

Amended Mapping of Kroll Bond Rating Agency Europe credit assessments under the Standardised Approach

1. Executive summary

1. This report describes the mapping exercise carried out by the Joint Committee of the European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs) to determine the ‘mapping’¹ of the credit assessments of Kroll Bond Rating Agency Europe Limited (KBRA), with respect to the version published in June 2021.
2. The methodology applied to produce the mapping remains as specified in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1799 of 7 October 2016 (the Implementing Regulation)² laying down implementing technical standards with regard to the mapping of credit assessments of external credit assessment institutions for credit risk in accordance with Articles 136(1) and 136(3) of Regulation (EU) No 575/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Capital Requirements Regulation – CRR). This Implementing Regulation employs a combination of the provisions laid down in Article 136(2) of the CRR.
3. The information base used to produce this mapping report reflects additional quantitative and qualitative information collected after the submission of the draft Implementing Technical Standards by the JC to the European Commission. Regarding qualitative developments, the qualitative factors as described in the Implementing Regulation remain unchanged, while KBRA introduced a new type of rating and rating scale.
4. The mapping neither constitutes the one which ESMA shall report on in accordance with Article 21(4b) of Regulation (EC) No 1060/2009 (Credit Rating Agencies Regulation - CRA) with the objective of allowing investors to easily compare all credit ratings that exist with regard to a specific rated entity³ nor should be understood as a comparison of the rating methodologies of KBRA with those of other ECAs. This mapping should however be interpreted as the correspondence of the rating categories of KBRA with a regulatory scale which has been defined for prudential purposes. This implies that an appropriate degree of prudence may have been applied wherever not sufficient evidence has been found with regard to the degree of risk underlying the credit assessments.

¹ According to Article 136(1), the ‘mapping’ is the correspondence between the credit assessments of and ECAI and the credit quality steps set out in Regulation (EU) No 575/2013 (Capital Requirements Regulation – CRR).

² OJ L 275, 12.10.2016, p. 3-18

³ In this regard please consider [ESMA’s Report on the possibility of establishing one or more mapping](#).

5. As described in Recital 12 of the Implementing Regulation, it is necessary to avoid causing undue material disadvantage on those ECAs which, due to their more recent entrance in the market, present limited quantitative information, with the view to balancing prudential with market concerns. Therefore, the relevance of quantitative factors for deriving the mapping should be relaxed. This allows ECAs which present limited quantitative information to enter the market and increases competition. Updates to the mapping should be made wherever this becomes necessary to reflect additional quantitative information collected after the entry into force of the revised draft ITS.

6. The resulting mapping tables are specified in Annex III Consultation Paper on the revised draft ITS on the mapping of ECAs' credit assessments under Article 136(1) and (3) of Regulation (EU) No 575/2013. Figure 1 below shows the result for the main rating scale of KBRA, the KBRA Long-term credit rating scale.

Figure 1: Mapping of KBRA's Long-term credit rating scale

Credit assessment	Credit quality step
AAA	1
AA	1
A	2
BBB	3
BB	4
B	5
CCC	6
CC	6
C	6
D	6

2. Introduction

7. This report describes the mapping exercise carried out by the Joint Committee (JC) to determine the ‘mapping’ of the credit assessments of Kroll Bond Rating Agency Europe Limited (KBRA).
8. Kroll Bond Rating Agency Europe Limited registered with ESMA on 13 November 2017 and therefore meets the conditions to be an External Credit Assessment Institution (ECAI).⁴
9. The methodology applied to produce the mapping is the one specified in the Commission’s Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1799 (‘the Implementing Regulation’) laying down Implementing Technical Standards (ITS) with regard to the mapping of credit assessments of External Credit Assessment Institutions (ECAIs) for credit risk in accordance with Articles 136(1) and (3) of the Regulation (EU) No 575/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council (‘the CRR’). This Implementing Regulation employs a combination of the provisions laid down in Article 136(2) CRR.
10. The information base used to produce this mapping report reflects additional quantitative information collected after the submission of the draft Implementing Technical Standards by the JC to the European Commission. Following the change in legal status of KBRA, only ratings that are issued by the registered entity can be used for the mapping. No such ratings were reported by KBRA for this mapping report. Regarding qualitative developments, the qualitative factors described in the Implementing Regulation remain unchanged, while KBRA introduced a new type of rating and rating scale.
11. The quantitative information is drawn from data available in the ESMA’s central repository (CEREP⁵) and RADAR⁶ based on the credit rating information submitted by the ECAIs as part of their reporting obligations.
12. The following sections describe the rationale underlying the mapping exercise carried out by the Joint Committee (JC) to determine the mappings. Section 3 describes the relevant ratings scales of KBRA for the purpose of the mapping. Section 4 contains the methodology applied to derive the mapping of KBRA main ratings scale whereas Sections 5 refers to the mapping of its remaining relevant rating scales. The mapping tables are shown in Appendix 4 of this document and have been specified in Annex III of the Consultation Paper on the revised draft ITS on the mapping of ECAIs’ credit assessments under Article 136(1) and (3) of Regulation (EU) No 575/2013.

⁴ The mapping does not contain any assessment of the registration process of KBRA carried out by ESMA.

⁵ <https://cerp.esma.europa.eu/cerp-web/>

⁶ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/2 RADAR RTS.

3. KBRA credit ratings and rating scales

13. KBRA produces three credit ratings. Column 2 of Figure 2 in Appendix 1 shows the relevant credit ratings that may be used by institutions for the calculation of risk weights under the Standardised Approach (SA)⁷:

- **Long-term issue / issuer rating** – assigned to issuers and their obligations, KBRA's long-term credit ratings are intended to reflect both the probability of default and severity of loss in the event of default, with greater emphasis on probability of default at higher rating categories. For obligations, the determination of expected loss severity is, among other things, a function of the seniority of the claim. Generally speaking, issuer-level ratings assume a loss severity consistent with a senior unsecured claim.
- **Short-term issue / issuer rating** – short-term ratings indicate an ability to meet obligations that typically have maturities of thirteen months or less when issued by corporate entities, financial institutions, and in connection with structured finance transactions. When applied to municipal obligations, KBRA's short-term ratings typically indicate an ability to meet obligations of three years or less. Short-term ratings may be assigned to both issuers and to specific obligations. As compared to long-term ratings, greater emphasis is placed on an obligor's liquidity profile and access to funding.
- **Insurance financial strength rating ('IFSR')** - IFSR ratings measure the overall financial condition of an insurance operating company with respect to its ability to meet its policyholder obligations.

14. KBRA assigns these credit ratings to different rating scales as illustrated in column 3 of Figure 2 in Appendix 1. Therefore, a specific mapping has been prepared for the following rating scales:

- **KBRA Long-term credit rating scale.** The specification of this rating scale is described in Figure 3 of Appendix 1.
- **KBRA Short-term credit rating scale.** The specification of this rating scale is described in Figure 4 of Appendix 1.
- **KBRA Insurance financial strength rating ('IFSR') scale.** The specification of this rating scale is described in Figure 5 of Appendix 1.

⁷ As explained in recital 4 ITS, Article 4(1) CRA allows the use of the credit assessments for the determination of the risk-weighted exposure amounts as specified in Article 113(1) CRR as long as they meet the definition of credit rating in Article 3(1)(a) CRA.

15. The mapping of the Long-term credit rating scale is explained in Section 4 and it has been derived in accordance with the quantitative factors, qualitative factors and benchmarks specified in the Implementing Regulation.
16. The mapping of the Short-term credit rating scale is explained in Section 5 and it has been indirectly derived from the internal mapping of the Long-term credit ratings scale and the relationship between these two scales provided by KBRA. This relationship is shown in Figure 6 of Appendix 1.
17. The indirect mapping approach described in the previous paragraph has also been applied in the case of the IFSR scale, as explained in Section 6. The relationship with the Long-term credit rating scale has been assessed, for the purpose of the mapping, by the JC based on the comparison of the meaning and relative position of the rating categories.

4. Mapping of KBRA's Long-term credit rating scale

18. The mapping of the Long-term credit rating scale has consisted of two differentiated stages where the quantitative and qualitative factors were considered. In addition, the benchmarks specified in Article 136(2) CRR have been taken into account.
19. In the first stage, the quantitative factors referred to in Article 1 of the Implementing Regulation have been taken into account to differentiate between the levels of risk of each rating category. The *long run default rate* of a rating category has been calculated in accordance with Article 6 of the ITS, as the number of credit ratings cannot be considered to be sufficient.
20. In a second stage, the qualitative factors proposed in Article 7 of the ITS have been considered to challenge the result of the previous stage.

4.1. Initial mapping based on the quantitative factors

4.1.1. Calculation of the long-run default rates

21. For KBRA, CEREP and RADAR did not reflect information regarding the credit ratings issued by the registered entity. Therefore, the allocation of Credit Quality Steps (CQS) has been made in accordance with Article 6 of the Implementing Regulation, as shown in Figure 7 of Appendix 3.
22. For rating category "D", default rates were not calculated since it already reflects a 'default' situation.

4.1.2. Mapping proposal based on the long run default rate

23. The assignment of the rating categories to credit quality steps has been initially made in accordance with Article 6 of the Implementing Regulation. Here, the prior expectation of the equivalent rating category of the international rating scale have been used.

- **AAA to B:** The allocation of Credit Quality Steps (CQS) remains consistent with the current mapping. Thus, the credit quality steps associated with the rating categories in the international rating scale can be assigned. Please see Figure 7 in Appendix 3 and Figure 8 in Appendix 4.
- **CCC-C:** since the CQS associated with the equivalent rating category of the international rating scale is 6, the proposed mapping for these rating categories is also CQS 6.

4.2. Final mapping after review of the qualitative factors

24. The qualitative factors specified in Article 7 of the ITS have been used to challenge the mapping proposed by the default rate calculation. Qualitative factors acquire more importance in the rating categories where quantitative evidence is not sufficient to test the default behavior,⁸ as it is the case for all KBRA's rating categories.

25. KBRA has not registered any change in the qualitative elements specified in the Implementing Regulation, therefore no amendment is made based on the qualitative review.

5. Mapping of KBRA's Short-Term credit rating scale

26. KBRA also produces short-term issue/issuer credit ratings and assigns them to the Short-term credit ratings scale (see Figure 4 of Appendix 1). Given that the default information referred to these rating categories cannot be comparable with the 3-year time horizon that characterizes the benchmarks established in the Implementing Regulation, the internal relationship established by KBRA between these two rating scales (described in Figure 6 of Appendix 1) has been used to derive the mapping of the Short-term credit rating scale. This should ensure the consistency of the mappings proposed for KBRA.

27. More specifically, as each short-term issue/issuer rating can be associated with a range of long-term issue/issuer ratings, the CQS assigned to the short-term credit rating category has been determined based on the most frequently CQS assigned to the related long-term credit rating categories. In case of draw, the most conservative CQS has been considered.

28. The result is shown in Figure 9 of Appendix 4:

- **K1+.** This rating category indicates exceptional ability to meet short-term obligations. It is mapped to credit rating AAA and AA, which are predominantly mapped to CQS 1. Therefore, CQS 1 is the proposed mapping.
- **K1.** This rating category indicates a very strong ability to meet short-term obligations. It is mapped to credit rating A, which is mapped to CQS 2. Therefore, CQS 2 is the proposed mapping.

⁸ The default behavior of a rating category is considered to be properly tested if the quantitative factors for that rating category are calculated under Articles 3 – 5 ITS.

- **K2.** This rating category indicates strong ability to meet short-term obligations. It is mapped to long-term credit rating A and BBB, which are mapped to CQS 2 and 3. Therefore, CQS 3 is the proposed mapping.
- **K3.** This rating category indicates adequate ability to meet short-term obligations. It is mapped to the long-term credit rating BBB, which is mapped to CQS 3. Therefore, CQS 3 is the proposed mapping.
- **B.** This rating category indicates questionable ability to meet short-term obligations. It is mapped to the long-term credit rating BB and B, which are mapped to CQS 4 and CQS 5. Since the risk weights assigned to CQS 4 to 6 are all equal to 150% according to Article 131 CRR, the mapping proposed for the B rating category is CQS 4.
- **C.** This rating category indicates little ability to meet short-term obligations. It is mapped to the long-term credit rating CCC/CC/C, which are mapped to CQS 6. Since the risk weights assigned to CQS 4 to 6 are all equal to 150% according to Article 131 CRR, the mapping proposed for the C rating category is CQS 4.
- **D.** This rating category indicates that the rated entity is in default on short-term obligations. It is mapped to the long-term credit rating D, which are mapped to CQS 6. Since the risk weights assigned to CQS 4 to 6 are all equal to 150% according to Article 131 CRR, the mapping proposed for the D rating category is CQS 4.

6. Mapping of KBRA's IFSR scale

29. KBRA also produces Insurance financial strength ratings that are assigned to the Insurance financial strength rating scale.

30. Based on the methodology described in the previous section, the mapping of the IFSR scale has been derived from the relationship established by the JC with KBRA's Long-term credit rating scale. More specifically, as each rating can be associated with one or a range of rating categories on the Long-term credit rating scale, its CQS has been determined based on the most frequent CQS assigned to the related rating categories. In case of draw, the most conservative CQS is assigned. The results are shown in Figures 10 of Appendix 4:

- **Insurance financial strength rating scale** (see Figure 5 in Appendix 1). The rating categories can be considered comparable to those of the Long-term credit rating scale. Therefore, the mapping of each rating category has been derived from its meaning and relative position and the mapping of the corresponding categories of the Long-term credit rating scale. The result of the mapping of this scale is shown in Figure 10 of Appendix 4.

Appendix 1: Credit ratings and rating scales

Figure 2: KBRA’s relevant credit ratings and rating scales

SA exposure classes	Name of credit rating	Credit rating scale
Long-term ratings		
Institutions	Long-term credit rating	Global long-term rating scale
Corporates	Long-term credit rating	Global long-term rating scale
	Insurance financial strength rating (IFSR)	Insurance financial strength rating (IFSR) scale
Central governments or central banks	Long-term credit rating	Global long-term rating scale
Regional governments or local authorities	Long-term credit rating	Global long-term rating scale
Public sector entities	Long-term credit rating	Global long-term rating scale
Short-term ratings		
Institutions	Short-term credit rating	Global short-term rating scale
Corporates	Short-term credit rating	Global short-term rating scale

Source: KBRA

Figure 3: KBRA Long Term Credit Rating Scale

Credit assessment	Meaning of the credit assessment
AAA	Determined to have almost no risk of loss due to credit-related events. Assigned only to the very highest quality obligors and obligations able to survive extremely challenging economic events.
AA	Determined to have minimal risk of loss due to credit-related events. Such obligors and obligations are deemed very high quality.
A	Determined to be of high quality with a small risk of loss due to credit-related events. Issuers and obligations in this category are expected to weather difficult times with low credit losses.
BBB	Determined to be of medium quality with some risk of loss due to credit-related events. Such issuers and obligations may experience credit losses during stress environments.
BB	Determined to be of low quality with moderate risk of loss due to credit-related events. Such issuers and obligations have fundamental weaknesses that create moderate credit risk.
B	Determined to be of very low quality with high risk of loss due to credit-related events. These issuers and obligations contain many fundamental shortcomings that create significant credit risk.
CCC	Determined to be at substantial risk of loss due to credit-related events, near default, or in default with high recovery expectations.
CC	Determined to be near default or in default with average recovery expectations.
C	Determined to be near default or in default with low recovery expectations.
D	In default.

Source: KBRA

Figure 4: KBRA Short Term Credit Rating Scale

Credit assessment	Meaning of the credit assessment
K1+	Exceptional ability to meet short-term obligations.
K1	Very strong ability to meet short-term obligations.
K2	Strong ability to meet short-term obligations.
K3	Adequate ability to meet short-term obligations.
B	Questionable ability to meet short-term obligations.
C	Little ability to meet short-term obligations.
D	In default on short-term obligations.

Source: KBRA

Figure 5: KBRA IFSR Scale

Credit assessment	Meaning of the credit assessment
AAA	The insurer's financial condition is extremely strong and there is almost no risk of the entity not meeting its policyholder obligations.
AA	The insurer's financial condition is very strong and the entity is highly likely to meet its policyholder obligations under severe economic, financial, and business conditions.
A	The insurer's financial condition is strong and the entity is very likely to meet its policyholder obligations under difficult economic, financial, and business conditions.
BBB	The insurer's financial condition is good and the entity is likely to meet its policyholder obligations, though it may be more susceptible to difficult economic, financial, and business conditions than more highly rated entities.
BB	The insurer's financial condition is moderately weak and is susceptible to changes in economic, financial, and business conditions that could affect the entity's ability to meet its policyholder obligations.
B	The insurer's financial condition is weak and is highly susceptible to changes in economic, financial, and business conditions that could affect the entity's ability to meet its policyholder obligations.
CCC	The insurer's financial condition is very weak and changes in economic, financial, and business conditions are likely to affect the entity's ability to meet its policyholder obligations.
CC	The insurer's financial condition is poor and changes in economic, financial, and business conditions are highly likely to affect the entity's ability to meet its policyholder obligations.
C	The insurer's financial condition is very poor and changes in economic, financial, and business conditions will affect the entity's ability to meet its policyholder obligations.
D	KBRA defines the default of an insurance operating company as occurring if the rated entity fails to meet its policyholder obligations.
R	Due to its financial condition, the insurance operating company is under regulatory supervision.

Source: KBRA

Figure 6: Internal relationship between KBRA’s long-term and short-term rating scales

Long-term credit ratings scale	Short-term credit ratings scale
AAA	
AA+	
AA	K1+
AA-	
A+	
A	K1
A-	
BBB+	K2
BBB	
BBB-	K3
BB+	
BB	
BB-	
B+	B
B	
B-	
CCC+	
CCC	
CCC-	C
CC	
C	
D	D

Source: KBRA

Appendix 2: Definition of default

KBRA defines default as occurring if:

- There is a missed interest payment, principal payment, or in preferred dividend payment, as applicable, on a rated obligation which is unlikely to be recovered.
- The rated entity files for protection from creditors, is placed into receivership or is closed by regulators such that a missed payment is likely to result.
- The rated entity seeks and completes a distressed exchange, where existing rated obligations are replaced by new obligations with a diminished economic value.

Source: KBRA

Appendix 3: Default rates of each rating category

Figure 7: Mapping proposal for rating categories with a non-sufficient number of credit ratings

	AAA/AA	A	BBB	BB	B
CQS of equivalent international rating category	CQS 1	CQS 2	CQS 3	CQS 4	CQS5
N. observed defaulted items	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Minimum N. rated items	0	0	0	0	0
Observed N. rated items	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mapping proposal	CQS 1	CQS 2	CQS 3	CQS 4	CQS 5

Source: Joint Committee calculations based on CEREP and RADAR data.

Appendix 4: Mappings of each rating scale

Figure 8: Mapping of KBRA's Long-term credit rating scale

Credit assessment	Initial mapping based on LR DR (CQS)	Review based on SR DR (CQS)	Final review based on qualitative factors (CQS)	Main reason for the mapping
AAA	1	n.a.	1	
AA	1	n.a.	1	
A	2	n.a.	2	The quantitative factors are representative of the final CQS
BBB	3	n.a.	3	
BB	4	n.a.	4	
B	5	n.a.	5	
CCC	6	n.a.	6	
CC	6	n.a.	6	The meaning and relative position of the rating category is representative of the final CQS
C	6	n.a.	6	
D	6	n.a.	6	

Figure 9: Mapping of KBRA’s Short-term credit rating scale

Credit assessment	Corresponding Long-term credit rating scale assessment	Range of CQS of corresponding Long-term credit rating scale	Final review based on qualitative factors (CQS)	Main reason for the mapping
K1+	AAA / AA	1	1	
K1	A	2	2	
K2	A / BBB	2 – 3	3	The final CQS has been determined based on the most frequent step associated with the corresponding long-term credit rating category.
K3	BBB	3	3	
B	BB / B	4 - 5	4	
C	CCC / CC / C	6	4	The final CQS has been determined based on the most frequent step associated with the corresponding long-term credit rating category. The risk weights assigned to CQS 4 to 6 are all 150%, therefore CQS 4.
D	D	6	4	

Figure 10: Mapping of KBRA’s IFSR scale

Credit assessment	Corresponding Long-term credit rating scale assessment	Range of CQS of corresponding Long-term credit rating scale	Final review based on qualitative factors (CQS)	Main reason for the mapping
AAA	AAA	1	1	The final CQS has been determined based on the most frequent step associated with the corresponding long-term credit rating category.
AA	AA	1	1	
A	A	2	2	
BBB	BBB	3	3	
BB	BB	4	4	
B	B	5	5	
CCC	CCC	6	6	
CC	CC	6	6	
C	C	6	6	
D/R	D	6	6	