mobile devices.

For example, the policy should cover, amongst other factors, the fact that data must be retained for a period of at least 5 years, relevant persons should be prevented from being able to delete records. It should cover what happens to the data/device if a relevant person leaves a firm and what happens in the event that the device is lost or stolen. Additionally, it should also stipulate the frequency of transferring data from the mobile device (whether privately owned or expressly authorised for use by the firm) to the firm's own data retention database.

Question 11 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

What telephone conversations and electronic communications should be recorded in accordance with Article 16(7) MiFID II?

Answer 11

In ESMA's view, the following stages of conversations and electronic communications²⁶ that relate to the provision of client order services or dealing on own account will be caught by the rules:

- Conversations or communications with a client, or a person acting on behalf of such a client, which relate to an agreement by the firm to carry out one of the covered activities, whether as principal or agent.
- Conversations or communications with any other person, which relate to transactions concluded when dealing on own account and the provision of client order services that relate to the reception, transmission and execution of client orders. This should include telephone conversations or electronic communications such as: transmitting an order to a broker or placing an order with an entity for execution, conversations or communications relating to the handling of an order (including solicitations and acceptance of transactions).

Also included, are any other conversations or communications which are carried out by the firm with a view to reach an agreement to carry out one of the covered activities, whether as principal or agent, even if those conversations or communications do not lead to the conclusion of such an agreement²⁷. This should include conversations and communications regarding prices, solicitations, bids, offers, indications of interest and requests for quotes.

²⁶ For example, transactions concluded through online websites, online platforms and smart phone applications.

²⁷ Second sub-paragraph of Article 16(7) MiFID II.

Firms should have in place policies and procedures to ensure that no relevant telephone conversations or electronic communications are done through communication systems which are not recorded.

Firms will have to decide which devices these relevant conversations or communications will take place on and ensure the effectiveness of their arrangements. Firms will have to ensure that relevant persons are trained on the procedures governing the requirements in Article 16(7) MiFID II²⁸.

Question 12 [Last update: 10 July 2017]

Do the record keeping requirements set out in Article 16(7) of MiFID II apply only when, through a given channel, the execution and transmission of the order is allowed in addition to the reception and transmission of the order?

Answer 12

No.

ESMA considers that the content of Article 16(7) of MiFID II and the related Article 76 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation does not support the narrow interpretation that telephone conversations and electronic communications should be recorded only when, through a given channel, the execution and transmission of the order is allowed in addition to the reception and transmission of the order.

The first subparagraph of Article 16(7) of MiFID states “*Records shall include the recording of telephone conversations or electronic communications relating to, at least, transactions concluded when dealing on own account and the provision of client order services that relate to the reception, transmission and execution of client orders*”. The inclusion of language such as “relate to” points to a wider reading of the recording requirement.

This reading is also supported by the provision included in the second subparagraph of Article 16(7) of MiFID II which makes it clear that the conclusion of a transaction is not a prerequisite for the requirement to record relevant conversations or communications to apply.

Article 16(7) is intended to apply to specific MiFID services that are set out in Annex 1, Section A of MiFID II. ‘Reception and transmission’ is a separate MiFID service to execution, so the recording requirement must apply separately to situations when a firm receives and transmits a client order, irrespective of whether the execution and transmission of the order is allowed on that given channel.

²⁸ Article 76(5) of MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

Finally, we note that Recital 57 of MiFID II underlines the importance of such records involving client orders, for the reasons set out in the CESR technical advice to the Commission:

- to show the intention behind trading and the knowledge of the person at the point at which they trade, which are matters that are often not easily established, but may be crucial in a successful enforcement case;
- to assist the national competent authorities in assessing an investment firms' on-going compliance with market abuse requirements and conduct of business obligations and, in particular, with the requirements in MiFID on information to clients and potential clients, on best execution and on client order-handling; and
- to ensure that there is evidence to resolve disputes between an investment firm and its clients over the terms of transactions, being in some cases the sole evidence to be relied on in the event of a dispute.

ESMA believes that the above objectives could not be achieved if the MiFID II telephone recordings requirements were not applied to all orders given by clients and independently from the fact that through a given channel, the execution and transmission of the order is allowed in addition to the reception and transmission of the order.

Question 13 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

What is the applicable scope of the record keeping requirements set out in Article 16(7) of MiFID II in terms of products and services?

Answer 13

The requirements set out in Article 16(7) of MiFID II and the related Article 76 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation apply “at least” to the provision of services (1), (2) and (3) included in Annex I, Section A of MiFID II.

Article 16(7) only requires the recording of communications in relation to the client order services mentioned above. However, the second subparagraph of Article 16(7) also requires those conversations and communications that are “intended to result in” the provision of these services to be recorded. In practice, other investment services like investment advice (paragraph (5) of Annex I, Section A) may be provided at the point when there is an intention to provide a client order services. In this case, the content of the advisory service would need to be recorded, as it would de facto be in scope of Article 16(7) of MiFID II.

ESMA notes that Members States may also decide to extend the requirements further to other MiFID services, or non-MiFID services and products.

4 Record keeping [Last update: 10 November 2017]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

How should firms prepare copies of records that have been encrypted and which have been requested by clients, competent authorities or other competent third parties?

Answer 1

For records that are captured by the requirements under Article 16(6) and 16(7) of MiFID II, ESMA expects firms to have the organisational and administrative capabilities to convert any encrypted data into an unencrypted format.

ESMA expects firms to deliver or make available copies of these records in an unencrypted and easily analysable format, or provide the means that such data can be unencrypted when requested by the client, competent authority or other competent third party.

Question 2 [Last update: 10 November 2017]

Are securities financing transactions (SFTs) in scope of the MiFID II requirements for order record keeping, as outlined in Article 16(6) of MiFID II and further specified in Section 8 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation?

Answer 2

Yes. Article 16(6) of MiFID II states that firms “shall arrange for records to be kept of all services, activities and transactions undertaken by it which shall be sufficient to enable the competent authority to fulfil its supervisory tasks and to perform the enforcement actions under this Directive, Regulation (EU) No 600/2014, Directive 2014/57/EU and Regulation (EU) No 596/2014 [...]”. Article 16(6) has a general application and does not provide for exclusions of particular types of transactions. SFTs are therefore inside the scope of the MiFID II record keeping requirements.

5 Investment advice on an independent basis [Last update: 3 October 2018]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Could a firm still hold itself out as being independent where it assesses and compares a sufficient range of financial instruments available (which are not limited to financial instruments issued or provided by the firm itself or by entities having close links) but that the outcome of such an assessment in a considerable number of cases is that the firm recommends financial instruments to its clients which are issued or provided by the firm itself or by entities having close links?

Answer 1

When a firm holding itself out as being independent frequently assesses financial instruments which are issued or provided by the firm itself or by entities having close links as best suited for its clients, ESMA considers this could potentially conflict its status as 'independent'.

Independent advisers are reminded of their obligations stemming from MiFID II (and in particular Article 24(4) and 24(7)) and implementing measures (in particular Articles 52 and 53 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation). A firm is also expected to manage conflicts of interest at all times. In doing so, the firm should establish, implement, maintain and update regularly adequate internal systems and controls in order to ensure that it is not bound by any form of agreement with a product provider that may limit the firm's ability to provide a personal recommendation which is unbiased and based on an assessment of a sufficient range of financial instruments available on the market. Also a regular review of the service and financial instruments it offers should be performed by the firm. Consequently, ESMA expects that these internal controls and systems should provide for a permanent internal awareness of its independency status.

In practice this means that the outcome of the unbiased and unrestricted analysis of the financial instruments available on the market could occasionally result in the firm recommending its own products. However, if the outcome is that the firm routinely recommends its own products or if there appears to be a systematic bias to advise clients to invest in its own products, the firm would most likely have problems in demonstrating the provision of advice on an independent basis. In such a case ESMA expects the firm to do thorough internal assessments determining if and to what extent clients' interests are or could be affected. Such an internal assessment should at least consider information on how the firm assessed and compared financial instruments which are issued or provided by the firm itself or by entities having close links versus a sufficient range of financial instruments available on the market. Also it should make clear the factors the assessment has been based upon and which factors determined the outcome. The firm should be able to provide this analysis to its clients and on request to the supervisory authority.

Question 2 [Last update: 3 October 2018]

An investment firm only offers financial instruments issued or provided by the investment firm itself or by entities having close links with the investment firm. On a look-through basis, the financial instruments offered (for example, investment funds, wrappers) allow the investor to indirectly invest in financial instruments issued by entities who do not have close links with the investment firm.

Can such investment firm hold itself out as providing investment advice on an independent basis?

Answer 2

No. In accordance with Article 24(7) of MiFID II, a firm can hold itself out as providing investment advice on an independent basis only if that investment firm assesses “a sufficient range of financial instruments available on the market which must be sufficiently diverse with regard to their type and issuers or product providers to ensure that the client’s investment objectives can be suitably met and must not be limited to financial instruments issued or provided by: (i) the investment firm itself or by entities having close links with the investment firm; or (ii) other entities with which the investment firm has such close legal or economic relationships, such as contractual relationships, as to pose a risk of impairing the independent basis of the advice provided”. When determining the range of financial instruments assessed, an investment firm providing investment advice must consider the financial instruments (directly) offered by the investment firm.

6 Underwriting and placing [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

Article 38(1)(a) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation states that “investment firms which provide advice on corporate finance strategy, as set out in Section B (3) of Annex I, and provide the service of underwriting or placing of financial instruments, shall, before accepting a mandate to manage the offering, have arrangements in place to inform the issuer client of the various financing alternatives available with the firm”. What are “the various financing alternatives” to be considered?

Answer 1

The various financing alternatives may be limited to those appropriate to the issuer client's needs. However, they should not be limited to financing alternatives that constitute investment services; for example, loans or extension of credit facilities shall be included if appropriate and offered by the firm. The firm should inform the issuer client which financing alternatives have not been considered, including financing alternatives not offered by the firm, with a short explanation of why they were discounted.

Question 2 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Article 38(1)(d) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation states that “investment firms which provide advice on corporate finance strategy, as set out in Section B(3) of Annex I, and provide the service of underwriting or placing of financial instruments, shall, before accepting a mandate to manage the offering, have arrangements in place to inform the issuer client of the details of the targeted investors, to whom the firm intends to offer the financial instruments”. Are investment firms required to provide details of each individual investor client or per type of investor client?

Answer 2

Before accepting a mandate to manage the offering, information on targeted investors should be provided at least by per type of client, for example long-term or short-term investors, size, and nature of investor (e.g. pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, hedge funds and private clients), and country. This should reflect the specific needs or preferences of the issuer client, acting as a supplement to the investment firms' overarching allocation policy. This is consistent with Article 40(5), which states that, during the placing process (once a mandate has been awarded), investment firms shall “obtain the issuer client's agreement to its proposed allocation per type of client for the transaction in accordance with the allocation policy”.

Furthermore, when carrying out the activities of underwriting and placing, investment firms should be aware of their product governance obligations, in particular in relation to the identification of the target market.

Question 3 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

What records should be kept by firms when providing underwriting or placing services and how should firms justify their final allocations to each investment client?

Answer 3

In order to be able to demonstrate to NCAs how they meet their obligations to the issuer client when providing underwriting and placing services, as well as their obligation to manage conflicts of interest between different clients or groups of clients, firms should have a process to record allocation decisions at material stages in the allocation process.

Records of allocations decisions should include:

- a. The firm's overarching allocation policy under Article 40(4) in force at the time of the commencement of the service;
- b. The firm's initial discussion with the issuer client and the agreed proposed allocation per type of investment client, as required by Article 40(5);
- c. The content and timing of allocation requests received from each investment client with an indication of their type;
- d. Where relevant, any further discussion and instructions or preferences provided by the issuer client, other members of the syndicate, or the firm itself, on the allocation process, including any emerging in light of allocation requests received from investment clients;
- e. The final allocations registered in each individual investment client's account.

Firms must provide a justification for the final allocation made to each investment client. For this purpose, a justification should explicitly provide detailed reasoning behind the final allocation unless firms can evidence that such detail has been provided through records maintained at stages (a-e) in the allocation process. Particular care should be given to justifications to any investment clients that appear in either of the following two rankings of the final allocation:

- (i) investors that receive a final allocation (recorded in (e) above) in the top 20% of the total allocation ranked by investor in descending order of size of allocation to each investor; or

- (ii) investors that receive a final allocation in the top 20% of the total allocation ranked by investor in descending order of the percentage allocation granted to each investor divided by the percentage bid by each investor (i.e. the relative extent to which each investor has their order (recorded in (c) above) reduced in the final allocation (recorded in (e) above).

Question 4

Article 38(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation applies to “investment firms which provide advice on corporate finance strategy as set out in Section B(3) of Annex I of MIFID II and provide the service of underwriting or placing of financial instruments”. Does this Article apply to investment firms acting as a manager or a member of the syndicate for a specific offering?

Answer 4

The activities of investment firms acting as a manager or member of the syndicate for a specific offering do not generally imply the provision of advice on corporate finance strategy. When no advice on corporate finance strategy is provided to the issuer client, provisions of Article 38(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation are not to be applied. If, however, advice on corporate finance strategy is provided to the issuer client alongside the service of underwriting and placing, provisions in Article 38(1) will apply. In all circumstances, all other relevant requirements in the MiFID II Delegated Regulation related to underwriting and placing activity remain applicable.

7 Inducements (research) [Last update: 12 July 2018]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 October 2016]

When a firm is using a research payment account under Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, can the research budget required under Article 13(1)(b)(ii) and 13(2)(a) be set for more than one client's portfolio when determining the specific research charge to a client and establishing the need for third party research?

Answer 1

While a research payment account (RPA) can only be funded by a specific research charge to the client, which must be based on a research budget set by the firm, ESMA considers that a budget can be set for a group of client portfolios or accounts where the firm has established a similar need for third party research in respect of the investment services rendered to its clients.

This would allow a firm providing investment services to set a research budget at a desk or investment strategy level, for example, if client portfolios have sufficiently similar mandates and investment objectives such that investment decisions relating to those portfolios are informed by the same research inputs. A firm should be able to clearly evidence and demonstrate its approach to setting and managing a budget for a given group of client accounts and that it is consistent with using the budget in the best interests of its clients, as required by Article 13(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. A firm should also describe its approach in a written research policy provided to its clients under Article 13(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive.

A firm is still required to identify a specific research charge for individual clients to fund the RPA, even where a budget is set for several portfolios. A firm will therefore need to have a transparent method for making a fair allocation of costs in such cases. This may involve the firm pro-rating the cost of the research budget across all client accounts benefitting from it based, for example, on the value of each client's portfolio, to establish a specific charge for individual clients.

Firms should not set a budget for a group of client portfolios or accounts that do not share sufficiently similar investment objectives and research needs. For example, if portfolios have material differences in the types of financial instruments and / or geographic regions or market sectors they can invest or are invested in, such that their research needs and the potential costs of acquiring those inputs are different, they should not be subject to the same research budget. This would not allow the firm to ensure a budget is used in the best interests of clients and may result in an unfair allocation of the costs, or benefits derived from research purchased, between different sets of clients. A firm may also choose to set a firm-level research budget to help it control overall costs, but this does not replace the need to set budgets for discrete groups of client portfolios and accounts as described above.

Question 2 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

What is the legal status of money held in a research payment account (RPA) established under Article 13(1)(b) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, prior to it being used to pay providers for research?

Answer 2

Under Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, where an investment firm chooses to use an RPA, this must be funded by a research charge to the client.

The nature of this deduction as a charge means that once it is deducted from a client, the funds belong to the firm. However, this research fund should be managed in an RPA controlled by the investment firm and it should be used specifically for purchasing external research to benefit the client. ESMA is of the opinion that it is important that the investment firm makes its best efforts to align as much as possible the timing of the charges paid by the client to the firm, and the expenditure on research paid from the RPA by the firm to the research provider.

The obligation on the investment firm to have a process by which it can rebate surplus funds if it underspends the original research budget for a set of portfolios under Article 13(5) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive²⁹ does not alter the status of RPA money. Only when a rebate has been made into a client's account would it be considered as client assets.

When administration of the RPA is outsourced, the investment firm should maintain legal control over RPA funds until such time as it decides to make a payment to a research provider. Each payment and its amount should be decided with reference to the quality criteria established by the firm itself in its research policy and its assessment of the need for research in the best interest of the client.

The investment firm must be satisfied that through the outsourced agreement it continues to retain full discretion and control over the use of the account.

The money should be ring-fenced and clearly separated from other funds of the RPA Administrator, such that they remain legally owed to the investment firm.

The third party provider should have no right of set-off over the money or be entitled to use it as collateral or otherwise for their own benefit.

Question 3 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

How should an investment firm deal with unrequested research that is provided free of charge?

²⁹ Or offset it against the research budget and charge calculated for the following period

Answer 3

The provision or reception of research by an investment firm is subject to the rules on inducements in Article 24, paragraphs 7, 8 and 9, of MiFID II, depending on the firm's investment activities.

Firms need to have in place policies and systems to assess the nature of any service, benefit or material paid or provided by any third party to determine whether they can provide or accept it. It is not acceptable for firms to receive research for free where no assessment has been made under the above inducements rules or there is no payment arrangement in place that complies with Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive.

A firm providing independent investment advice or portfolio management services can only receive research in relation to those activities by complying with Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive³⁰. In this context, firms should not accept research for 'free'.

In relation to services or activities other than those covered under Articles 24(7) and 24(8), a firm providing or receiving research services must assess whether the provision or receipt of the research service meets the quality enhancement test (and the other conditions in Article 24(9)) or decide whether it intends to pay for the research directly or through a separate RPA under Article 13 Delegated Directive.

Where a firm does not want to accept research material, they should take reasonable steps to cease receiving it or avoid benefitting from its content, for example by automatically blocking or filtering certain senders/materials where practicable, and / or requesting a provider to stop providing research, and / or using the compliance function of the firm to monitor, assess and determine whether the material can be accepted before it reaches those parts of the firm that would make use of it. As proportionate to the nature, scale and complexity of its business, a firm should also provide adequate training and / or information to staff to ensure they understand the inducements obligations and the firm's specific approach to receiving research, for example whether or not they have budgeted research expenses or have agreements in place for the provision of research with particular providers to meet Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. A firm could also consider having a process whereby staff can report to compliance or senior management any cases of unsolicited research being provided to them from a third party where no payment arrangement or agreement is in place.

Where the provider of research is a firm which also provides execution services under MiFID, and is subject to Article 13(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, the provision of unsolicited (or 'free') research would not meet the obligation on them to price services separately, and ensure its supply does not potentially influence the execution services they supply. On that basis, firms should have systems and controls in place to enable them to cease providing unsolicited research.

³⁰ For the purposes of this question, it is assumed a priori that an item or service is research, rather than material that could constitute a minor non-monetary benefit that is acceptable under Article 12(3) of the Delegate Directive (see question 6 of this section below).

Question 4 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

Can investment firms accept research from third country providers that are not subject to the MiFID II requirements?

Answer 4

EU/EEA firms subject to MiFID II inducements rules must comply with these requirements (Article 24, paragraphs (7), (8) and (9), and the relevant level two provisions) irrespective of the status or geographical location of the research provider. Alternatively, they could receive research using the paying arrangements set out in Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive.

Firms should therefore treat research from a third country provider in the same way as any other third party benefits (see Q&A 3 above).

Question 5 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

What approach should a firm take to research provided from another group entity?

Answer 5

The MiFID inducements rules apply in the same manner irrespective of the relationship between the provider of fees, commissions or monetary or non-monetary benefits and the firm receiving them, (i.e. irrespective of being part of the same group or not).

On this basis, firms subject to MiFID inducements rules need to either assess whether accepting the inducement (research) is compliant with Article 24(7), (8), (9) and the relevant level two provisions or decide to use the arrangements in Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. In the latter case, firms should pay particular attention to any potential conflicts of interests as well as their obligations to assess the quality of research and keep appropriate controls and oversight over the amounts paid with reference to the quality criteria mentioned beforehand. Alternatively, the firm could refuse to accept research from other intra-group entities.

Where firms do seek to receive third party research from or provide it to other group entities using an RPA model under Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, the requirement on the EU firm to ensure a research budget is used and managed in the best interests of their clients and that the costs of research are allocated fairly between client portfolios under Article 13(6) and 13(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive will be particularly important. The commercial preference of a firm to operate as part of a global business model does not override their obligations under Article 13 if using an RPA. The firm will need to ensure their systems, controls and oversight of research spending and cost allocation to clients are sufficient to meet

all the requirements linked to an RPA, notwithstanding that this may require some changes to their business model.

Alternatively, there remains the option for the firm to pay for research with direct payments from their own resources if the RPA and research charge mechanism is deemed too complex.

Question 6 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

In what circumstances should material received by a firm providing independent investment advice or portfolio management services be considered a minor non-monetary benefit under Article 12(3) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive rather than research?

Answer 6

In accordance with Q&A 3 (see above) firms should have in place policies and systems to assess the nature and scale of any service, benefit or material provided by any third party to determine whether it can be considered as a minor non-monetary benefit or as research subject to Article 13 requirements.

Whereas an overall definition of minor non-monetary benefits is provided for in Article 24 (8) of MIFID II, and specific items are provided for in Article 12(3) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, Recital 29 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive provides some further clarity in relation to certain types of information or material. It states that in particular “non-substantive material or services consisting of short term market commentary on the latest economic statistics or company results” that firms providing independent investment advice or portfolio management may treat as minor non-monetary benefits.

The assessment of whether material is substantive or not (and therefore can be viewed as a minor non-monetary benefit) should only be linked to its content and not to the qualification given/alleged by the provider nor its provenance within the third party provider. Article 12(3) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive makes clear that for any third party benefits to be an acceptable minor non-monetary benefits, a firm should assess and ensure they are “reasonable and proportionate and of such a scale that they are that they are unlikely to influence the firm’s behaviour in any way that is detrimental to the interest of the relevant client.”

For example, a detailed research report or conversation with a research analyst, which in content meets the nature of research described in Recital 28, cannot be considered as a minor non-monetary benefit due to it being labelled as such by a provider or because such material is provided through a dealing desk rather than a research department. By contrast, short market updates with limited commentary or opinion may be capable of being considered as information that is a minor non-monetary benefit consistent with Recital 29 and Article 12(3)(a) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. The restriction on inducements, including research, should also not prevent communications between a firm’s trading desk and a trader in another firm’s dealing desk in the context of seeking market information to immediately execute an order, for example on available liquidity or recently traded prices, which should be considered as part of

the execution service. Material repeating or summarising public news stories or public statements from corporate issuers (e.g. public quarterly results reports or other market announcements) could also be considered as information that constitutes a minor non-monetary benefit.

Recital 29 also refers to Article 12(3)(b) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. This provides that a minor non-monetary benefit can include “written material from a third party that is commissioned and paid for by a corporate issuer or potential issuer to promote a new issuance by the company... provided that the relationship is clearly disclosed in the material and that the material is made available at the same time to any investment firms wishing to receive it or to the general public”. This exemption can allow investment firms to receive ‘pre-deal’ material directly relating to a new capital raising event by an issuer, which is produced by a third party such as another investment firm who is placing and / or underwriting the issue (often referred to as ‘connected research’), provided that the nature of the material is made clear and it is available at the same time to any prospective investor.

Article 12(3)(b) also allow investment firms to accept material from a third party where they are “contractually engaged and paid by the issuer to produce such material on an ongoing basis”, again subject to the relationship being clearly disclosed within it and the material being made available at the same time to any investment firms wishing to receive it or to the general public. This permits so-called ‘issuer sponsored’ third party coverage to be distributed and received by an investment firm as a minor non-monetary benefit, provided that it is offered generally either to any investment firm or is made public. In both cases under Article 12(3)(b) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive it is clear that there should be no expectation or actual payment from a recipient investment firm for such material or restriction in access that could in any way infer the provision of this material could act as an inducement and not constitute a ‘minor’ benefit.

Recital 30 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive finally clarifies that “any non-monetary benefit that involves a third party allocating valuable resources to the investment firm shall not be considered as minor and shall be judged to impair compliance with the investment firm's duty to act in their client’s best interest.”

Question 7 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

Can the service of a third party arranging meetings with the management of a corporate issuer for an investment firm (‘corporate access’) be considered as research that can be paid for from an RPA under Article 13(1)(b) of the Delegated Directive, and if not, how should firms providing independent investment advice or portfolio management services treat such services?

Answer 7

Recital 28 provides a definition of research for the purpose of the RPA model. Arranging a meeting itself is not providing material or services which “*explicitly or implicitly recommend or suggest an investment strategy and provide a substantiated opinion as to the present or future*

value or price of such instruments or assets" so does not appear to be 'research' and should be considered a discrete service.

This does not preclude an investment firm that arranges such meetings, and also supplies research and execution services, from being paid for research services from an RPA, but the firm should ensure their pricing and payments received from firms purchasing its research are not subsidising a charge for the corporate access (concierge) service. This is consistent with Article 13(9) of the Delegated Directive, which applies to firms providing execution services, which specifies that "the provision of each other benefit or service by the same investment firm to investment firms established in the Union shall be subject to a separately identifiable charge."

ESMA expects investment firms subject to Article 24(7) or Article 24(8) of MiFID II to carefully assess whether corporate access services such as field trips, conferences and individual meetings involving a corporate issuer and facilitated by an investment firm are material benefits, or alternatively could qualify as an acceptable minor non-monetary benefit.

For example, corporate access services offered by a third party that are by their nature exclusive, such as individual meetings or field trips with a corporate, may involve the allocation of valuable resources by the provider (Recital 30 of the Delegated Directive) and / or have a value to the recipient such that the benefit is not minor in nature and scale and could influence their behaviour (Article 12(3) of the Delegated Directive). Conversely, ESMA considers that where a corporate's investor relations office (or its 'house broker' if the service is paid for by the issuer) organises investor 'road shows' to support a capital raising event and it is freely and publicly open to analysts from investment firms and other investors it could be capable of qualifying as acceptable minor non-monetary benefits under Article 12(3). As set out in Q&A 6, it will be for the recipient investment firm to determine whether or not it can accept a benefit.

However, ESMA notes that an investment firm can also treat corporate access as a commercial service and pay for it appropriately from its own resources. In such cases, it is important that the provider prices services at commercial levels and access itself is not linked to or dependent on payments for research or execution services where the provider offers these other MiFID services. This should ensure there is no inducement risk under the MiFID II obligations.

There also remains the option for an investment firm wishing to meet with a corporate issuer individually to approach them directly and/or pay for a third party corporate access service provider to facilitate meetings that does not provide other MiFID investment services. This removes the primary potential conflict of interest or inducement risk that could arise if meetings are provided by another MiFID firm with whom they have other commercial relationships.

Question 8 [Last update: 23 March 2018]

Can macro-economic analysis be considered research that can be paid for from an RPA and client research charges under Article 13(1)(b) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive?

Answer 8

Macro-economic analysis is a relatively broad term. Whether it can be considered research will depend on its nature and content, which should be considered against the criteria set out in Recital 28 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. This recital provides an expansive interpretation of what counts as value-added analysis that can inform investment decisions across a variety of financial instruments and asset classes.

In particular, the following two conditions need to be met:

- (i) The material or service must concern one or several financial instruments or other assets, or current or potential issuers of financial instruments, or be closely related to a specific sector or market such that it informs views on financial instruments, assets or issuers within that sector or market. And,
- (ii) This material or service explicitly or implicitly recommends or suggests an investment strategy and provide a substantiated opinion as to the present or future value or price of such instruments or assets, or contains analysis and original insights and reaches conclusions based on new or existing information that could be used to inform an investment strategy and be relevant and capable of adding value to the investment firm's decisions on behalf of clients being charged for that research.

ESMA considers, as a starting point, that most macro-economic analysis is likely to, explicitly or implicitly, suggest an investment strategy (e.g. by providing views on inflation expectations, economic growth, the interest rate curve or currencies for certain countries or regions), although some macro-economic material may be sufficiently general to fall outside the definition.

If macro-economic analysis is classified as research, it has the advantage that such research material is then capable of being received (and paid for) by an investment firm, including (independent) investment advisers and portfolio managers, under Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive.

Where macro-economic analysis is substantive or involves the allocation of valuable resources by a provider to an investment firm, based on Recital 30, or is deemed to have a material value by a recipient firm, it will not constitute a minor non-monetary benefit satisfying the criteria set out in Article 12(3) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. Therefore, if macro-economic analysis is not considered as research, it does not automatically classify as a minor non-monetary benefit. In this case, portfolio managers and independent advisors would need to make a commercial decision either to pay for it from their own resources or else not accept such benefits or services. Firms providing other services would need to assess it against Article 24(9) of MiFID II and the relevant delegated provisions.

One exception would be where a provider makes macro-economic-related material openly available at the same time to any investment firms or to the general public on a website. Material made available in this way could be justified as a minor non-monetary benefit – representing “information ... relating to a financial instrument or investment service” that is “generic in nature” under Article 12(3)(a) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. ESMA considers that ‘openly available’ in the context of written material should mean that there are no

conditions or barriers to accessing it, for example a necessary log-in or sign-up, or the submission of user information by a firm or a member of the public, in order to access material.

Examples in Q&A 6 may also further inform firms' judgements with respect to macro-economic analysis.

ESMA considers that, unlike more asset or sector-specific analysis, macro-economic research is likely to be relevant to (and able to inform), a variety of strategies and asset allocation decisions across a multiplicity of portfolios. For example, investment firms seeking to comply with Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive when receiving macro-economic analysis may be able to more easily justify paying for it on a subscription basis and allocating costs more broadly across many of its clients' portfolios and accounts. Similarly, providers of macro-economic research may choose to price access to written content on a similar basis, although pricing models remain a commercial decision for firms.

Question 9 [Last update: 23 March 2018]

How should research related to fixed income, currencies or commodities (FICC) be treated for the purposes of the MiFID II inducements restriction for firms providing portfolio management or independent investment advice (Article 24(7) and (8))?

Answer 9

MiFID II inducements restrictions in Articles 24(7) and (8) do not provide any carve out for third party analytical work on fixed income, currencies and commodities (FICC) or other assets. However, depending on its nature, specific material relating to FICC markets may be capable of being either research that would be acceptable if received in accordance with Article 13 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, or a minor non-monetary benefit under Article 12 of the same.

ESMA acknowledges that the current lack of established market practices and mechanisms for investment firms to pay for FICC research separately from execution costs may limit certain operational arrangements firms can adopt to comply with Article 13. Primarily, FICC markets do not currently have explicit execution commissions and mechanisms that allow research charges to be deducted alongside transaction fees. ESMA notes that firms still have the option to pay for research themselves, or using a research payment account that is funded by a direct charge to the client, which could be facilitated by a third party such as a depositary or custodian, rather than alongside a transaction.

Given the commonalities between some forms of written macro-economic and FICC research, ESMA considers that in some cases written FICC research could be capable of being priced and paid for through a subscription agreement (see Q&A 8). However, firms would need to document how they arrive at their pricing structures and ensure there is no inducements risk in order to comply with Article 13(9).

There also is the option for research providers to make FICC material openly available to all investment firms or the general public, on a similar basis to that set out in Q&A 8, or for firms to receive FICC material if commissioned and paid for by a corporate issuer or a potential issuer. In this case, the analytical input will qualify as a minor non-monetary benefit as set out

in Article 12(3)(b) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. Some types of FICC material may also lack substantive analysis and instead represent information about financial instruments and short-term market commentary that meets the minor non-monetary exemption in Article 12(3)(a) and Recital 29 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive. The examples provided in Q&A 6 will be equally relevant to material on FICC instruments.

Question 10 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

What approach should firms adopt to ensure that the allocation of their research budget to third party providers and the determination of the payments made from it are in the best interests of the firm's clients under Article 13(6)?

Answer 10

MiFID requires firms to set out in their research policy the criteria against which the quality of the research material they purchase should be assessed. The research policy also needs to articulate how the research inputs can contribute to better investment decisions and explain how the related costs can be allocated in a manner that is fair to the various clients' portfolios. Where an investment firm wishes to purchase research centrally within the firm and make it widely accessible to internal staff, it is particularly important that firms have systems and policies in place to allocate costs fairly to clients and explain their approach in the written policy (Article 13(8) of the DD) (See also Q&A1). This could involve apportioning costs according to the expected relevance of research to particular investment strategies or the level of use by individuals or teams that manage or advise on certain portfolios or accounts.

Budgeting for research should take place at the outset of the research procurement process in order to determine the level of the research charge in the best interest of clients. Budgets need to be regularly reviewed. The research budget is thus an ex-ante estimate of forecast expenditure for research costs that can be charged to portfolios with similar strategies under management. This, in turn, will require that a budget is sufficiently granular to be able to be pre-apportioned by portfolio or client.

Once the budget is set for a specified period, Article 13(6) of the Delegated Directive requires that "the allocation of the research budget to purchase third party research should be subject to appropriate controls and senior management oversight to ensure that it [the research budget] is managed and used in the best interest of the firm's clients." It notes that this should include having "a clear audit trail of the payments made to research providers" and controls over how amounts paid to providers are determined with reference to the quality criteria established by the firm (Article 13(6) of the Delegated Directive).

ESMA expects portfolio managers to have robust systems in place to ensure that decisions on the procurement of research are clearly documented, and are taken separately and distinctly from decisions on the choice of brokerage and execution services subject to relevant best-execution requirements. This means that firms should carefully consider whether their policies and research procurement systems are designed to minimise any conflict of interest that may

arise. Portfolio managers should be particularly aware of such risks when purchasing research alongside execution services. Doing so in a way that is compliant with MiFID requires severing the link between transaction volumes and value and the amount paid for research inputs (Article 13(2)(b) of the Delegated Directive).

For this reason, it is expected that an investment firm should ensure research inputs are assessed in accordance with internal policies and procedures, and are allocated a value to help the firm determine the level of payments to be made to providers. Similarly, investment firms supplying research should be able to explain how they price their services, especially where they also provide execution services, to enable them to evidence that their research pricing is not influenced or conditioned by other payments for execution services (Article 13(9) of the Delegated Directive). ESMA considers that so called 'waterfront' subscription arrangements where firms agree to pay a periodic subscription fee to receive access to research could be compatible with MiFID II rules, provided that the fee can be justified by expected benefit to the client.

In ESMA's view, a firm should have a clear methodology to establish what they expect to pay providers for research before they receive and consume services. One way of doing it is for a firm to set measureable ex ante criteria as to how it will value the types, level and quality of service. This can provide the basis for agreements with each service provider on the level of payment expected for the anticipated provision of services. At the end of the period, based on actual services received, the firm may adjust the payment made to the research firm in a proportionate and predictable manner based on those criteria. The total amount of payments should still be aligned with the budgeted amount of research and be justifiable in terms of the benefit for the client.

A firm may, for example, have its own internal 'rate cards' or thresholds to adjust what it will pay individual providers for specified service levels. This should allow firms to negotiate with suppliers to set ex ante expectations of payment levels, and enable the firm to demonstrate they have applied appropriate controls in determining actual payments to providers for services received. By clearly linking payments to inputs and services, it should mitigate the conflicts of interest risk that research payments to providers could be perceived to be rewarding other non-research benefits and ensure payments are in the best interests of the client.

ESMA considers that the regular ex-post assessment contributes to evaluate the quality of the research they have purchased and to inform their future procurement decisions and payment levels.

ESMA acknowledges scope for firms to negotiate research prices with suppliers, based on their own approach to ascribing value to specific service levels. Internal records of investment firms procuring research should demonstrate how they have reached their assessment of value and the actual price they secure for specific research services. In line with Article 13(2)(b), there should be no correlation between the transaction volumes executed by a broker on behalf of a portfolio manager and any 'discount' applied to the research material offered to the same portfolio manager.

Question 11 [Last update: 4 April 2017]

How should the estimated client research charge disclosure be presented for the purposes of Article 13(1)(c)(i)?

Answer 11

Before providing an investment service, investment firms intending to use an RPA to pay for investment research should provide clients with two separate pieces of information:

- (i) the amount that the IF has budgeted for research; and
- (ii) the estimated amount that can be expected to be paid out of the assets of the individual client.

ESMA considers that (i) should reflect the monetary amount of the budget set for a given group of portfolios, strategies or funds that are expected to benefit from such research (see Q&A1), to which their individual research charges will contribute.

In relation to (ii), it is ESMA's view that this should be considered in light of the wider MiFID II costs and charges provisions, in particular Recital 80 and Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. Consistently with this, ESMA considers that the estimated client research charge should be presented as a single estimate figure, and disclosed in both a percentage (or basis points) format and as a cash amount.

If a firm wishes to do so in order to provide a degree of certainty to investors, it can present (ii) as a *maximum* figure where they guarantee to their clients they will not pay more than that predetermined amount. However, figures presented as a range are not acceptable.

Question 12 [Last update: 12 July 2018]

Is a free trial period of research services acceptable when it is provided in relation to portfolio management or advice on an independent basis?

Answer 12

Based on Article 13(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, research by third parties to investment firms providing portfolio management or other investment or ancillary services to clients shall not be regarded as an inducement if the investment firm pays for it, either out of its own resources or through payments from a separate research payment account controlled by the investment firm.

In the case of a free trial period, the investment firm does not pay for its access to research. Hence, its access to third-party research under a free trial period is qualified as an inducement (a non-monetary benefit) where it is provided in connection with the provision of an investment service or an ancillary service. Based on Article 12(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, an

investment firm should not accept non-monetary benefits that do not qualify as acceptable minor non-monetary benefits.

In accordance with Article 12(3)(e) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, minor non-monetary benefits not listed in Article 12(3)(a) to (d) may nonetheless be qualified by Member States as acceptable if they are deemed capable of enhancing the quality of the service provided to a client and, having regard to the total level of benefits provided by one entity or group of entities, are of a scale and nature that are unlikely to impair compliance with an investment firm's duty to act in the best interest of the client. In addition, Article 12(3) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive requires that acceptable minor non-monetary benefits shall be reasonable and proportionate and of such a scale and nature that they are unlikely to influence the investment firm's behaviour in any way that is detrimental to the interests of the relevant client. Furthermore, based on Recital 30 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive, any non-monetary benefit that involves a third party allocating valuable resources to the investment firm shall not be considered as minor and shall be judged to impair compliance with the investment firm's duty to act in their client's best interest.

It has been brought to ESMA's attention that the practice of free trial periods in relation to research services has been raising many questions across the Union. ESMA considers that it is appropriate to issue some guidance on whether free trial periods of research services may qualify as acceptable minor non-monetary benefits under Article 12(3)(e) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive.

ESMA is of the view that free trial periods of research services (i.e. research that is received so that the firm may evaluate the research provider's research service before deciding whether or not to enter into a contract or arrangement for the provision of research services for a fee) may qualify as minor non-monetary benefits under Article 12(3)(e) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive provided that:

- the trial period must be offered and agreed upon prior to the decision to enter into a contract or arrangement relating to the provision of research services for a fee;
- the scope and extent of the research services offered during the trial period must be agreed upon by the parties prior to the start of the trial period;
- the trial period must be strictly defined and limited in time and, in any case, shall not last for longer than three months;
- no monetary or non-monetary consideration is due by the research recipient during the trial period (this includes implicit benefits such as abnormally high order flows with the research provider compared to volumes normally carried out with the research provider or an entity part of the same group);
- the trial period is not commenced within twelve months from the termination of an arrangement for the provision of research (including any previous trial period) with the same research provider;
- the firm has controls in place to ensure that the research received during the trial period is not billed to its clients; and



- the firm makes and retains a record of how the conditions above were satisfied for each such trial period.

8 Post-sale reporting [Last update: 23 March 2018]

Question 1 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

How does a firm fulfil the obligation to report on the overall value of a client's portfolio depreciating by a 10% threshold on a particular business day if a firm's automated systems do not provide valuations throughout the day for all the portfolios it manages? In line with this question: could a firm use a single daily valuation point as the basis for the evaluation?

Answer 1

Article 25(6) of MiFID II requires firms to provide clients with adequate reports on the investment service provided. These reports shall include periodic communications to clients, taking into account the type and the complexity of financial instruments involved and the nature of the service provided to the client. In addition, Article 62(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation requires firms to meet additional reporting obligations so clients are made aware when the overall value of their portfolio, as evaluated at the beginning of each reporting period, depreciates by 10% and thereafter at multiples of 10%. So, a firm is obliged to value the overall portfolio at the beginning of the reporting period and evaluate the overall portfolio at least once each day, but is not obliged to have systems in place that calculate valuations on an on-going basis throughout each day.

One way a firm could provide the required reports would be to set a fixed portfolio valuation point for each day, for example at 06.00 hours after any overnight reconciliation is complete, and identify whether the depreciation threshold is exceeded by comparing this value with the valuation of the portfolio at the beginning of the reporting period. Then, if the portfolio value is shown to have depreciated by 10% or more, the firm would inform the client by the end of that business day. Assuming its business day ends at 17.00 hours, this approach would give firms 11 hours in which to report to clients during working hours. Adopting one fixed valuation point for each day would also avoid multiple reports being triggered during volatile market periods.

Question 2 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

When fulfilling the obligation to report on a portfolio depreciating by the 10% threshold, does the firm need to report if a portfolio value drops by more than 10% as a result of the client making cash withdrawals?

Answer 2

The obligation is to report if the overall value of a portfolio, as evaluated at the beginning of each reporting period (usually every three months), depreciates by 10% and thereafter at multiples of 10%. When cash withdrawals are made from a portfolio, the value of the managed financial instrument or funds is reduced by the amount of the client money transferred; but the overall value of the portfolio, as evaluated at the beginning of the previous reporting period, includes the value of the cash withdrawn. So, if clients withdraw cash from a portfolio, until a

periodic statement is provided that discounts the cash withdrawn, when calculating the overall value of a portfolio, to see whether the 10% thresholds are exceeded, a firm will need to take this cash into account by adding its value to the value of remaining financial instruments or funds in the portfolio.

Question 3 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

How does a firm fulfil the obligation to report if the values of a client's leveraged financial instruments or contingent liability transactions depreciate by a 10% threshold on a particular business day, if a firm's automated systems do not provide valuations throughout the day for all the instruments held?

Answer 3

In line with the response to Q&A 1 (on portfolio reporting), in order to identify whether there has been a depreciation by 10% or more, a firm could set a fixed daily valuation point for its leveraged financial instruments and inform clients in the same time frame set out in Q&A 1.

Article 62(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation requires firms to report to clients that hold positions in leveraged financial instruments or contingent liability transactions, where the initial value (original cost) of each instrument depreciates by 10% and thereafter at multiples of 10%. It applies on an instrument-by-instrument basis, unless otherwise agreed, and shall take place no later than the end of the day in which the threshold is exceeded. MiFID II Delegated Regulation, Recital 96 states that a 'contingent liability transaction' should involve any actual or potential liability for the client that exceeds the cost of acquiring the instrument. There is no similar explanation of what a 'leveraged financial instrument' is. However, given Recital 96 and the objective of Article 62(2), firms should conclude that if a financial instrument has the potential of magnifying an investor's exposure to an underlying risk then this will result in the instrument being a leveraged financial instrument.

Question 4 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

When fulfilling the obligation to report on a portfolio depreciating by the 10% threshold, how should the firm take account of a client making additions to the portfolio after the reporting period has started?

Answer 4

The obligation is to report if the overall value of a portfolio, as evaluated at the beginning of each reporting period (usually every three months), depreciates by 10% and thereafter at multiples of 10%.

If cash is added to a portfolio after the reporting period has started, the current value of the portfolio increases by the amount of client money transferred in, but the invested value at the

beginning of the reporting period is unaffected. To identify if there are depreciations to report, the current portfolio value measured should exclude the value of cash added after the reporting period has started, so only the original cash or invested value is taken into account. Until a periodic statement accounting for this added cash is provided, when calculating the value of a portfolio to assess whether the 10% thresholds are exceeded, a firm should discount the value of any added cash from the current overall value of the portfolio.

If clients add cash that is invested or add investments to a portfolio (increasing the assets that are subject to devaluation), to see whether the 10% thresholds are exceeded, the value of any added investments should be added to the original starting value of the portfolio. Then, if the current value of the portfolio depreciates by more than 10% of the revised starting portfolio valuation, the obligation to report applies. Firms should avoid any behaviour that might incentivise clients to add investments/cash that is invested for the purpose of avoiding the reporting on a portfolio depreciation.

Question 5 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

When fulfilling the obligation to report on a portfolio depreciating by the 10% threshold, how should a firm value on a daily basis, as requested by the answer to question 1, financial instruments within the portfolio for which there is no secondary market or daily price reference?

Answer 5

Such financial instruments could be UCITS or AIFs for which managers do not calculate or publish a daily net asset value, unlisted securities, or shares of companies which are otherwise illiquid or subject to collective proceedings. For these types of financial instruments, investment firms should use appropriate methods to estimate what a fair value might be that should be consistent with the ones used for periodic statement provided to client under Article 60 MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

Question 6 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

How should a firm fulfil the obligation under Article 62 if a firm's reporting period commences after the introduction of MiFID 2 on 3 January 2018?

Answer 6

Article 62 MiFID II Delegated Regulation requires firms to value portfolios on a daily basis. Firms should use the valuation undertaken under Article 62 on 3 January 2018 as the overall value of the portfolio for the purposes of the reporting obligations in Article 62 until the commencement of their first reporting period after 3 January 2018.

Question 7 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

When fulfilling the obligation to report on a portfolio depreciating by the 10% threshold, on what basis should a firm calculate the 10% threshold? Should a firm continue to refer to the value of the portfolio at the beginning of the reporting period or refer to the portfolio value at the previous value that triggered the reporting obligation?

Answer 7

Firms should continue to refer to the value of the portfolio at the beginning of the reporting period to calculate the multiples of 10%.

For example, if a portfolio is valued at 100,000 at the beginning of the period, it first reports if the portfolio falls to 90,000. A second reporting requirement would occur at 80,000 and a third at 70,000 (i.e. multiples of 10% of the value at the beginning of the reporting period). If the value of the portfolio is 70 000 at the beginning of the next reporting period, a first report for that reporting period would occur at 63 000.

Question 8 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

Article 62(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation states "...Reporting under this paragraph should be on an instrument-by-instrument basis, unless otherwise agreed with the client...What kind of flexibility could be allowed by such an agreement with clients?

Answer 8

Under Article 62(2) the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms should have the possibility to agree with their clients on the possibility to assess the 10 % depreciation on a aggregated basis, for example:

- on the overall value of the portfolio, as required under Article 62(1) the MiFID II Delegated Regulation;
- on the global value of all leveraged financial instruments or contingent liability transactions in the client's portfolio.

In any case, the client should give his/her express consent to assess the 10% depreciation on an aggregated basis and the client should have the capacity to terminate it at any time.

Question 9 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

When reporting to clients information required under Articles 62(1) and 62(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, can firms agree with clients to assess the depreciation of the overall value of the client's portfolio, or of leveraged financial instruments or contingent liability

transactions included in a client's account, on a threshold higher than the "10% and thereafter at multiples of 10%"?

Answer 9

No. The requirements set out in Article 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation do not allow firms to agree with clients to assess the depreciation on a threshold higher (e.g. 15%) than that set out in Article 62 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

Question 10 [Last update: 10 November 2017]

Does the obligation in Article 62(1) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/565 to report on the overall value of a client's portfolio depreciating by a 10% threshold on a particular business day apply only to retail clients?

Answer 10

No. The obligation in Article 62(1) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/565 relates to retail and professional clients.

Question 11 [Last update: 23 March 2018]

What does "hold a retail client account" mean in the context of Article 62(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation?

Answer 11

The phrase "hold a retail client account" could be understood as:

- providing the ancillary service of (1) Section B of Annex 2 of MIFID II of safekeeping and administration of financial instruments for the account of retail clients, or;
- holding an account intended for registering client's transactions on financial instruments (in the context of an investment service provided to a retail client)

Question 12 [Last update: 23 March 2018]

For the purpose of Article 62(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, if the same threshold is exceeded again and again during the same reporting period, should the firm report the fact to the client each time the threshold is exceeded?

Answer 12

No, ESMA's view is that no new information is needed for the purpose of Article 62(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation if no new threshold is exceeded during the same reporting period.

EXAMPLE:

Date	Value of the portfolio	Change in value of the portfolio	Obligation to report (in line with Article 62(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation?
3 Jan 2018	100,000 €	-	-
10 Jan 2018	90,000 €	Depreciation of 10%	Obligation to report
25 Jan 2018	92.000 €	Increase of 2%	No obligation to report
27 Jan 2018	89,000 €	Additional depreciation of 3%	No obligation to report

9 Information on costs and charges [Last update: 4 December 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

How can a personalised ex-post disclosure of costs of the fund be made, if the client buys and sells a fund during the business year?

Answer 1

Based on Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, an investment firm that has or has had an ongoing relationship with a client, shall provide this client with ex-post information on the total costs and charges. Such information shall be based on costs incurred and shall be provided on a personalised basis.

For calculating the total costs during the year (in which the costs of the fund are taken into account), first of all the holding period of the fund is needed. The firm will have insight in this. Secondly, an investment firm has to have annualised information on ongoing realised costs and charges with regard to the financial instrument. Where this data is not already publicly available, the firm should liaise with the manufacturer (e.g. the fund manager) to obtain information on costs and charges of the financial instrument. The firm should assess itself or inquire with the manufacturer whether the costs incurred in the holding period adequately reflect the costs incurred over the whole year. If this is the case, the firm could choose to use the annual costs of the financial instrument to calculate the costs during a specific holding period. If this is not the case, the firm will, on a best effort basis and possibly with the manufacturer's help, have to make adjustments to ensure that it does reflect the actual costs incurred.

For clarification, ESMA notes that there might also be one-off costs involved in buying and selling the financial instruments. This could include mark-ups. The firm has to account for these, based on the actual costs.

Question 2 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

To what extent does the cumulative effect of the costs on the return need to be graphically displayed?

Answer 2

Based on Article 24(4) MiFID II and Article 50(10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms have to provide clients with an illustration to show the cumulative effect of the costs on the return. The format of the illustration is not prescribed. This means that the illustration required can take multiple forms, among others a graph, a table or a narrative. However, it is required

that (i) the illustration shows the effect of the overall costs and charges on the return of the investment, (ii) the illustration shows any anticipated spikes or fluctuations in the costs (where applicable), (iii) and that the illustration is accompanied by a description of the illustration.

Question 3 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

The cumulative effect of the costs on the return shall show “anticipated spikes and fluctuations of the costs”; does that also apply to the ex-post disclosure of the cumulative effect of the costs on the return?

Answer 3

Based on Article 24(4) MiFID II and Article 50(10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms have to provide clients with an illustration to show the cumulative effect of the costs on the return.

When providing the client ex-post with information on total costs and charges, a firm can for instance decide to show the historical costs, and simultaneously provide the client with a forward looking illustration with regard to expected costs. In this case, the firm can show the historical costs that show a spike, for instance because of entry costs, and future expected costs based on the firm's expectations (including anticipated spikes and fluctuations).

If the ex-post illustration takes into account only historical data, the firm has to account for realised spikes and fluctuations in costs. However, since these data are historical, there are no 'anticipated' spikes.

Question 4 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

How often should a firm provide ex-post information on total costs and charges?

Answer 4

Based on Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms shall provide information about the total costs and charges on an annual basis. This means that firms should ensure that once a year the client receives an overview of the total costs and charges incurred in the previous year, based on their personal circumstances and actually incurred costs. These costs and charges shall be totalled and expressed both as a cash amount and as a percentage, as is also described in Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

In addition to the abovementioned obligation, there is room for firms to provide this information more frequently, for instance every time the client receives a (quarterly) report about the investments.

Question 5 [Last update: 16 December 2016]

How can a firm provide ex-post information on total costs and charges more regularly (e.g. on a quarterly basis)?

Answer 5

ESMA notes that based on Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, and without prejudice to any other explicit reporting requirements (e.g. Article 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation), there is only a legal obligation to provide ex-post information on costs and charges to clients on an annual basis if there is or has been an ongoing relationship with the client during the year. However, firms can choose to provide this information more regularly, which could improve the clients' insights in the costs and charges of the investment service (based on an ongoing relationship).

If a firm chooses to provide the client with more frequent information, for instance on a quarterly basis, it should ensure the differences between the annual ex-post figures based on actual costs, and the quarterly cost figures are minimized. The firm could for instance do this by applying the same methodology when calculating the annual total costs and charges figures. Further, the firm should – where available – use realised and known ex-post cost figures.

To ensure clients are not confused by such ex-post information on costs and charges in relation to the mandatory annual costs figures, it is important that the firm informs clients on the characteristics of the ex-post information.

Question 6 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

Does the PRIIPs calculation methodology cover product cost components that need to be disclosed under MiFID II cost disclosure?

Answer 6

The PRIIPs calculation methodology is designed in such a way that it will capture all costs and charges incurred by a PRIIP. These costs relate to (i) one-off costs; (ii) ongoing costs, which include transaction costs incurred when trading and (iii) incidental costs, such as performance fees. With regard to transaction costs, the PRIIPs RTS provides for a detailed calculation methodology which ensures that both explicit and implicit transaction costs are captured. This would mean that PRIIPs manufacturers can provide all relevant information on an instrument's cost components.

Question 7 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

How should investment firms use the product's costs as presented in the PRIIPs KID?

Answer 7

The PRIIPs KID will contain detailed information about costs and charges of the PRIIP. ESMA is of the view that the cost components, as mentioned in the PRIIPs KID, cover all cost components, so that an investment firm can fulfil its obligation under the MiFID II regime with regard to the ex-ante costs and charges of a financial instrument.

Based on the prescribed calculation methodology of the PRIIPs RTS Annex VI, PRIIPs manufacturers have to calculate the total amount of costs on an annualised basis, for standardised investments (usually either €10,000 lump sums or €1,000 p.a. for recommended holding periods). This means that PRIIPs manufacturers have insight in (i) one-off costs; (ii) ongoing costs, which include transaction related costs and charges and (iii) incidental costs. In order to calculate the reduction in yield this total amount of costs is turned into values that reflect the annualised impact on return per year at the recommended holding period. Firms could use this raw annualised data as the basis for the MiFID II cost calculation, and they could also use the PRIIPs annualised Reduction in Yield (RIY) indicator. For products with non-linear charging structures (linear charging structures being understood as where the charges increase in direct proportion to the size of the investment) where investment amounts are different from the abovementioned standardised ones, firms would need to amend the PRIIPs KID data or indicator depending in particular on these charging structures. Once the firm has adjusted the raw annualised data or the RIY indicator in such way that it reflects the costs and charges associated with the amount that actually will be invested, it could use either the adjusted raw annualised data or the adjusted RIY indicator as the basis for the MiFID II costs and charges calculation. Unless all relevant annualised data is already publicly available, it is probable that an investment firm will have to liaise with the PRIIPs manufacturers to obtain such data.

As investment firms need to include inducements in the costs of the investment services, any inducements mentioned as costs of the PRIIP should be added to the costs of the investment services and deducted from the costs of the PRIIP (as mentioned in the KID).

Question 8 [\[Last update: 6 June 2017\]](#)

Should the PRIIPs methodology also be applied when calculating costs and charges of financial instruments that do not fall within the scope of PRIIPs?

Answer 8

PRIIPs defines a 'packaged retail investment product' in Article 4(1). Some financial instruments may be out of the scope of PRIIPs because (1) they are not packaged products; or (2) they are packaged products, but they are not sold to retail investors. Examples of (1) are corporate shares or sovereign bonds. An example of (2) might be an alternative investment fund that is only available for sale to professional clients.

For financial instruments in category (1) above, it would be reasonable to conclude that the PRIIPs cost methodology would not apply. For financial instruments in category (2) above, the

methodology described in Annex VI of the PRIIPs RTS appears relevant and investment firms would be expected to use it to calculate the financial instrument's costs. ESMA notes that the calculation of costs, for instance with regard to using simulated or historical data, would be expected to be performed in line with the requirements set out in PRIIPs.

Question 9 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

How does the investment firm obtain access to the relevant data for a financial instrument to apply the PRIIPs methodology?

Answer 9

In order to be able to apply the PRIIPs methodology, investment firms need to have access to the relevant data from manufacturers of a financial instrument.

Where a financial instrument falls within the scope of PRIIPs, the investment firm can use the publicly available PRIIPs KID to obtain the data that is relevant for its ex-ante cost disclosure. For access to any data that is relevant for its ex-post cost disclosure, and to the extent this data has not already been made publicly available by the manufacturer, an investment firm would be expected to liaise with the manufacturer of these instruments. The manufacturer should have already calculated the relevant data in order to comply with the PRIIPs regulation.

Where a financial instrument does not fall within the scope of PRIIPs, the investment firm would be expected to liaise with the manufacturer of these instruments to obtain the relevant data, if the data has not already been made publicly available, on the costs and associated charges of the financial instrument that it needs to meet its obligations for both ex-ante and ex-post cost disclosure.

Question 10 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

What steps should an investment firm take when calculating the costs of products that fall within the PRIIPs transition period, like UCITS during the 3 January 2018 to 31 December 2019 period?

Answer 10

UCITS do not have to provide a PRIIPs KID until 31 December 2019 and until that moment are only obliged to comply with the requirement to provide a Key Investor Document under the UCITS IV directive (2009/65/65). Based on Article 32(2) of the PRIIPs Regulation, and depending on the Member State, this exemption can apply to other non-UCITS funds (e.g. AIFs). While the UCITS KIID provides information on the costs and charges of UCITS (or non-UCITS, when applicable) with regard to ongoing charges (e.g. management fees), one-off charges (e.g. entry and exit charges) and incidental charges (e.g. performance fees), not all costs items are included therein. For instance, the UCITS KIID does not include information on the transaction costs a UCITS incurs when trading.

An investment firm should however disclose all costs, including all costs of the financial instruments. Therefore, where for instance the information on transaction costs, which would be expected to be calculated using the methodology referred to in the PRIIPs RTS, is not publicly available the investment firm would be expected to liaise with the UCITS manager (and, where applicable, the manager of a non-UCITS fund) to obtain it.

During this transition period, transaction costs might be assessed by using the method provided for in paragraphs 21 to 23 of Annex VI of the PRIIPs RTS.

Question 11 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

What should an investment firm do when they are unable to obtain the relevant data from the manufacturer?

Answer 11

When the investment firm is not able to obtain the relevant data from the manufacturer, the investment firm should first assess whether it can provide its clients with adequate information on the total costs and charges of the financial instrument and the investment service. ESMA would expect investment firms to base these calculations on the methodology prescribed in the PRIIPs RTS. It is essential that the investment firm has assured itself that it can make a reasonable and sufficiently accurate estimate of the total costs of the financial instrument. If this is the case, an investment firm may use this estimate to calculate the ex-ante and ex-post figures on costs and charges.

Question 12 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

Which methodology should an investment firm use when calculating the 'costs related to transactions initiated in the course of the provision of an investment service' for its ex-post cost disclosure?

Answer 12

This question relates to costs involved when an investment firm buys or sells (or engages in any other transaction in) a financial instrument for its client. These transaction costs are different from the transaction costs incurred by a financial instrument's manufacturer which result from an investment decision (e.g. a manager changes his fund's asset allocation), and which should be incorporated in the costs of the financial instrument.

The requirements on total costs and charges require investment firms to incorporate both implicit as well as explicit transaction costs. For retail products, the PRIIPs RTS provides for a detailed calculation methodology for different financial instruments, which ensures that both explicit and implicit transaction costs are captured. Therefore, in that case, for the calculation of transaction costs on an ex-post basis, ESMA would expect the investment firm to use the methodology as covered in paragraphs 12 to 20 (and possibly other relevant paragraphs) of Annex VI of the PRIIPs RTS.

An investment firm may assess that the costs involved in calculating the transaction costs using the method provided in paragraphs 12 to 20 of Annex VI of the PRIIPs RTS are disproportionate compared to their significance. In such cases, the firm may use an alternative approach (e.g. the method provided for in paragraphs 21 to 23 of the Annex VI of the PRIIPs RTS) to calculate transaction costs, provided that it identifies the actual transaction costs associated with the transaction, and that it clearly discloses to clients the basis on which transaction costs have been calculated.

Question 13 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

When providing information of costs and charges to clients, on which basis should costs be aggregated? What is the level of aggregation that firms need to apply?

Answer 13

In accordance with article 24(4) MiFID II and article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms shall aggregate costs and charges in connection with the investment service and costs and charges associated with the financial instruments. Third party payments received by investment firms in connection with the investment service provided to a client shall be itemised separately³¹. The aggregated costs and charges shall be totalled and expressed both as a cash amount and as a percentage. The following example shows the cost figures that are to be disclosed³²:

Investment services and/or ancillary services	€ 1.500	1.5%
Third party payments received by the investment firm	€ 500	0.5%
Financial instruments	€ 1.500	1.5%
Total costs and charges	€ 3.500	3.5%

In addition, the investment firm shall provide an itemised breakdown at the request of the client. ESMA would expect that an investment firm take reasonable steps to minimise the effort for the client to submit such requests. When disclosing costs and charges in an online

³¹ ESMA notes that in the case of independent advice and portfolio management, the investment firm must transfer all fees, commissions or monetary benefits received from third parties in full to the client (Article 12(1) of the Delegated Directive) and clients shall be informed about the fees, commissions or monetary benefits transferred to them.

³² The table is included for illustrational purposes only and ESMA does not intend to suggest a prescriptive format (i.e format, colour, font size etc).

environment for instance, a best practice would be to enable the client to access such information through the use of hyperlinks. ESMA also considers it a best practice when an investment firm actively informs its clients on their right of submitting such a request when providing the aggregated information.

When an itemised breakdown is requested by the client, an investment firm should provide such breakdown (in a consistent way such that cost items may be aggregated) at least at the level of the cost items that are depicted in the tables included in Annex II MiFID II Delegated Regulation:

- One-off charges
- Ongoing charges
- All costs related to transactions
- Any charges that are related to ancillary services (not applicable to financial instruments)
- Incidental costs

This also applies to firms that use an all-in fee for their investment services. However, ESMA notes that firms only need to disclose cost items that are actually incurred by the client (which in the case of an all-in fee, may for example include exit or entry fees paid to fund manager or stamp duty).

The obligation to aggregate costs and charges is without prejudice to any other obligations to provide clients with cost information. For instance, for financial instruments that are within the scope of PRIIPs Regulation, a KID will be distributed to retail investors by investment firms that advise or sell a PRIIP, thus providing information on ex-ante costs and charges per individual PRIIP.

Question 14 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

How should investment firms provide ex-ante disclosure of information on costs and charges to clients when there is no available data on actually incurred costs?

Answer 14

Based on article 50(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, when calculating costs and charges on an ex-ante basis, an investment firm shall use actually incurred costs as a proxy for the expected costs and charges. There may be circumstances where such data is not (entirely) available, for instance during the first year after MiFID II has become effective, when an investment firm just started business or in the case of new clients. In these cases, the investment firm should make reasonable estimations of the expected costs and charges.

ESMA considers an estimation to be reasonable when it includes all variables that directly impact the costs and charges that are expected to be incurred by the client, using actual data

to the extent available and making reasonable assumptions otherwise. Examples of such variables are in the case of executing a transaction:

- the type of financial instrument the client wants to buy or sell;
- the cost of the financial instrument, if any;
- the transaction size;
- the commission that will be paid to the broker for executing the order;
- stamp duty paid by the client

When the investment service provided to the client will involve an ongoing relationship, the ex-ante cost estimation would need to cover a certain period. In this case the investment firm would be required to apply an additional set of forward looking assumptions on the client's investment portfolio and the expected investment service(s). Examples are:

- the duration of the client relationship or period covered by the ex-ante cost estimation;
- the average invested amount;
- financial instruments that will be included in the portfolio;
- characteristics of transactions that will be performed by or on behalf of the client.

In line with recital 78 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms should disclose the costs associated with the products and the service the client intends to subscribe to. In the case of potential clients, adapting the information may only be possible when the potential client has engaged with the investment firm. Until then, investment firms could disclose generic ex-ante information on costs and charges using other means, such as disclosing costs and charges for several examples of investor types, providing online access to interactive cost calculation tools or providing cost tables that include multiple investment scenarios.

In any case, the firm should provide the ex-ante information in good time and clearly disclose the underlying assumptions as well as the fact that its presented cost figures were calculated on a best effort basis due to the fact that historical data were not available, where relevant.

Question 15 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

Which methodology should an investment firm use when calculating the 'costs related to transactions initiated in the course of the provision of an investment service' for its ex-ante cost disclosure?

Answer 15

Based on article 50(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms shall use actually incurred costs as a proxy when calculating expected costs and charges on an ex-ante basis. Firms should ensure themselves that the incurred costs are a representative proxy for future costs, taking into account any changes that are expected to have a material impact on the transaction related costs and charges, for instance changes in broker tariff structures or significant changes in market liquidity that will affect transaction costs on an ongoing basis.

Where data on actually incurred transaction costs are not available, the investment firm shall make reasonable estimations of these costs, provided that it identifies all expected transaction costs associated with the transaction, and that it clearly discloses to clients the basis on which transaction costs have been estimated. Firms may for instance use the method provided for in paragraphs 21 to 23 of the Annex VI of the PRIIPs RTS.

In accordance with Article 50(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms are also required to review ex-ante assumptions based on ex-post experience and make adjustment to these assumptions where necessary.

Question 16 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

How is Recital 79 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation “The costs and charges disclosure is underpinned by the principle that every difference between the price of a position for the firm and the respective price for the client should be disclosed, including mark-ups and mark-downs.” to be interpreted with regard to the position for the firm?

Answer 16

When an investment firm holds a financial instrument on its own account before offering it to a client, the price of the financial instrument may change due to market value fluctuations. Based on Article 24(4) MiFID II, any costs and charges that are caused by the occurrence of underlying market risk³³ shall not be included in the aggregated information about costs and charges. Hence, the price of a position of the firm as referred to in Recital 79 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation should be understood as the current (fair market) value of the financial instrument held by the firm when the firm offers the instrument to the client (ex-ante) or when it sells it to the client (ex-post).

Question 17 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

How should investment firms identify and disclose mark-ups and structuring costs embedded in the transaction price (Recital 79 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation)?

Answer 17

According to Recital 79 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, practices where there is ‘netting’ of costs should not be excluded from the obligation to provide information on costs and charges. As a result, mark-ups and structuring costs that are embedded in the transaction price need to be identified and disclosed to clients by the investment firm. Based on Recital 79, investment firms should identify such costs by calculating the difference between the price of the position for the firm and the price for the client. In case of PRIIPs, ESMA would expect the

³³ Recital 79 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation provides further clarifications on the concept of underlying market risk.

investment firm to apply the calculation methodology in paragraphs 36 to 46 of Annex VI of the PRIIPS RTS.

Question 18 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

How should an investment firm assess, in accordance with Article 50(1) paragraph 3 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, that an eligible counterparty does not intend to offer the financial instruments to its clients?

Answer 18

Without prejudice to the obligations set out in Article 24(4) MiFID II and the requirement to provide information on all costs and charges to all clients and potential clients, investment firms providing investment services to eligible counterparties shall have the right - in accordance with Article 50 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation - to agree to a limited application of the detailed requirements set out in Article 50, except when, irrespective of the investment service provided, the financial instruments concerned embed a derivative and the eligible counterparty intends to offer them to its clients.

Investment firms are expected to apply the full cost and charges disclosure regime as the default option, and only to apply the limited flexibility allowed under Article 50(1) as further explained under recital 74 when there is an agreement to do so and the eligible counterparty has indicated that it does not intend to offer the financial instrument to its clients. ESMA expects investment firms to have procedures in place aiming at recording eligible counterparties' agreement and intention not to offer such financial instruments to their clients.

Question 19 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

Which specific limitations to the cost transparency regime may professional clients and eligible counterparties agree on?

Answer 19

Article 50(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation allows - in certain situations described in paragraphs 2 and 3 thereof - for a limited application of some of the detailed requirements set out in Article 50. The more limited application which needs to be agreed by the two parties should however never lead to disapplying the obligations imposed on investment firms pursuant to Article 24(4) MiFID II.

ESMA emphasizes that Article 24(4) MiFID II requires that the information provided to clients, amongst others, includes information on all costs and charges, including information relating to both investment and ancillary services, the financial instrument recommended or marketed

to the client and any third-party payments. In addition, the information shall be aggregated and where the client so requests, an itemised breakdown shall be provided. The information about costs and charges shall be provided to the client in good time before the investment service is provided and, where applicable, on a regular basis, at least annually.

Recital 74 provides examples of detailed requirements which could be the object of such limited applications under article 50 of the Delegated Regulation. For instance, the investment firm could agree, at the request of the client, to not provide the illustration showing the cumulative effect of costs on return, not provide an indication of the currency involved and not provide the applicable conversion rates and costs where any part of the total costs and charges is expressed in foreign currency.

Question 20 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

How should the cost disclosure be made regarding the respective figures that are to be disclosed in aggregated and itemized form (see Question 13) in case the respective costs or charges are zero?

Answer 20

The firm should explicitly show a “zero” for the individual figure that is to be disclosed. As one of the purposes of the cost disclosure regime is comparability of products and services, it is important that clients receive explicit figures for every item to be disclosed, even if it is zero. The firm should therefore not leave out a cost component which value is zero as this might lead to misinterpretations.

Question 21 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

At what date should investment firms send their first annual ex-post information to their clients?

Answer 21

When investment firms are required to provide their clients annual ex-post information about costs and charges based on article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, ESMA expects firms to provide such information on the basis of a time period that ends at the latest one year (12 months) after the date on which the ongoing relationship has started and that this information should be provided to clients as soon as possible after the above annual anniversary of the relevant service commencing. Where an existing ongoing relationship between a firm and a client ends during 2018, ESMA expects firms to provide information at that period end. Where part of the reporting period would fall under MiFID I³⁴ and part under MiFID II regime, investment firms may choose to calculate, on a best effort basis, the costs

³⁴ Article 19(3) MiFID I (Directive 2004/39/EC) also requires disclosure to clients of costs and associated charges.

and charges in line with MiFID II requirements for the entire reporting period or provide this first ex-post report with a breakdown of costs for the two periods and a clear explanation of the basis on which costs have been calculated.

Question 22 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Do the MiFID II requirements expect that the ex-ante disclosure of information on costs and charges is provided on the basis of the specific transaction or is it sufficient for investment firms to disclose information in a more generic way?

Answer 22

According to Article 24(4) of MiFID II and Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms shall provide ex-ante information on costs and charges in a fully individualized, transaction-based manner, i.e. in relation to the specific financial instrument (ISIN-based) and in relation to the specific investment service or ancillary service provided.

This is in line with the objective of the MiFID II costs and charges provisions. Recital 78 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation clearly states that the MiFID II costs and charges provisions have the objective of ensuring clients' awareness of all applicable costs and charges as well as enabling a comparison of different financial instruments and investment services. ESMA is of the view that this is only achievable if the costs and charges disclosures are specific to the transaction (especially ISIN-based). The only relief to this principle can be found in Recital 78 which allows firms to provide costs and charges disclosures on the basis of an assumed investment amount. Nevertheless, the costs and charges disclosed must reflect the costs the client would actually incur on the basis of the assumed investment amount (Recital 78 sentence 3).

For how to apply this general principle where the service of portfolio management is provided, please refer to Q&A 24.

Question 23 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

In what circumstances and under which conditions could a firm meet its obligation for ex-ante disclosure by informing its clients of the relevant costs and charges just once, or on a regular basis, but not before each transaction?

Answer 23

Where there are no product costs for the relevant financial instrument (management, structuring or distribution fees which are neither included in the price or in addition to the price of the financial instrument) or in the residual instances where the assessment of product costs is not required (in accordance with Article 50(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation), firms may meet their ex-ante costs and charges disclosure obligation by providing to their clients a

grid or table displaying the relevant costs and charges specific to i) the investment or ancillary service and ii) the financial instrument category offered to or demanded by the client.

However, such grids or tables should comply in full with the MIFID II costs and charges requirements. Consequently, the amounts and percentages disclosed in such grids or tables for the relevant investment service(s) and category(ies) of financial instruments should be the same as those that would have been disclosed had the firm informed the client of the relevant costs and charges before each transaction and in a fully individualized, transaction-based manner (as per Q&A22). This means that the categories of financial instruments used as a basis to calculate and disclose service costs through such grids or tables have to be granular enough for this purpose. This also means that the information provided should be clear and understandable by the client to which it is provided, and such grids or tables should not be brochures in which the firm sets out a long list of tariffs that may or may not apply to a broad range of clients, when specific conditions apply to each.

However, as per Recital 78 of the MIFID II Delegated Regulation, the firm may base the costs and charges disclosed as a cash amount on an assumed investment amount. Nevertheless, the costs and charges disclosed must reflect the costs the client would actually incur on the basis of the assumed investment amount (Recital 78),

As per Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, the costs and charges shall also be disclosed as a percentage.

In addition, the information provided in such grids or tables must be updated every time any element changes so that the information provided to the client is, at all times, the same as the information that would have been provided to the client had the firm made such disclosure before each transaction and in a fully individualized, transaction-based manner.

The firm should provide such grids or tables in good time before the first investment service is provided to a new client and at any time they are updated. In addition, they should remain easily available at all times to clients.

Question 24 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

How should the ex-ante costs and charges disclosure requirements be applied to the service of portfolio management?

Answer 24

In accordance with Article 50(5) and Recital 75 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, an investment firm must inform the client, in good time before the provision of the investment service of portfolio management, about the costs and charges relating to (i) the investment and ancillary service(s) to be provided (service costs) and to (ii) the financial instrument(s) in which the client's portfolio could be invested in accordance with the mandate given by the client (product costs).

Due to the nature of the service of portfolio management (management on a discretionary client-by-client basis), no cost disclosure is due in relation to each investment decision taken by the firm. However, ex-ante information about costs and charges should be provided before the firm starts providing the service. The quality and completeness of the ex-ante information provided before the provision of the portfolio management service is thus critical.

ESMA is therefore of the opinion that ex-ante information relating to service and product costs where portfolio management is provided should be based on:

- the value of the assets (cash and/or financial instruments) under discretionary management (as disclosed by the client or prospective client before the firm starts exercising its discretionary mandate); and
- the anticipated (model or bespoke) portfolio corresponding to the client's investment profile, objective(s) and, in case of a bespoke mandate, strategy that will be adopted for the management of the client's portfolio, in accordance with the mandate given by the client.

Both service(s) costs and financial instrument(s) costs should be aggregated, as per Q&A 13. Additionally, firms may, as a good practice, proactively provide greater detailed ex-ante information about costs and charges. For example, firms could provide ex-ante information about costs and charges relating to financial instruments by category of financial instruments with the same costs structure.

Question 25 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

What terminology should firms use in costs and charges disclosure material?

Answer 25

To take an informed decision, investors should be able to compare information on costs and charges provided by different investment firms or by the same investment firm regarding different services or products. In addition, as required under Article 24(3) of MiFID II, any information must be fair, clear and not misleading. Therefore, ESMA is of the view that firms should be expected to use the same terminology as used in MiFID II, as transposed in national legislation, and in Annex II of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. For example, third-party payments should be named as such rather than using other terms that may not describe clearly and in simple terms the nature of such payments. Alongside the MiFID II terminology, firms may add their own "commercial" terminology, but those "commercial terms" should be clearly defined with reference to the MiFID II terminology.

Question 26 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Which taxes should be included in the ex-ante and ex-post costs and charges disclosure?

Answer 26

According to MiFID II, investment firms must disclose ex-ante and ex-post to their clients i) all costs and associated charges charged by the investment firm for the investment service(s) and/or ancillary service(s) provided to the client as well as ii) all costs and charges associated with the manufacturing and managing of the financial instruments. Such costs are listed in Annex II of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. Amongst the examples of costs and charges included in Annex II are stamp duty and transactions tax (relating to both service costs and financial instruments costs).

ESMA is of the view that – regarding service(s) costs – a distinction should be made between transactional or service-based taxes related to the provision of an investment or ancillary service (such as stamp duty, transaction taxes or VAT, where applicable), and taxes related to the income/revenue generated by the investment in which the client has invested (such as income or capital gains taxes on the coupons of bonds/dividends of shares).

Taxes related to the provision of an investment or ancillary service should always be included in the costs and charges disclosure.

Firms could decide whether to include or not in their costs and charges disclosure taxes that relate to the income/revenue generated by the investment in which the client has invested.

Question 27 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

Is it necessary to provide ex-ante information about costs and charges in case of clients' sell orders?

Answer 27

Yes, Article 24(4)(c) of MiFID II and Article 46(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation require investment firms to provide to clients or potential clients, in good time before the provision of investment services or ancillary services, the information about all costs and associated charges. When an investment service is provided in relation to the sale of a financial instrument by the client (e.g., execution of orders on behalf of clients, RTO and investment advice), the obligation to provide cost information applies.

Based on Article 50(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, when an investment firm does not recommend or market a financial instrument or when it is not obliged to provide the client with a KID/KIID in accordance with relevant Union legislation, the investment firm should only inform the client about the costs of the investment service or ancillary service provided by the firm. When an instrument is sold by the client, the firm neither recommends³⁵ nor markets that

³⁵ Within the meaning of Article 50(6) of the MiFID Delegated Regulation only. This Q&A should not be read as having any significance for the definition of "investment advice" under Article 4(1)(4) of MiFID II and Article 9 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

instrument nor is it obliged to provide the client with a KID/KIID. This means that Article 50(6) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation applies to this situation and investment firms only need to inform clients about the costs of the investment service(s) and/or ancillary service(s) when selling a financial instrument³⁶.

Based on Article 50(10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms shall provide their clients with an illustration showing the cumulative effect of costs on return when providing investment services. The aim is to give clients an overview about the impacts of costs on return of an investment so as to be able to assess and compare the impact of costs during the holding period of the respective financial instrument. Therefore, while such illustration has to be provided at the time of the purchase of the financial instrument, in case of clients' sell orders, it would not provide any further benefit for clients, since there is no further return to be expected from that instrument. Thus, in ESMA's view, Article 50(10) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation should not be applicable in case of ex-ante cost disclosures relating to clients' sell orders.

Question 28 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

How to disclose cost information (in good time) to a client who places an order via telephone?

Answer 28

According to MiFID II (Articles 24(4) and 25(6)) and the MiFID II Delegated Regulation (Article 46(2) and (3) and Article 50), firms must provide ex-ante information about costs and charges in good time before the provision of investment services or ancillary services to clients or potential clients and on a durable medium (or by means of a website (where it does not constitute a durable medium) provided that the conditions specified in Article 3(2) are satisfied). Such requirements are technology neutral.

In practice, this raises issues in some situations, for example when a client who neither has an email address nor an internet access wants to place an order via telephone. This may also be the case where a client who has an email address or an internet access nevertheless insists on placing an order via telephone without delaying the transaction to consult costs and charges information provided on a durable medium. Indeed, for transactions where time is of the essence, it may not be in the best interest of the client to delay the transaction so that the client can consult the costs and charges information provided by the firm on a durable medium.

Where an investment service concerning a financial instrument with no "product costs" is to be provided or in the residual instances where the firm is not required to disclose "product costs", the ex-ante information about costs and charges may be provided to the client in the form of a costs grid/table – e.g. at the time of the onboarding (please see Q&A 23).

³⁶ It is worth recalling that costs which may be particularly relevant to the sale of the financial instrument (e.g. exit costs), if any, should have been disclosed already, on an ex-ante basis, when the client purchased the financial instrument.

Where a firm does not fulfil the conditions to take the approach described in Q&A 23, before the provision of each investment service or ancillary service, the firm may offer to the client to either:

- delay the transaction in order to provide the ex-ante information about costs and charges in a durable medium prior to the provision of the service; or
- provide the ex-ante costs information over the phone prior to the provision of the service (thereby fulfilling the requirement that the information must be provided in good time) and, simultaneously, to provide that same information in a durable medium (or through a website in accordance with Article 3(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation).

Question 29 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

For ex-ante costs and charges disclosures in relation to investment services and/or products with non-linear charging structures, are firms allowed to use an assumed investment amount?

Answer 29

Yes. Whether investment services and/or products have linear or non-linear charging structures (i.e. where the percentage of fees payable for service costs and/or product costs varies depending on the amount invested), firms may base their ex-ante costs and charges disclosures on an assumed amount, as per Recital 78 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

However, any assumed investment amount chosen by the firm should reflect where, in the charging structure, the specific transaction giving rise to the disclosure is assumed to stand. This means that the firm should make an assumption regarding the scale of the amount the client wants to invest. Such assumption may be based, *inter alia*, on preliminary discussions with the client and/or the client's past transactions.

Question 30 [Last update: 29 May 2019]

For ex-ante costs and charges disclosures, are firms allowed to disclose the relevant costs and charges that would be incurred by a client by way of a range (between X€ and Y€ and between X% and Y%) or as a maximum amount/percentage?

Answer 30

No. According to Article 50(8) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, where calculating costs and charges on an ex-ante basis, firms shall use actually incurred costs as a proxy for the expected costs and charges. In addition, according to Article 24(4) of MiFID II and Article 50(2) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, investment firms shall provide ex-ante information on costs and charges in a fully individualized, transaction-based manner, i.e. in relation to the

specific financial instrument (especially ISIN-based) and in relation to the specific investment service or ancillary service provided.

On the basis of the foregoing, ESMA is of the view that the cash amount and percentage firms should disclose to their clients as the expected costs and charges should be the firm's best estimate. Disclosures made in the form of a range or maximum amount of fees that the client may incur would not give the client a sufficiently good idea of the fees such client may incur.

Question 31 [Last update: 4 December 2019] *new*

How should the ex-post costs and charges disclosure requirements be applied to the service of portfolio management?

Answer 31

In accordance with Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated regulation, firms shall provide annual ex-post information about all costs and charges related to both the financial instrument(s) and investment and ancillary service(s) where they have recommended or marketed the financial instrument(s) or where they have provided the client with the KID/KIID in relation to the financial instrument(s) and they have or have had an ongoing relationship with the client during the year. For the investment service of portfolio management, Article 50(9) applies (please see Q&A 15.1).

For annual ex-post costs and charges disclosures, firms are expected to provide ex-post cost information (service costs, inducements and product costs) aggregated at least at the level of the portfolio (similar to the approach to the ex-ante cost disclosure, please see Q&A 24). Firms should inform their clients that they can request an itemised breakdown, as per Article 24(4) of MiFID II.

In addition, firms may provide more granular information per category of products with the same cost structure or even per financial instrument (on an ISIN basis).

Question 32 [Last update: 4 December 2019] *new*

When providing portfolio management, how does the investment firm's obligation to provide ex-post aggregated costs and charges information under Art. 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation relate to existing reporting obligations under Article 60 of the same Regulation?

Answer 32

In accordance with Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms may choose to provide annual aggregated ex-post information on total costs and charges "together with any existing periodic reporting to clients".



In the case of portfolio management, Article 60 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation also applies.

So, if a firm decides to fulfil its ex-post costs and charges disclosure obligations under Article 50(9) by using the periodic statement required by Article 60, the information provided in this statement needs to also fulfill the requirements of Article 50(9) and (10), i.e. it would need to be expanded.

In addition, if a firm complies with its obligations under Article 50(9) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation together with its obligations under Article 60, and the periodic statement due under Article 60 is provided on a quarterly basis (or more frequent, e.g. monthly), the firm is not exempted from providing the client with a full picture of the costs and charges incurred for the whole year in accordance with the requirements of Article 50(9). This means that, although more frequent costs information (e.g. quarterly or monthly) may be provided, the client should also be provided with costs information aggregated on an annual basis.

10 Appropriateness / Complex Financial Instruments [Last update: 6 June 2017]

Question 1 [Last update: 6 June 2017]

Can shares in non-UCITS collective investment undertakings explicitly excluded under point (i) of Article 25(4)(a) of MiFID II be nevertheless assessed against the criteria set out in Article 57 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation and as a consequence potentially be deemed non-complex financial instruments for the purposes of the appropriateness test?

Answer 1

No. Article 25(4) of MiFID II allows, subject to certain conditions, MiFID firms to provide execution and/or reception and transmission of orders services without having to assess the appropriateness of the product for the client. One condition is that the service to be provided does not relate to a complex product. MiFID II has further clarified which instruments should be deemed complex *per se*.

Shares in non-UCITS explicitly excluded from the universe of non-complex products are complex *per se* and cannot be reassessed against the criteria set out in Article 57 of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. This approach is confirmed by Recital 80 of MiFID II which clarifies that: *“Investment firms are allowed to provide investment services that consist only of execution and/or of the reception and transmission of client orders, without the need to obtain information regarding the knowledge and experience of the client in order to assess the appropriateness of the service or the financial instrument for the client. Since those services entail a relevant reduction of client protection, it is appropriate to improve the conditions for their provision. (...). It is also appropriate to better define the criteria for the selection of the financial instruments to which those services should relate in order to exclude certain financial instruments, including those which embed a derivative or incorporate a structure which makes it difficult for the client to understand the risk involved, shares in undertakings that are not undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS) (non-UCITS collective investment undertakings) and structured UCITS as referred to in the second subparagraph of Article 36(1) of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010” (our underlining)³⁷.*

The treatment of shares (or units³⁸) in non-UCITS as complex products does not prohibit firms from selling these instruments but only ensures a higher level on investor protection by requiring MiFID firms to carry out the appropriateness test before providing MiFID execution services in relation to these instruments.

³⁷ This position has also been stated by ESMA in its Technical Advice on MiFID II (19 December 2014, ESMA/2014/1569).

³⁸ ESMA has already clarified that investments in non-UCITS collective investment undertakings should be considered complex, regardless of whether they take the legal form of shares or of units (ESMA/2014/1569, page 159).

11 Client categorisation [Last update: 25 May 2018]

Question 1 [Last update: 3 October 2017]

Are investment firms required to inform of their MiFID categorisation all their clients, including those already categorised under MIFID I, or should they just provide such information to new clients or to clients which categorisation has changed under MIFID II?

Answer 1

Article 45(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation requires investment firms to “notify new clients, and existing clients that the investment firm has newly categorised as required by Directive 2014/65/EU, of their categorisation....”

ESMA’s view is that under Article 45(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Regulation, firms only have to notify information on their categorisation to:

- new clients; and
- clients whose categorisation has changed under MiFID II. Such is the case for instance for certain local public authorities or municipalities which could have been categorised as professional clients under MiFID I and will now be considered as retail clients according to paragraph 1 of section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II.

Question 2 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

When should an investment firm assess whether a private individual investor may be treated as a professional client under Section II of Annex II of MiFID II?

Answer 2

Pursuant to Section II of Annex II of MiFID II, a private individual investor may be allowed to waive some of the protections afforded by the conduct of business rules set in MiFID II by requesting to be treated as a professional client. This request must be made by the client in writing and at its own initiative. This written statement shall indicate whether the client asks to be treated as a professional client generally (i.e. for all future transactions and investment services) or in respect of a particular investment service or transaction, or type of transaction or product. This written statement should be in a separate form from contracts or other terms of business. As further discussed in question 2 below, investment firms must perform the assessment and follow the procedure set in Section II of Annex II of MiFID II prior to deciding whether it considers it appropriate to accept such a request.

Investment firms should strictly refrain from implementing any form of practice that aims at incentivising, inducing or pressuring a private individual investor to request to be treated as professional client.

Question 3 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

How should an investment firm assess whether a private individual investor may be treated, on request, as a professional client under Section II of Annex II of MiFID II?

Answer 3

As Section II of Annex II of MiFID II allows some of the protections afforded to retail clients by the conduct of business rules to be waived, such provisions are expected to be relied upon in a reasonable and carefully considered manner that is also consistent with an investment firm's overarching duty to act in the best interest of its clients.

As a reminder, in accordance with the third paragraph of Section II.1, private individual investors may be treated as professional clients only if an adequate assessment of their expertise, experience and knowledge gives reasonable assurance, in light of the nature of the transactions or services envisaged, that the client is capable of making investment decisions and understanding the risks involved. For instance, the fulfilment by a private individual investor of two of the criteria provided in the fifth paragraph of Sub-Section II.1 is an indication that such client may be treated as a professional client. However, such test may not be sufficient to justify the acceptance of a request for waiver received under Sub-Section II.2. Depending on the circumstances (e.g. the category of products the client intends to trade), a more thorough analysis of the client's expertise, experience and knowledge may be required.

Therefore, retail clients that do not meet at least two of the criteria set out in the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 shall not be treated as professional clients. Still, investment firms should not automatically accept to treat as professional clients those who do meet two or more of these criteria.

In addition, in accordance with the second paragraph of Section II.2, investment firms are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure that a retail client that requested to be treated as a professional client meets the requirements of Section II.1. Whilst investment firms should use their discretion to determine the reasonable steps needed, they should avoid relying solely on self-certification by the client and should consider obtaining further evidence to support assertions that the client meets the identification criteria at that point in time, notably when they consider that the documents or statements received from the clients are not sufficiently conclusive.

For instance, when assessing whether a client meets the criteria set out under the third limb of the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II, investment firms must ensure that the position was professional in nature and held in a field that allowed the client to acquire knowledge of transactions or services that have comparable features and a comparable level of complexity to the transactions or services envisaged. Consequently, knowledge gathered in relation to simple products may not be relied upon where a private individual investor requests to be treated as a professional client in respect of more complex products (e.g. knowledge related to vanilla government bonds should not be relevant with respect to envisaged transactions in complex derivatives).

The assessment conducted by the investment firm of the expertise, experience and knowledge of the client shall give the investment firm reasonable assurance that the client is capable of making investment decisions in, and understanding the risks involved with respect to, each type of transactions and services envisaged.

Investment firms shall also maintain adequate recording and retention arrangements in order to demonstrate compliance with the procedure under Section II.2 of Annex II of MiFID II to their national competent authorities.

Question 4 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

How should an investment firm assess whether a private individual investor has carried out transactions of a “significant size” in accordance with the first limb in the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II?

Answer 4

When assessing whether a client transaction is of a significant size, investment firms shall, inter alia, take into account the size of transactions on the relevant market. For the purpose of determining the relevant threshold, the scope of the analysis should not be limited to (the size of) transactions previously carried out by the relevant client or by clients of the relevant investment firm on the relevant market.

To assess whether transactions are of a significant size, investment firms should consider whether the transactions were individually large enough to provide the client with meaningful exposure to the relevant market so that it contributed to the client’s acquiring the required expertise, experience and knowledge of the transactions or services envisaged.

In relation to leveraged positions or financial instruments for which a margin is deposited, ESMA considers it likely that the typical notional value of transactions in such financial instruments will be commensurately higher than in non-leveraged products, and therefore would expect firms to assess “significant size” at a level appropriate to that market. In the case of derivatives, a firm may also need to consider if the “relevant market” should be distinguished by the underlying asset class, index or reference price to which exposure is provided to ensure “significant size” is appropriately assessed.

Question 5 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

How should an investment firm assess whether a private individual client meets the conditions under the first limb in the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II where such investor has been trading on the relevant market for less than a year?

Answer 5

Clients who have been trading on the relevant market for less than a year cannot fulfill the conditions imposed by the first limb in the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID

II. This is because, to assess whether a client meets such conditions, investment firms shall review the client's trading history on the relevant market over the past four quarters. For the avoidance of doubt, a lack of one-year trading history on the relevant market does not prevent clients from meeting the conditions set out in limbs two and three of the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II.

Question 6 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

How should leveraged financial instruments be taken into account in order to assess the size of a client's financial instrument portfolio in accordance with the second limb of the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II?

Answer 6

The size of a client's financial instrument portfolio should exceed the threshold of EUR 500,000 in order to fulfil the requirement in the second limb of the fifth paragraph of Section II.1 of Annex II of MiFID II.

If an investment portfolio contains leveraged positions, or financial instruments for which a margin is deposited, the net equity of the specific position or positions (i.e. the margin deposited or paid for the financial instrument plus any unrealised profits or unrealised losses due to changes in the value of the underlying) should be used in order to determine the size of the financial instrument as part of the portfolio. An investment firm should not use the notional value of the financial instruments, as this value does not reflect the actual size of the portfolio of the client.

12 Inducements [Last update: 23 March 2018]

Question 1 [Last update: 10 November 2017]

Does Article 24(9) of MiFID II also apply to payments made by investment firms to a third party in relation to the provision of the investment service of investment advice provided on an independent basis or of portfolio management?

Answer 1

Yes. The inducement restrictions relating to the provision of investment advice on an independent basis and portfolio management, in Articles 24(7)(b) and 24(8) of MiFID II respectively, concern the acceptance and retention of fees, commissions and benefits paid or provided by third parties in relation to the provision of such services. These provisions are not concerned with payments made, or the provision of benefits by, the investment firm providing the relevant service.

ESMA is therefore of the opinion that payments made, or benefits provided to, third parties by investment firms in connection with the provision of investment advice on an independent basis or of portfolio management are subject to Article 24(9) of MiFID II.

Question 2 [Last update: 10 November 2017]

In connection with an investment firm providing investment advice on an independent basis or portfolio management services, what is, with a perspective on Chapter II of the implementing directive, the legal status of a fee, commission or monetary benefit, after it has been received by an investment firm from a third party or a person acting on behalf of a third party as an inducement, and prior to it being transferred in full by the investment firm to the client?

Answer 2

Article 12(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive requires that all fees, commissions or any monetary benefits received from a third party, or person acting on behalf of a third party, in relation to the provision of independent investment advice or portfolio management shall be transferred in full to the client. Once it is received by an investment firm from a third party or a person acting on behalf of a third party, and prior to the transfer to the client, the fee, commission or monetary benefit should be considered a liability of the investment firm, which is subject to the obligation in Article 12(1) of the MiFID II Delegated Directive to return the money to the client "as soon as reasonably possible after receipt".

The terms of business and/or contractual arrangements in place between the investment firm and a client should document how inducements are treated by the investment firm, including how the regulatory obligation to transfer such money to a client is discharged and the status of fees, commissions or monetary fees in case of insolvency. Such arrangements

should provide for the transfer of the inducement by transferring to a client asset account, if the client holds a client asset account with the investment firm, or provide for some other means, such as, by cheque or bank transfer to the client's account held externally. In any event, an investment firm must have systems and controls in place to transfer the money to the client as soon as reasonably possible after receipt. As set out in Recital 74 of MiFID II, an investment firm is not permitted to offset the inducement from any fees owed by the client to the firm.

Question 3 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Does an investment firm receiving a payment for performing the function of investment management or portfolio management³⁹ of one or more investment funds for a UCITS management company⁴⁰ or an AIF Manager⁴¹ have to comply with the MiFID II inducements requirements in relation to these payments, when the investment firm also provides investment services to other clients that relate to those same investment funds?

Answer 3

ESMA approaches this question from the perspective of the relationship between the investment firm and the client to whom the firm provides investment services that relate to units or shares in that fund/those funds. From the perspective of that relationship, the payment made to the investment firm by the UCITS management company or AIF Manager is made by a third party (i.e. a party other than the client or a person acting on behalf of the client).

Fees, commissions, monetary or non-monetary benefits received from a third party must comply with the MiFID II inducements requirements when they are paid or provided in relation to, or in connection with, the provision of an investment service or an ancillary service.⁴²

It is therefore important to determine if the payments received by the investment firm for the provision of investment/portfolio management function on behalf of the fund(s) can also be said to be paid in relation to, or in connection with, the provision of investment services to the firm's other clients.⁴³

³⁹ In accordance with, respectively, Article 13 of Directive 2009/65/EC of 13 July 2009 (UCITS Directive) or Article 20 of Directive 2011/61/EU of 8 June 2011 (AIFM Directive).

⁴⁰ Within the meaning of bullet point 1 of Annex II of the UCITS Directive.

⁴¹ Within the meaning of point 1(a) of Annex I of the AIFM Directive.

⁴² Article 24(7)(b) of MiFID II when the investment service of investment advice provided on an independent basis is provided, Article 24(8) of MiFID II when portfolio management is provided; and Article 24(9) of MiFID II when other types of investment service or an ancillary service are provided.

⁴³ For example, where an investment firm receiving payments for the management of a UCITS/AIF fund on behalf of the UCITS management company or AIF Manager also recommends its own clients to buy such UCITS/AIF fund; or where the investment firm also provides portfolio management to its own clients and invests on their behalf in the same UCITS/AIF fund.

In principle ESMA is of the view that managing UCITS or AIFs on behalf of a UCITS management company or an AIF Manager should not be regarded as an activity that is carried on in relation to, or in connection with, investment services provided by the investment firm to its other clients. Therefore payments received by the investment firm for the provision of a genuine service of investment/portfolio management on behalf of a UCITS management company or AIF Manager should not be considered as payments to which MiFID II's inducements requirements apply in the context of the firm's relationships with its other clients.⁴⁴

However, ESMA would highlight that a different conclusion might apply in the event that these delegation arrangements for the provision of the investment/portfolio management function were designed to circumvent, or resulted in the circumvention of, MiFID II's inducement requirements. This scenario might arise, for example, where there is no specific expertise within the investment firm regarding the function of investment/portfolio management. It might also arise where it can be shown that there are no, or insufficient, operational measures adopted by the investment firm to fulfill the function of investment/portfolio management. On a case-by-case basis, therefore, it may be concluded that payments received for the provision of investment/portfolio management function could be considered as a mere circumvention of the MiFID II inducements requirements. The structure of fee arrangements would be an element taken into account when doing such a case-by-case analysis. In particular, the level and method or manner of calculation or composition of payments received for the provision of the function of investment/portfolio management should be for a genuine service, in proportion to the nature of the service provided and comparable to the level of fees usually paid for the provision of that or equivalent functions.

Further, ESMA would also like to underline that where such delegation arrangements exist, even though the inducements requirements may not apply, investment firms must comply with all the relevant MiFID II requirements, paying attention to the MiFID II conflicts of interest requirements in order to avoid otherwise acting in a manner that would be contrary to the best interest of their clients.

MiFID II's provisions on conflicts of interest include a requirement that a firm takes all appropriate steps to identify and to prevent or manage conflicts of interest between itself and its clients or between one client and another. In this scenario, the investment firm must take steps to ensure that its role in providing delegated portfolio management services to a UCITS scheme or AIF does not adversely affect the interests of other clients. In particular, investment firms should be alive to the risks arising from situations where they also provide investment advice or portfolio management services to other clients. In these circumstances, the payments received for the delegated UCITS scheme or AIF portfolio management may have the potential to influence a firm's personal recommendations or investment decisions in relation to the portfolios of its other clients in ways which may not be in those clients' best interests.

An investment firm should identify such conflicts and take steps to prevent or manage them. For example, it could segregate the area of its business that provides portfolio management for a UCITS or AIF Manager from that which services its other clients, and ensure the

⁴⁴ This is without prejudice to the relevant provisions on inducements imposed by UCITS/AIFM Directives.

remuneration of advisors or portfolio managers acting for other clients is not materially influenced by the level of fees received for the management of the UCITS or AIF assets. At all times, an investment firm should also ensure the suitability of its personal recommendations to clients or decisions to invest when offering investment services of investment advice or of portfolio management.

The same reasoning as above would apply:

- Where the investment firm is appointed by a UCITS management company or an AIF Manager to provide advisory services in relation to the management of UCITS or AIFs and the investment firm also provides investment services to its other clients in relation to those same UCITS or AIFs.
- When the investment firm performs the function of investment management or portfolio management of one or more investment funds directly for such funds (in the case of internally managed funds) and the investment firm also provides investment services to its other clients in relation to those same funds.

Question 4 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Does an investment firm receiving a payment for the marketing of one or more investment funds from a UCITS management company or an AIF Manager have to comply with the MiFID II inducements requirements in relation to these payments, when the investment firm provides investment services to other clients that relate to those same investment funds?

Answer 4

As explained in Question 3, it is important to determine if the payments received by the investment firm for the provision of the function of marketing can be said to be paid in relation to, or in connection with, the provision of investment services to its clients when these services concern the UCITS or AIFs marketed⁴⁵.

ESMA considers that the function of marketing of UCITS or of AIFs, on the one hand, and the provision of investment services with regard to the same UCITS or AIFs by an investment firm to its own clients, on the other hand, are closely related. In such a situation, therefore, payments received for the provision of the function of marketing would be considered as falling under the MiFID II inducements requirements⁴⁶ and investment firms providing investment services to their clients should comply with the relevant inducements requirements (for example, when providing the service of reception and transmission of orders in relation to these

⁴⁵ For example, where an investment firm receiving payments for the marketing of a UCITS/AIF fund on behalf of the UCITS management company or AIF Manager also recommends to its own clients to buy such UCITS/AIF fund; or where the investment firm also provides portfolio management to its own clients and invests on their behalf in the same UCITS/AIF fund.

⁴⁶ This is without prejudice to the relevant provisions on inducements imposed by UCITS/AIF Directives.

UCITS they should, inter alia, comply with the quality enhancement requirement and the other requirements in accordance with Article 24(9) of MiFID II).

The same reasoning as above would apply when the investment firm performs the function of marketing of one or more investment funds directly for such funds (in the case of internally managed funds) and the investment firm also provides investment services to its other clients in relation to those same funds.

Question 5 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Does an investment firm receiving a payment for performing the function of administration⁴⁷ of one or more investment funds from a UCITS management company⁴⁸ or an AIF Manager⁴⁹ have to comply with the MiFID II inducements requirements in relation to these payments, when the investment firm provides investment services to other clients that relate to those same investment funds?

Answer 5

As explained in Question 3 above, from the perspective of the firm's relationships with its clients other than the UCITS management company or AIF Manager, it is important to determine if the payments received by the investment firm for the provision of the function of administration are in relation to, or in connection with, the provision of investment services to its clients when these investment services concern the UCITS or AIFs administered.⁵⁰

In principle, administering UCITS or AIFs on behalf of a UCITS management company or an external AIF Manager should not be regarded as an activity that is carried on in relation to, or in connection with, investment services provided by the investment firm to its other clients. Therefore payments received by the investment firm as remuneration for the provision of a legitimate genuine function of administration on behalf of a UCITS management company or an external AIF Manager are deemed to remain outside the scope of the MiFID II inducements requirements.⁵¹

As for the function of investment management (Question 3), the analysis may be different if there are elements which suggest that the delegation is neither legitimate (for example, there is no specific expertise within the investment firm regarding the function of administration), nor effective (for example, there are no, or no sufficient operational measures adopted by the

⁴⁷ In accordance with, respectively, Article 13 of Directive 2009/65/EC of 13 July 2009 (UCITS Directive) or Article 20 of Directive 2011/61/EU of 8 June 2011 (AIFM Directive).

⁴⁸ Within the meaning of bullet point 2 of Annex II of the UCITS Directive.

⁴⁹ Within the meaning of point 2(a) of Annex I of the AIFM Directive

⁵⁰ For example, where an investment firm receiving payments for the administration of a UCITS/AIF fund on behalf of the UCITS management company or AIF Manager also recommends its own clients to buy such UCITS/AIF fund; or where the investment firm also provides portfolio management to its own clients and invests on their behalf in the same UCITS/AIF fund.

⁵¹ This is without prejudice to the relevant provisions on inducements imposed by UCITS/AIFM Directives.

investment firm to fulfill the function of administration)⁵². Case-by-case analysis of arrangements may thus suggest that payments received for the provision of the function of administration could be considered as a mere circumvention of the MiFID II inducements requirements. In the course of such a case-by-case analysis, attention must be paid to the fee structure: the level and method or manner of calculation or composition of payments received for the provision of the function of administration should be proportionate to the function effectively provided and comparable to the level of fees usually paid for the provision of that, or an equivalent, function.

The considerations on the management of conflicts of interest contained in the answer to Question 3 equally apply here.

The same reasoning as above would apply when the investment firm performs the function of administration of one or more investment funds directly for such funds (in the case of internally managed funds).

Question 6 [Last update: 23 March 2018]

How should investment firms providing the investment service of portfolio management treat inducements received after 3 January 2018 with regards to financial instruments in which the firm has invested on behalf of the client before that date?

Answer 6

According to Article 24(8) of MiFID II, investment firms providing the investment service of portfolio management shall not accept and retain fees, commissions or any monetary or non-monetary benefits paid or provided by any third party (or a person acting on behalf of a third party) in relation to the provision of such an investment service to clients.

These requirements apply not only to any fee, commission or monetary or non-monetary benefit received by a portfolio manager in relation to investments in 'new' instruments undertaken from 3 January 2018 onward, but also with respect to any ongoing inducement the firm may be receiving in relation to financial instruments in which the firm has invested on behalf of the client prior to that date.

This means that only ongoing inducements accrued until 2 January 2018 can be received (so long as they are compliant with MiFID I requirements). ESMA is of the opinion that investment firms should be able to demonstrate and document that such inducements only concern the period prior to 3 January. From 3 January 2018, the firm has to: (i) transfer to its clients such fees, commissions or monetary benefits paid or provided by any third party; or (ii) change any

⁵² In this regard, it should be noted that compliance with the conditions set out in Article 13 of the UCITS Directive or in Article 20 of the AIFM Directive for the delegation of functions of the UCITS/AIF is also relevant for the correct assessment that such delegation arrangements are legitimate and effective.



existing arrangements in place with third parties so as to no longer receive any inducements from them.

13 Provision of investment services and activities by third country firms [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

Article 42 of MiFID II regulates the provision of services by third country firms at the exclusive initiative of the client. How should “initiates at its own exclusive initiative the provision of an investment service or activity by a third-country firm” be understood in Article 42 of MiFID II?

Answer 1

According to Article 42 of MiFID II, where a retail client or professional client within the meaning of Section II of Annex II established or situated in the Union initiates at its own exclusive initiative the provision of an investment service or activity by a third-country firm, the third country firm is not subject to the requirements under Article 39.

As provided in recital 111, in order to qualify for Article 42 of MiFID II, “where a third-country firm solicits clients or potential clients in the Union or promotes or advertises investment services or activities together with ancillary services in the Union, it should not be deemed as a service provided at the own exclusive initiative of the client”.

ESMA is of the view that such a solicitation, promotion or advertising should be considered regardless of the person through whom it is issued: the third country firm itself, an entity acting on its behalf or having close links with such third country firm or any other person acting on behalf of such entity.

As for the means of such solicitations, ESMA is of the view that every communication means used such as press releases, advertising on internet, brochures, phone calls or face-to-face meetings should be considered to determine if the client or potential client has been subject to any solicitation, promotion or advertising in the Union on the firm’s investment services or activities or on financial instruments.

Firms are reminded that such clarification is without prejudice to any provisions attached to the marketing of such products.

The client’s own exclusive initiative shall be assessed in concreto on a case by case basis for each investment service or activity provided, regardless of any contractual clause or disclaimer purporting to state, for example, that the third country firm will be deemed to respond to the exclusive initiative of the client.

Such approach should be used for the purpose of Article 46 of MiFIR as well.

Question 2 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

How should «new categories of investment products or investment services» within the meaning of Article 42 of MiFID II and Article 46 of MiFIR be understood?

Answer 2

To determine the categories of investment services for the purpose of Article 42 of MiFID II and Article 46 of MiFIR, ESMA is of the view that a third-country firm provides a new investment service or investment activity as defined in Section A of Annex I of MiFID II where this service or activity is added to the existing services or activities after 3 January 2018.

Investment products include financial instruments set out in Section C of Annex I of MiFID II and structured deposits as defined in Article 4(1) point 43) of MiFID II. ESMA is of the view that any investment product which is the subject of the investment service or activity provided by a third-country firm to a client after 3 January 2018 is a new investment product.

Under the reverse solicitation regime, a third-country firm cannot market new categories of investment products to the client. Whether a third-country firm markets a new category of an investment product needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account elements such as (i) the type of the financial instrument which is offered; (ii) the distinction between complex and non-complex products as referred to in Article 25(4) of MiFID II; (iii) the riskiness of the product. For example, a subordinated bond does not belong to the same category as a plain-vanilla debt instrument. In addition, categories of investment products should be granular enough to ensure that the reverse solicitation is not used as a way of circumventing a national regime of a Member State governing the provision of investment services by a third-country firm.

As an example, if a third-country firm has been providing investment advice to a client prior to January 2018 under the national regime of a Member State governing the provision of investment services by third-country firms, the third-country firm will not be entitled to continue providing investment advice - without complying with Article 39 of MiFID II and 46 of MiFIR – in relation to an investment product other than those that belong to the same category on which the investment advice was provided prior to 3 January 2018 [new products]. This is without prejudice to any more restrictive approach adopted at national level regarding the transition to the MiFID II third-country regime. Reverse solicitation should not be assumed. Third-country firms should be able to provide records tracking the relationship with the client and in particular whether the client has taken the initiative to receive investment advice with respect to a new product.

Question 3 [Last update: 12 July 2018]

What are practical examples of investment products belonging to different categories within the meaning of Article 42 of MiFID II and Article 46 of MiFIR and Q&A 2 (see above)?

Answer 3

This answer complements Q&A 2 on reverse solicitation and aims at providing a non-exhaustive list of pairs of investment products which should not be considered as belonging to the same category for the purpose of the reverse solicitation regime as set out by Article 42 of MiFID II and Article 46 of MiFIR:

- a non-complex debt instrument (as referred to under point (a) of Article 25(4) of MiFID II), and a debt instrument embedding a derivative or incorporating a structure which makes it difficult for the client to understand the risk involved (see Sections V.I. and V.II. of the ESMA guidelines on complex debt instruments and structured deposits)
- a debt instrument admitted to trading on a regulated market or on an equivalent third-country market or on a MTF and a debt instrument not admitted to trading on a regulated market or on an equivalent third-country market or on a MTF;
- a non-complex money-market instrument (as referred to under (a) of Article 25(4)), and a money-market instrument embedding a derivative or incorporating a structure which makes it difficult for the client to understand the risk involved (see Sections V.I. and V.II. of the ESMA guidelines on complex debt instruments and structured deposits) ;
- a non-complex structured deposit (as referred to under point (a) of Article 25(4) of MiFID II), and a structured deposit incorporating a structure which makes it difficult for the client to understand the risk of return or the cost of exiting the product before term (see Sections V.III. and V.IV. of the ESMA guidelines on complex debt instruments and structured deposits);
- a subordinated debt instrument and a senior debt instrument;
- a common share issued by a company and a unit or share issued by an ETF;
- two shares belonging to two different stock-exchange segments;
- a share admitted to trading on a regulated market or on an equivalent third-country market or on a MTF and a share not admitted to trading on a regulated market or on an equivalent third-country market or on a MTF;
- a share embedding a derivative and a share that does not embed a derivative;
- a share or unit in a UCITS and a share or unit in an AIF;

- two AIFs applying two different types of investment strategies as referred to in Annex 4 of Commission Delegated Regulation No 231/2013;
- two packaged retail investment products with different features such as a different summary risk indicator, as featured in their respective key information documents according to Regulation (EU) N° 1286/2014;
- a share or unit in a non-structured UCITS and a structured UCITS as referred to in the second subparagraph of Article 36(1) of Regulation (EU) No 583/2010;
- two financial instruments with different underlying asset classes (e.g. government bonds vs high yield corporate bonds).

For financial instruments, it is reminded that two instrument belonging to a different category of Annex C (1) to (11) are considered as different investment products for the purpose of Article 42 of MiFID 2 and 46 of MiFIR.

Question 4 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Article 42 of MiFID II allows third-country firms to market products and services directly (without the need of a branch) to retail clients and professional clients within the meaning of Section II of Annex II of MiFID II if this is done at the client's own exclusive initiative (reverse solicitation exemption), specifying that in such a case the firm in question may also offer the client products and services from the same category. Does this mean that a firm that, within the context of a one-off service to the client, has sold, or has had the opportunity to sell, a product or service under this rule may in the future again offer products or services from the same category (i.e. outside the context of the request of the client)?

Answer 4

No. The reverse solicitation exemption is based on the premise that the product or service is marketed at the client's own exclusive initiative⁵³ and can only be applied to the specific product or service requested ("the requirement for authorisation under Article 39 shall not apply to the provision of that service or activity by the third-country firm").

Therefore, when providing a one-off investment service⁵⁴ to a client, the third-country firm may not sell to that client (without establishing a branch if so provided for by national law) a product or service from the same category⁵⁵ unless requested to do so by the client at its own exclusive initiative and only at the time the client asks for an investment product or service.

Therefore, during the course of a transaction, the firm may offer the client another product or service of the same category as the one requested by the client but not at a later stage unless the client specifically requests it at its own initiative (e.g. if the client contacts the third-country firm to buy a share, the firm could - at this moment in time - market to the client other

⁵³ On this topic see Q&A 1 of this Section.

⁵⁴ On this topic see also Q&A 1 of Chapter 15 of this document.

⁵⁵ On this topic see also Q&A 3 of this Chapter.



shares from the same stock-exchange segment. However, the firm would not be entitled to market more shares to the client a month later, unless this is done through a branch).

14 Application of MiFID II after 3 January 2018, including issues of ‘late transposition [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Question 1 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Should authorisations to perform investment services or activities granted under MiFID I still be valid after 3 January 2018?

Answer 1

The authorisation granted under MiFID I should continue to be valid after 3 January 2018. However, ESMA notes that, as set out in Article 21 of MiFID II (and, already, Article 16 of MiFID I) license holders need to comply at all times with the conditions for initial authorisation and may therefore be subject to review by their competent authority.

Question 2 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Should passport notifications⁵⁶ made before the entry into application of MiFID II, still be valid after 3 January 2018 or will firms need to make new passport notifications to the competent authorities of their Member State?

Answer 2

Passport notifications made before the entry into application of MiFID II should still be valid after 3 January 2018. Firms will therefore not need to make new passport notifications to the competent authorities of their Member State.

Firms will however be required to give written notice to the competent authority of the home Member State in case of the change in any of the particulars previously communicated. The competent authority of the home Member State shall inform the competent authority of the host Member State of that change.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ A ‘passport notification’ can refer to:

- an investment service and activity passport notification made in accordance with Article 31 of Directive 2004/39/EU, or
- a branch passport notification made in accordance with Article 32 of Directive 2004/39/EU, or
- a notification for the provision of arrangements to facilitate access to an MTF made in accordance with Article 31(6) of Directive 2004/39/EU.

⁵⁷ See Articles 34(4) and 35(10) of MiFID II and related provisions on the passporting RTS (Regulation 2017/1018) and passporting ITS (Regulation [waiting for publication in the OJ])

Question 3 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Can firms established in EU Member States that have not transposed MiFID II at the date of 3 January 2018, and that already have a valid authorisation and a passport, continue to provide investment services in other EU Member States after the entry into application of MiFID II?

Answer 3

Firms established in Member States that have not transposed MiFID II by 3 January 2018 but have been already authorised under MiFID I and have already made a valid passport notification, may continue to provide investment services in the Member States for which they have already made a valid passport notification, provided that, depending on the case, the following conditions are met:

- Where the firm provides investment services through a branch, the branch complies with host Member State rules implementing Articles 24, 25, 27 and 28 of MiFID II and Articles 14 to 26 of MiFIR; and
- Where the firm provides investment services under the freedom to provide services, the firm complies with home Member State provisions comparable to the operating conditions of MiFID II. In this respect, home Member States competent authorities may be requested to reassure host Member States competent authorities that, pending transposition of MiFID II, they are applying the detailed operating conditions included in the Directive and the relevant ESMA guidelines and other forms of guidance (for example Q&As), when supervising firms passporting services.

This is without prejudice to the right of host competent authorities to take other precautionary measures under Article 86(1) and 86(2) of MiFID II.

Question 4 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

Should competent authorities in a host Member State be obliged to accept new passport notifications concerning firms authorised in a Member State that has not transposed MiFID II at the date of 3 January 2018?

Answer 4

No. In ESMA's view, a stricter approach is warranted in this situation taking into account that a firm is not already offering the relevant services in the host Member State.

Therefore, if a Member State fails to transpose MiFID II by 3 January 2018, competent authorities in a host Member State should not be obliged to accept new passport notifications by firms authorised in the late transposing Member State and wishing to provide services in that host jurisdiction for the first time after 3 January 2018 (or wishing to extend their existing passport notifications to new investment services and activities or to new financial instruments).

Question 5 [Last update: 18 December 2017]

If a host Member State has not transposed MiFID II by 3 January 2018, can it refuse to accept notifications from the home competent authority of an incoming firm, or can it prevent the firm from carrying on business in the territory of that Member State in accordance with its passporting rights either remotely or through a branch?

Answer 5

No. The failure of a host Member State to transpose MiFID II does not allow it to refuse the receipt of a passporting notification from the home competent authority of an incoming firm, or to prevent the firm from carrying on business in the territory of that Member State in accordance with its passporting rights.

15 Other issues [Last update: 3 October 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 3 October 2019]

The term “ongoing relationship” is used in various articles in the MiFID II Directive and the MiFID II Delegated Regulation. How should this term be understood?

Answer 1

The term "ongoing relationship" should have its ordinary meaning. It should be understood consistently in the context of all articles of the MiFID II Directive or the MiFID II Delegated Regulation⁵⁸ where it appears. The term should apply to a client relationship that is continuing, or has been so during the preceding year. The existence of an ongoing relationship (or not) with a client should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the nature of the service provided. Firms should be able to explain how, why and when they have assessed a particular client relationship as ongoing (or not).

When determining the nature of their relationships with clients, firms should consider the following non-exhaustive and non-cumulative list of situations. Indicators of the existence of an ongoing relationship include:

- Where both parties have concluded a contract for the provision of an investment or ancillary service that is not a one-off service. This would apply for as long as the parties agreed to such a contract and would include situations where:

⁵⁸ See Articles 27(7) (best execution) of MiFID II, 50(9) (costs and charges) and 54(7) (suitability) of MiFID II Delegated Regulation.

- there is a portfolio management agreement in place;
 - there is an agreement for the firm to provide the client with a periodic assessment of suitability;
 - the client holds a trading account with the investment firm and trades on that account;
 - the firm provides safekeeping and administration of financial instruments in conjunction with an investment service.
- Where there is an agreement for an ongoing fee to be paid by the client to the firm for an ongoing service.
 - Where the firm receives ongoing inducements, provided that all the conditions for the legitimacy of inducements envisaged by Article 11 of the MiFID II Delegated Directive are met

Question 2 [Last update: 25 May 2018]

What are the supervisory responsibilities of competent authorities in host Member States when a UCITS management company or an alternative investment fund manager provides investment services through a branch established in the host Member State?

Answer 2

Under both the UCITS⁵⁹ and the AIFM⁶⁰ Directives, supervisory powers of competent authorities in relation to branches of UCITS management companies or alternative investment fund managers (AIFMs) established in a Member State that is not the home Member State are shared. The competent authority of the Member State in which the branch is located (host Member State) is responsible for the supervision of the branch's compliance with conduct rules referred to in Article 17(5) of the UCITS Directive and Article 45(2) of the AIFMD and the competent authority of the Member State in which the UCITS management company or the alternative investment fund manager is established (home Member State) is responsible for the supervision of the other requirements provided under the relevant applicable framework⁶¹.

Neither the UCITS Directive nor the AIFMD provides for an explicit framework for the allocation of supervisory responsibilities and powers for those cases where UCITS management companies or AIFMs are authorised to carry out investment services set out in Article 6(3) of

⁵⁹ Directive 2009/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 on the coordination of laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS).

⁶⁰ Directive 2011/61/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2011 on Alternative Investment Fund Managers and amending Directives 2003/41/EC and 2009/65/EC and Regulations (EC) No 1060/2009 and (EU) No 1095/2010.

⁶¹ See Article 17(4) and (5) of UCITS Directive and Article 45(1) and (2) of AIFMD. On this subject, see also "Notification frameworks and home-host responsibilities under UCITS and AIFMD", an ESMA Thematic Study among National Competent Authorities https://www.esma.europa.eu/sites/default/files/library/esma34-43-340_final_report_on_thematic_study_on_notification_frameworks.pdf

the UCITS Directive and Article 6(4) of the AIFMD and have branches providing those services in other Member States. ESMA is of the view that responsibilities of home and host Member States should be identified similarly to, and consistently with, the general framework established for the provision of activities pursued by UCITS management companies and AIFMs through branches as well as with the MiFID II framework regulating the supervision on the provision of investment services across the EU.

This approach is in line with the division of responsibilities provided under the MiFID II framework. In accordance with Article 35(8) of MiFID II, the competent authority of the host Member State has the responsibility for ensuring that the services provided by the branch of an investment firm or a credit institution in its territory comply with the MiFID II requirements under Articles 24 (“General principles and information to clients”) and 25 (“Assessment of suitability and appropriateness and reporting to clients”) of MiFID II, which also apply to UCITS management companies and AIFMs providing investment services.

Question 3 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Where MiFID II requires firms to provide information to clients in a durable medium, can this information be made available to the client on the firm’s website, with the client receiving a notification (via email or through any other means of communication) regarding the availability of this document?

Answer 3

Yes. With regard to the provision of information through a firm’s website, please see the clarifications provided in Q&A 3 of Section 2 of this document.

16 Product governance [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 28 March 2019]

Which considerations should manufacturers and distributors take into account when specifying the target market category “type of client to whom the product is targeted” for CoCo-Bond-Funds?

Answer 1

In ESMA’s view, CoCo-Bond⁶²-Funds are generally not compatible with the retail market. ESMA believes that the investor protection concerns raised by CoCo-Bonds⁶³ do also largely apply to funds which predominantly invest in CoCo-Bonds or use benchmarks which are predominantly composed of CoCo-Bonds. Therefore, ESMA expects manufacturers and distributors of CoCo-Bond-Funds to carefully scrutinize such products in the respective product approval process and assess the target market proportionally to the features and risks of the product. This assessment should also take into account the envisaged investment services for the product (e.g. in the course of an investment advice or portfolio management some of the above mentioned concerns could be mitigated). Manufacturers and distributors should therefore consider excluding retail investors from the positive target market or including retail clients in the negative target market. For CoCo-Bond-Funds already in the market, ESMA would expect manufacturers and distributors to take the abovementioned considerations into account in the next cycle of the product review process, at latest.

⁶² CoCo Bonds are highly complex, hybrid capital instruments with loss-absorbency features written into their contractual terms. One key characteristic is that they feature an equity conversion or writing down trigger, set with reference to the issuer’s capital position in relation to regulatory requirements. CoCo Bonds are eligible towards issuers’ Additional Tier 1 (AT1) capital and feature other unusual characteristics for non-equity instruments, in that they are permanent notes with entirely discretionary income payments. This means ‘coupons’ may be cancelled at any time, for any reason, and the notes may never be called. While CoCos can be designed in a range of different ways, all are highly complex instruments presenting investment risks that are exceptionally challenging to evaluate and model.

⁶³ ESMA and the Joint Committee of the European Supervisors as well as several NCAs have already expressed their view that CoCo Bonds are inappropriate for distribution to ordinary retail investors as they raise several investor protection concerns (e.g. ESMA Statement on “Potential Risks Associated with Investing in Contingent Convertible Instruments” –ESMA/2014/944 – 31 July 2014 and JC Reminder on “Placement of financial instruments with depositors, retail investors and policy holders (‘Self placement’)” – JC 2014 62 – 31 July 2014).

17 Product intervention [Last update: 4 December 2019]

Question 1 [Last update: 4 December 2019] **new**

Which national product intervention measures should a firm apply in case of cross-border provision of investment services?

Answer 1

National competent authorities (NCAs) may take product intervention measures in accordance with Article 42 of the Markets in Financial Instruments Regulation (EU) No 600/2014 (MiFIR) in or from their Member State. Where two NCAs adopt product intervention measures that both apply in and from their Member State and that are different from each other, it is important for investment firms to comply with the product intervention measures that apply from the Member State in which they are authorised in case of cross-border provision of investment services and also the product intervention measures applicable in a Member State where the client is located.

This holds that if Member State (MS) A adopts stricter measures than MS B, then firms from MS B still have to abide by the national product intervention measures of MS A in respect of any cross-border activity provided to clients in MS A that is within the scope of the national measures of MS A.

When product intervention measures in a Member State apply from that Member State, this implies that the product intervention measures apply to firms when marketing, distributing or selling MiFID financial instruments also to clients located in third country jurisdictions, without prejudice of any local legislation and/or regulation.

In order to determine the location of the client, firms could, for example, consider the habitual residence of the client based on information collected in their client-onboarding process as part of the know-your-customer assessment.

It is possible that national product intervention measures contain specific rules on the territorial scope of their application. Therefore, when providing cross-border investment services firms should ensure compliance with the applicable product intervention measures.