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1. Executive Summary

The EBA is tasked, pursuant to Article 8(1)(ab) of Regulation 1093/2010 of the European Parliament and the Council, with developing and maintaining ‘an up-to-date Union resolution handbook on the resolution of financial institutions in the Union which is to set out best practices and high-quality methodologies and processes for resolution, taking into account the work of the Single Resolution Board, and changing business practices and business models and the size of financial institutions and of markets’. This Resolution Handbook Chapter (‘Handbook’) provides best practices and high-quality methodologies and processes for the selection and appointment of independent valuers for resolution purposes in accordance with Article 36 and 74 of Directive 2014/59/EU of the European Parliament and the Council.

The EBA has already issued Regulatory Technical Standards (RTS) on independent valuers under Article 36(14) of Directive 2014/59/EU determining the circumstances under which a person is to be considered independent from any public authority, including the resolution authority (RA), and the relevant entity and can therefore act as an independent valuer.

In line with those Regulatory Technical Standards, the Handbook identifies best practices for the three elements of independence that the RA should assess for the valuer. The RA should ensure that the valuer: i) possesses the necessary qualifications, experience, ability, knowledge and resources; ii) is legally separated from the relevant public authority and the relevant entity; and iii) has no material common or conflicting interest with the relevant public authority or the relevant entity.

The Handbook is structured in chronological order, covering actions before, during and after the appointment of the independent valuer. The Handbook covers the preparatory arrangements, such as market research, framework contracts and internal procedures. The Handbook then moves to the appointment process, with specific parts for the assessment of the valuer’s independence and the application of safeguards. The Handbook ends with considerations at and after valuation contract signature, such as the maintenance of policies and procedures to identify and manage conflicts of interest.

The Handbook provides examples of situations and safeguards that may affect the materiality of a common or conflicting interest. It gives examples of past or current provision of services, personal and financial relationships or investments that may pose a threat to the valuer’s independence, and suggests possible safeguards, such as termination, disconnection or restriction.

The Handbook addresses some other considerations on independent valuers for resolution purposes, such as cases where appointing the same valuer to perform different valuations before or after resolution might be considered a best practice. Other aspects that the RA should consider when procuring valuation services, such as the timing, scope, format and language of the valuation, are addressed as well.

2. Background and rationale

As announced in the 2023 EBA Work Plan, the EBA focused on critical elements of the secondary legislation that may need to be reviewed based on the collected practical experience. In this scrutiny, in discussions with the RA, the Regulatory Technical Standards (RTS) on independent valuers emerged as a main product for consideration.

The RAs indicated that more practical guidance, sharing of best practices and examples for specific situations of appointing an independent valuer would be helpful in this regard.

This need also emerged in the context of the European Resolution Examination Programme (EREP) covering the 2023 period. Specifically, the EBA asked RAs if they believe there would be potential issues in contracting valuation services at short notice while assessing the requirements of Article 36 Directive 2014/59/EU and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075. Almost all the RAs that answered this question identified potential issues in this respect, such as: the short time available and lack of guidance for assessing conflict of interest/independence; challenges stemming from the potential need to comply with procurement law in a short time frame; the small number of suitable valuation service providers in the national market; the suitability or availability of pre-selected valuers changes when entering resolution.

To address these issues, developing a Handbook Chapter on Independent Valuers was considered necessary. The purpose of the Handbook is to provide specific best practices, examples and high-quality methodologies and processes to ensure the independence of the potential valuers in the appointing process.

actions that need to be carried out during the assessment of independence (qualifications and structural separation, identification of statutory auditor, etc.).

- ii. The second step consists of **the actual selection** of an independent valuer **when a crisis arises**. In this second step, possibly urgently, the RA should carry out the remaining assessment actions, including integrating new pieces of information (such as the details of the actual target institution).

1.3 Considerations and limitations

- 14 Article 37(1) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 refers to the ‘appointing authority’ as the authority responsible for selecting and appointing the independent valuer for conducting the valuations referred to in Articles 36(1) or Article 74(1) of Directive 2014/59/EU. RAs should as a best practice be aware of their relevant applicable procurement and procedural rules and requirements as much in advance as possible of commencing any process to obtain valuation services, while also considering the relevant EU and national public procurement applicable rules.
- 15 The appointment of the independent valuer is an indispensable step to ensure that a definitive fair, prudent and realistic valuation of the assets and liabilities of the relevant entity can be performed to support a resolution action. RAs may be bound by different national legal provisions which could lead to different appointment processes or to situations where not all aspects of the procurement process and practices identified in this Handbook are relevant or may be followed.
- 16 The best practices and high-quality methodologies and process complied with in this Handbook are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Furthermore, neither using them nor not using them should necessarily lead to an automatic conclusion on the existence or not of a conflict of interest or lack of independence of the relevant valuer. The latter would very much depend on the context, scenarios and case-by-case supervisory judgement or assessment, taking into consideration the applicable procurement rules, the idiosyncrasy of the crisis and the urgency.
- 17 Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 indicates, in its Article 38, that both a legal or a natural person may be appointed as a valuer. The Handbook has put the focus on legal persons. However, the same principles, process and examples should apply to natural persons assessed to be appointed as valuers.

Preparatory arrangements

- 18 Preparatory arrangements or measures relate to all processes and activities the RA can conduct before resolution, when there is no indication that an institution is failing or likely to fail, related to the potential appointment of a valuer. The benefits of the preparatory actions are to reduce the time of performing the assessment at the moment of appointment, to increase the pool of potential suitable valuers and to reduce the potential legal risks of the appointment.
- 19 Preparatory measures – in relation to the valuer’s appointment in resolution – can be divided in three categories: (i) **internal preparation**; (ii) **market research and list of suitable valuers**; and (iii) **external preparation (framework contracts** – Section 2.3 of this Handbook). All three are interconnected and actions from one category may interact with actions from the other categories. This chapter identifies the actions that could be performed under each category and the desired outcome.

RA’s internal preparation

- 20 Procuring services from external providers, such as valuation services, is likely to require a well-documented process in most jurisdictions. As a best practice, the RA’s procedure should be known and prepared in advance of such a process. The internal RA’s preparation would therefore **define internal procedures or processes** to be set to assess the valuer’s independence and to operationalise the appointment.
- 21 In practice, the procedure would specify **how the assessment will be conducted and allocate roles and responsibilities within the RAs**. RAs in practice could prepare **documents of the operational steps** to select an independent valuer, including:
- a chronology and a description of operational procedures and tasks;
 - an identification and a description of the input and outputs of the different process steps; and
 - a description of roles and responsibilities.
- 22 In addition, depending on the specific circumstances, the RA could (1) identify the other relevant public authorities (as required by Article 40 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, for structural separation); and (2) inform these other relevant authorities that, if there is a crisis, when a valuer will have to be appointed, they may be asked to provide information relevant for assessing the structural separation. Conversely, the RA could simply identify that the relevant public authorities do not participate or have any structural ties with any valuation company. Given the potential urgency of appointing a valuer, the RA may solicit the valuer, through the self-assessment, to confirm the legal separation from the relevant public authorities and the RA may also confirm this fact with the relevant public authorities without affecting the

- a description of the procedures of conflicts of interest (Col) identification implemented by the valuer;
 - an assessment of remuneration from the perspective of independence to the RA and relevant authorities;
 - the procedures in place to continually monitor for the identification of Col during the performance of the valuation service.
- 29 In more detail, in addition to the above pieces of information, as a best practice, RAs should require the pieces of information in the valuer's self-assessment that are further detailed in Annex 2. Annex 2 proposes some elements that could be required to be included in the self-assessment, such as the nature of relation of the valuer with the target institution, adherence to codes of conduct and safeguards envisaged to be put in place.
- 30 When assessing the information provided by the valuers and processing the personal data included therein, RAs should comply with the relevant provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/679⁸ (GDPR) or Regulation (EU) 2018/1725⁹ (EU GDPR). Furthermore, in pursuance of data protection principles, such personal data should be kept by the RA for no longer than it is necessary to the performance of its tasks.
- 31 As part of the preparatory arrangements, the RA could **identify** for each institution or group who is **the statutory auditor**. As a best practice, this information should be updated regularly, with each iteration of the resolution plan. This information would allow for an early assessment of the existence of the material conflict of interest described in Article 41(5) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 (absolute exclusion for the statutory auditor).
- 32 Consideration of the fact that the valuer may deny offering full information in the assessment process to the RA due to **confidentiality obligations** of a legal or contractual nature, the RA should, as another best practice:
- i) identify applicable legal provisions that would not allow the valuer to disclose information about its interaction with the target institution;
 - ii) identify possible exceptions to these barriers to information disclosure;
 - iii) discuss in advance with the valuer and/or the institution the possibility, considering the applicable legal framework, of obtaining a prior authorisation of the institution and/or person/s concerned to share in the future information with the RA as regards the information to be disclosed only for the purpose of the assessment of the independence of the valuer. This action is important if the RA prefers to have the option to conduct the valuation without informing the target institution.

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (OJ L 119 4.5.2016, p. 1) ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/2016-05-04>

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39). ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj>

- 33 To enhance effectiveness of their preparatory arrangements, RAs should as a best practice, regularly **test their internal procedures** related to the appointing of independent valuers. This might include coordinating among staff, units and external stakeholders, the documentation templates and performing dry runs or tabletop simulations of the processes.

Market research and lists of suitable valuers

- 34 Market research of valuers is an important preparatory arrangement and should have as an outcome **a list of suitable valuers** that the RA could potentially contact when needed. The set-up of a list of suitable and eligible valuers should optimise the time required for the appointment of the valuer and better manage the possible time constraints.
- 35 As a best practice, RAs should broaden their research to include **valuers from outside of their MS** (e.g. EU-wide) to expand their list of possible available and suitable valuers.
- 36 A high-quality process for performing market research and establishing a list of suitable valuers should comprise the following steps:
- i. RAs should, as a best practice, **identify potential valuers** that could be called to express their interest to a tender process.
 - ii. For each potential valuer, the RAs, as a best practice, should identify **several contact persons**. Such contacts should be **checked to remain active frequently**, preferably on an annual basis.
 - iii. The RA, as a best practice, should perform **regular market updates** to understand if new valuers would be suitable to be added to the list.
 - iv. The RAs, as a best practice, should consider engaging with other RAs for **sharing contact details of valuation companies** between themselves.
- 37 Annex 3 provides a list of data points and information that could be used in setting up the lists of suitable valuers.
- 38 When preparing the list of suitable valuers, the RAs should, as a best practice, focus on and ensure compliance, to the extent possible, with Articles 39 and 40 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075. These articles require that the valuer (i) possesses the qualifications, experience, ability, knowledge and resources; and (ii) is structurally separated from the RA and any other relevant authority.
- 39 In this vein, an advanced step to having lists of suitable valuers is the performance of some basic, high level **preliminary suitability assessments** of the identified valuers to be included in the list. An assessment at this early stage, while based on a more limited set of information, would simplify and accelerate the work required under the actual selection and appointment process in a crisis scenario. At this stage, the RA could at least assess the available information to:

- 51 To further reduce the appointing time, the RAs should prepare an advanced draft or template of the valuation engagement or contract or the main requirements and obligations to be signed by the potential selected valuer. This allows the participating valuers to evaluate the full set of contractual terms that will apply to the specific engagements at the time they are considering their participation in the framework contract. Alternatively, provided there is a ranking of potential valuers within the framework contract, appointing authorities might be able to make a direct offer to one potential valuer (if allowed by the relevant EU and national procurement law). To this extent, the valuation engagements or contracts should be prepared, as templates, in the preparatory phase.
- 52 Where framework contracts are used, and hence there is a prior relationship between the RA and the potential valuers, the RAs should make clear the exclusion situations from the tender procedure. The RAs' framework contract should detail the situation(s) when the RA will not be able to contact a valuer to participate in the tender procedure, even if they sign the framework contract.
- 53 RAs may consider negotiating framework contracts with a sizeable number of valuers. This approach should decrease the likelihood of situations in which the RA's choice of an independent valuer becomes too limited and no valuer subject to the framework agreement fulfils the independence criteria. As a best practice, framework contracts should be reviewed regularly and in line with applicable EU and national procurement requirements.
- 54 Where contacts are established with the valuers, regardless of whether framework contracts are in place or not, the RA should, as a best practice, run tests to check if the processes and procedures of contacting valuers are operational and if the contact details from the valuers are up to date. Further, such tests should use mock documents based on real templates and requests to familiarise the valuers with potential requests and identify any gaps in understanding or expectations between the valuers and the RA during this planning phase. Some RAs, during this preparatory stage, consider it very important to instruct the valuers about the specifics of valuation in resolution and the key elements required in the valuation report, as well as the RAs' expectations that are necessary to implement resolution measures. As a best practice, this instruction should be performed in the preparatory phase, outside of the actual appointment process, in order to save time in the delivery of the valuation.

- Strategy 1 – sequential assessment. Under this approach, the RA performs the independence assessment first (i.e. only a Col assessment and not a full assessment) and subsequently the assessment of the other contractual elements of the bid/tender procedure (to include all elements of the independence assessment as required under Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075). In this scenario, only valuers not in conflict of interest are asked to provide information related to the other elements of the tender procedure (such as qualifications and expertise, price, delivery time or geographical reach).
 - Strategy 2 – holistic assessment. Under this approach the RA requests the information for the assessment of the independence jointly with all the other elements of the tender process.
- 61 The result of the two strategies is the same, but there are advantages and disadvantages for both:
- In the approach under Strategy 1, the elimination of the valuers is sequential. When a firm is found to not be independent, it will not be part of the next step. This would limit the number of valuers that are to be assessed for the other components of the bidding procedure. This process requires several iterations of dialogue with the valuers.
 - The early elimination of candidates in conflict may facilitate and expedite the subsequent documentary checks, especially in jurisdictions where the process is constrained by the public procurement rules, of the bids submitted.
 - The approach under Strategy 2, while envisaging only one round of data collection from the valuers, requires the RA to process all the information for all candidate valuers. On the positive side, if the RA has the resources, it can process in parallel the various offers on all aspects, obtaining at the same time a list of valuers not conflicted and a ranking in terms of the other components of the tender process.
- 62 Regardless of the strategy chosen, when time permits, the RA should, as a best practice, inform the valuers found to be conflicted with the conclusion of the RAs assessment. The valuer concerned may clarify the situation, provide additional information or propose safeguards. This best practice ensures that the pool of potential valuers is not unduly restricted. Entering into such a dialogue does not prevent the RA from stopping the dialogue at any point and is not a mandatory action for the RA considering the additional resources requirements and the potential time constraints to finalise the appointment.
- 63 As part of the tendering process, RAs should, as a best practice, provide a tender document outlining the information as per below Information Box 1. RAs should ask valuers to respond with a bid document outlining details of the intended team, relevant experience in the context of the information provided and requirements of the RA, and the economic terms of the assignment.

Information Box 1

The RA should consider providing the following information to the valuer in order decrease the time for an answer from the valuer, subject to the RA's assessment on how providing specific pieces of information may jeopardise the effectiveness of the valuation or the resolution action:

- **Background:** overview of institution's size, operations, geographical presence, financial condition, including factors requiring the valuation, and resolution reasons.
- **Scope of Work:** detailed description of assets, liabilities and financial instruments to be valued, and any special additional requirements.
- **Technical Requirements:** RA's expectation for valuer's expertise in financial valuation methodologies, regulatory frameworks and experience in similar resolution cases.
- **Submission Instructions:** formats, deadlines and contact information for tender document submission.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** technical expertise, experience, methodology, conflict-of-interest compliance, fees, etc.
- **Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure:** guidance on identifying, disclosing and managing Col.
- **Access to Information:** data, documents and information access, restrictions and confidentiality requirements.
- **Terms and Conditions:** additional terms governing the tender process, such as confidentiality agreements or liability limitations.

- 64 Irrespective of the approach chosen, RAs should, as a best practice, ask from all candidate valuers to **provide a self-assessment of the Col.** RAs should have in place procedures to review those self-assessments provided by candidate valuers. Further details of this are outlined in Chapter 4.
- 65 As part of the tendering process, RA's will typically ask the valuers to provide a bid containing **details on intended team structure, relevant and up-to-date experience, and the economic terms of the assignment.** Provided their independence is confirmed, RAs should apply a decision mechanism to assess and compare incoming bids.
- 66 RAs will then, based on their assessment, select the preferred provider and finalise the valuation engagement or contract for services. The independence of the valuer should also be guaranteed during the execution of the valuation services.
- 67 RAs should make internal arrangements for the relevant timing of when to commence a specific procurement for valuation services. This should reflect the inevitable time lags between procuring an independent valuer and obtaining any meaningful valuation results to support the resolution actions.

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situations under the principle of judgement-led supervision and communicate them to the candidates. For example, specific knowledge of national insolvency law can be determined only when the FOLTF institution is known.

- 74 In proving the qualifications, experience, ability, knowledge and resources, the valuer may submit the following elements:
- certifications, licences and professional accreditations held by key personnel and the team involved in the specific project;
 - description of the experience working in the financial advisory sector: duration and nature of the projects;
 - evidence of successful outcomes achieved for clients, including testimonials, case studies and performance metrics where available and disclosable;
 - insight into firm's resources and infrastructure, including access to specialised tools, information providers and technology platforms.
- 75 If there are joint ventures or any kind of consortium of valuers and/or subcontracting, RAs should, as a best practice, assess the requirements mentioned above for each valuer separately. **All valuers part of the joint venture or subcontracted should undergo the independence assessment.**
- 76 In addition, the RA should, as a best practice, inform the valuers invited to the tender if they are allowed to freely extend the invitation, or, on the contrary, if such an extension is prohibited, taking into account that the confidentiality of crisis proceedings may be compromised, generate leaks and even pose a risk to financial stability in case of such an extension of the invitation.
- 77 At an initial stage, during market research, or at the stage of awarding a framework contract, for instance, RAs may consider setting general skills requirements only. However, the specific actual needs are likely to become far more detailed when a crisis arises and factors such as size of the relevant entity, jurisdictions concerned, and type of business models and portfolios affected materialise. The same considerations can be made on the appropriate level of resources that, in accordance with Article 39(2) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, the valuer shall hold or have access to.
- 78 Consequently, the RA may need to add further details at the time of the tender process or when finalising the case-specific request for services (depending on the approach used) to allow the potential valuers to prepare their detailed offers for valuation services on time. The case-specific request for services may be needed whether the framework contracts are used or not.

conflict or the impossibility to ensure that a valuer is independent (as required by Article 36(1) of Directive 2014/59/EU).

- 81 The assessment of the actual or potential material interest in common or in conflict with any relevant public authority or the relevant entity should identify and address any threats to independence such as self-review, self-interest, advocacy, familiarity, trust or intimidation.
- 82 As a high-quality process, the RAs should, at first, identify situations that may reveal the existence of a common or conflicting interest of the valuer with any relevant public authority or the relevant entity. Article 41 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 lists a number of parties (paragraph 3) and matters (paragraph 4) that should *at least* be considered *relevant* for the finding of whether an interest in common or in conflict exists. The wording of those two paragraphs (by referring *at least* to certain parties and matters) suggests that the RAs may also assess the relevance of other parties or matters not expressly mentioned in these two subparagraphs if appropriate. Chapter 4.3 of this Handbook elaborates on such parties and situations.
- 83 Next, if such a common or conflicting interest is established, RAs should assess its materiality, i.e. **whether it could influence, or be reasonably perceived to influence, the independent valuer's judgement in carrying out the valuation** (as per Article 41(2) Delegated Regulation 2016/1075). In assessing materiality, RAs should, as a high-quality methodology, consider and/or factor any safeguards or measures set in place to mitigate the effects of the possible influence on the interest in common or in conflict on the valuer's judgement. Recital 39 of Delegated Regulation 2016/1075 indicates that safeguards should be considered in the assessment of materiality. **Therefore, the analysis of safeguards should be deemed a part of the assessment of materiality.** This means that any conclusion on the materiality of any conflict should be drawn after considering such safeguards. Chapter 5 of this Handbook elaborates on the assessment of safeguards.
- 84 As a best practice, the materiality assessment should be carried out on a case-by-case basis: the number of elements that could be considered in the assessment is potentially very large. As a best practice, RAs should consider to only assess as *material* those interests that are built upon links, relationships or circumstances, which are proven and/or tangible and which present a *significant* amount, degree, intensity or severity, therefore raising doubts on the lack of independence of the valuer. In different words, these circumstances would raise doubts on the impartiality of the judgement of the valuer, which could be compromised to the extent that the objectiveness of the valuation would be at risk¹⁴.
- 85 If at the end of this assessment and having carried out all enquires deemed necessary, the RA concludes that the candidate presents a potential or actual material interest in conflict or in common or the independency of the valuer cannot be ensured (as required by Article 36(1) of Directive 2014/59/EU), the candidate valuer should not be appointed as the valuer.

¹⁴ The standard of independence to be met by the valuer (and the RA carrying out the assessment) is uncertain although an interesting reference could be paragraphs 97 to 101 of the ECJ judgement in T-304/20, Molina Fernández vs SRB, where the Court seems to require the standards of impartiality expected from public authorities.

the identified conflict and potential safeguards that are proposed to be implemented are sufficient or call for an exclusion of the provision of services or not.

- 92 As a best practice, the RA should ensure on a continuous basis the independence of the selected valuer, as it might become conflicted after its appointment.
- 93 The information on the current statutory auditor is publicly available through national trade registers or other national registries. Such information is also available on the relevant institution's webpages or other communications and could be captured, as a best practice, in the resolution plan. However, the information on previous statutory auditor, that acted during the year preceding the valuer's assessment, may not remain in the publicly available records of national trade registers or other national registries after the appointment of the new auditor, but could still be available from the institutions and via the resolution planning activities. Therefore, as a best practice, the RA should request such information from institutions, CAs or previous resolution plans.
- 94 The information on a firm appointed to be the next statutory auditor of an institution may not be publicly available. The next statutory auditor has already been selected and informed before the beginning of the audit period. If this audit firm wishes to participate in a tender process to be appointed independent valuer, the RA can expect that such conflicting roles will then be reviewed in the firm's self-assessment. The RAs may require such information from the relevant entity when updating the resolution plan or during the tender process through the valuers' self-assessment.

Past or current provision of services with potential Col

- 95 This chapter provides a non-exclusive list of examples of processes to assess the materiality of a potential Col. The examples are built on samples of conditions where the valuer would, in principle and subject to assessment of other circumstances of the relevant scenario, meet a sufficient or acceptable level of independence. The examples set out how those services could be assessed as posing a material Col or not, by analysing the particular link between those services and the elements relevant for the valuation, as laid down by Article 41(4)(a) of Delegated Regulation 2016/1075. The chapter also analyses services entailing potential Col from the perspective of the addressee of the service, namely:
 - the relevant entity;
 - senior management and the members of the management body of the relevant entity;
 - the legal or natural persons who control or have a qualifying holding in the relevant entity;
 - the creditors identified by the appointing authority to be significant on the basis of the information available;
 - each group entity;
 - relevant public authorities.

- 96 With the exception of a statutory audit, where a past provision of services exists, the RA should assess the materiality and relevant safeguards that can be put in place on a case-by-case basis to determine if an exclusion from the tender procedure is warranted. The fact that a firm had provided services to the relevant entity or to the persons referred to in Article 41(3) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 in the past should not necessarily imply the disqualification of the firm concerned. However, recital 40 of that Regulation indicates that for audit (other than the ones covered by the exclusion of Article 41(5)) or valuation services provided to the entity concerned years immediately preceding the date on which independence is to be assessed, these should also be assumed to present a material interest in common or in conflict unless it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the appointing authority, that this is not the case having regard to all relevant circumstances, including any structural separation or other arrangements in place.
- 97 As a best practice, RAs should conduct its assessment based on the elements of the specific situation and seek the necessary information to conclude its well-grounded assessment. During crisis situations, the time might be limited. Therefore, the RAs should define in advance what pieces of information and general areas of assessment would amount to a satisfactory assessment, but always considering that circumstances of the crisis could lead to a change in approach. Where it is not possible to obtain information to the full satisfaction of the RA, as a best practice, the firm under review should not be deemed independent.
- 98 For any kind of service being performed at the time of the assessment of Col or having it performed in the past, as a high-quality methodology, three main elements should be considered:
- (1) if there is a link between the services provided by the valuer and the elements relevant for the valuation, i.e. the assessment of an entity's assets and liabilities;
 - (2) the risks associated with the identified links, as presented in Article 41(4)(d) of Delegated Regulation 2016/1075 (i.e. threats to independence such as self-review, self-interest, advocacy, familiarity, trust or intimidation);
 - (3) to what extent those services could influence the valuer's judgements in carrying out the valuation and therefore determine that there was an actual or potential material interest in common or in conflict with the relevant entity within the meaning of Article 41(2) of that Regulation. If the link between the services provided and valuation is strong enough it could be perceived as an actual Col.
- 99 The assessment of Col however also has other relevant dimensions than the direct link between the services in question and elements related to valuation. The nature and scope of those services as well as the time elapsed between the provision of services and the appointment of the valuer should also be included in the overall assessment. The RAs, in general, should consider at least the following elements as driving principles of the independence assessment:
- **Scope of the services:** previous services encompassing a valuation of assets and/or liabilities of the relevant entity or other types of advisory services that could have a perceived

impact on the value of the balance sheet (and/or profit and loss) items. Those services should be evaluated in connection to the resolution entity. Services provided to the buyer in case of a sale of business which are not linked to the relevant valuation of the entity in resolution might not be perceived as a material CoI if appropriate safeguards have been implemented.

- **Relevance:** RAs should determine whether the services have or could have a relevant (material) impact on the valuation of the assets or liabilities of the relevant entity or on the decision on the application of resolutions tools or on the decision to compensate shareholders and/or creditors. Past services linked to assets and liabilities or business having no material value as regards the relevant valuation to be carried out of the target entity might not constitute a conflict of interest.
- **Time dimension:** the difference between the time of the provision of the services and valuation engagement date. Services linked to assets and liabilities or business that are no longer part of the relevant entity might not be deemed as posing a material risk of conflict of interest. In general, the longer the time period between when the services were provided and the time of the valuation, the less likely that such past services would amount to a material conflict of interest. This can be enhanced further by new valuation opinions or audit services having been performed since the original provision of services.

100 In this assessment, in order to mitigate or exclude the threat to self-review, RAs may consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the valuer's past services, in particular where valuation-type services are concerned, were reviewed and confirmed by a third party before the independence assessment is carried out.

Example – mitigation of self-review

Valuer 1 has valued the entity in a merger 2 years ago. In the meantime, Valuer 2 (completely independent of Valuer 1) has audited all relevant assets and performed impairment tests e.g. on goodwill.

The RA, in the context of the assessment of the independence of Valuer 1, may consider as a possible mitigant to the risk of self-review, the fact that a third party (Valuer 2) confirmed the work and outcome of Valuer 1, as the original valuation has been reviewed and confirmed by an independent third party.

101 The table below provides a non-exhaustive list of examples where past or current provision of services that might give rise to a conflict of interest and elaborates on whether these could, as a best practice, be automatically excluded or considered in more detail, including non-exhaustive suggestions on how mitigants could be considered in the RA's assessment, without prejudice of any other circumstance not envisaged in the table below which, in accordance with Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, would imply the existence of a CoI.

	Past or current services being offered	Potential impact on the outcome of RAs' assessment
1 <p>Valuations of assets and liabilities in the context of price purchase allocation (IFRS 3), public disclosures (IFRS 7), impairment tests (IAS 36).</p>	<p>If the assets and liabilities subject to previous valuation still remain on the balance sheet of the relevant entity, the RA should consider to what extent they constitute a significant portion of the relevant entity's balance sheet and/or to what extent they could have an impact on the valuation outcome.</p> <p>The RA should also consider the distance in time when those services were performed. In general, without any other links to indicate an increase in materiality or circumstance implying an actual and current existence of the Col in accordance with Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, services provided more than 3 years ago per se could be considered as not amounting to a material threat to the independence. For services performed within the last 3 years, the RA should consider more in depth the nature and potential importance of the service and the provision of safeguards that could be put in place.</p> <p>If the previous service were limited in scope, requesting a quality assurance analysis/review by a different adviser/valuer just on those aspects covered by the previous service should be considered.</p>	
3 <p>Advisory services in areas with likely low material impact on an institution's failing or likely to fail or on the outcomes of the valuation.</p>	<p>Unlikely to be deemed as posing a material conflict of interest.</p> <p>The RA should check, in any case, that such services are not linked to the triggers of the bank's failure (e.g. IT failures that resulted in wrong booking of values).</p>	

<p>4</p> <p>Tax matters relevant to the business operations of the relevant entity, with identified tax risks for the last 5 years.</p>	<p>If the advice was limited to tax issues, which are irrelevant and immaterial for the valuation at stake, requesting a quality assurance analysis/review by a different adviser/valuer just on those tax aspects, it is unlikely to be deemed as posing a material conflict of interest and the RA could ensure that appropriate safeguards could be put in place to address any remaining concerns, such as a different team performing the valuation, to the extent that the valuer can be deemed independent.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>The assistance for developing in the planning phase operational playbooks to implement the resolution strategy (the write-down and conversion power and/or the bail-in or other transfer tools).</p>	<p>The RA should consider when the provision of such services occurred. As a best practice, a provision of these services more than 2 years apart, should not per se and automatically amount to a material threat to independence. For less than 2 years, the RA should identify the possible risks that could be posed to the current valuation and consider appropriate safeguards (such as team separation).</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Valuation services provided to the subsidiaries of the relevant entity.</p>	<p>The final decision will depend on whether the subsidiary is within the scope of the resolution action or write-down and conversion of capital instruments and eligible liabilities and its materiality in terms of portion of the relevant entity's balance sheet and/or the impacted perimeter.</p> <p>The RA should assess the potential risks and potential influence of the valuation outcome and if sufficient safeguards could be put in place, so the valuation is not impacted.</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Provision of support to competent authorities for asset quality reviews, stress testing, simulation exercises, etc.</p>	<p>The RA should consider if there is sufficient time between the time those services were provided and the valuation engagement date, as a first factor to determine the independence.</p>

If the time distance alone is not considered sufficient (e.g. less than 2 years), the RA should assess the materiality of these provision of services and the safeguards that the valuer can put in place (e.g. different team, ringfenced by Chinese walls).

A bank is failing in Member State (MS) A. The RA from MS A decides that valuation company α , located in MS A, had provided services that would amount to a material conflict of interest. The RA is thus considering including in the tender process a valuer that is part of the same group as α , but is located in a different MS (i.e. same franchise, but from a different country).

In this case, the RA should, as a best practice, assess, in addition to the structural separation and ethical rules put in place by this valuation group, the possibility that the group would be considering its franchise value, as an interference to its objectivity, and the implications for its perceived independence.

4.3.3 Investments, personal and financial relationships or other material financial interests between the valuer and the relevant entity

102 Within the process of assessing Col, the valuers should provide the RAs with information about personal and financial ties with the relevant entity that could be perceived as material Col. Below is a non-exhaustive list of elements that can be considered in the assessment by the RAs:

- the valuer is a creditor of the relevant entity or has taken out leasing services from the relevant entity;
- the relevant entity is a significant profit contributor for the firm;
- the firm holds significant investments in assets managed by the relevant entity; and
- transaction-related services provided by a potential valuer might be connected with the financing operations of the relevant entity.

Safeguards

Existing references to safeguards

- 103 As a best practice, RAs should conduct the assessment of the material common or conflict of interest holistically, by taking into account relevant circumstances and safeguards.
- 104 Article 41(4)(d) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 identifies as relevant some minimum safeguards in relation to legal persons, such as ‘any structural separation or other arrangements that shall be put in place to address any threats to independence’.
- 105 In the same vein, Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 introduces the concept of safeguards by specifying in recital 39 that ‘if the significance of those threats to independence compared to the **safeguards** applied is such that the person’s independence is compromised, the company or partnership should not be the independent valuer’.
- 106 Safeguards should be understood to be those measures that could be put in place and would decrease the materiality of actual or perceived risk of a common or conflict of interest. The application of safeguards in a level and manner acceptable for the RA would lead to the conclusion that there is no material interest in common or in conflict.
- 107 Recital 39 of Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 gives further indications of such safeguards for the materiality assessment of interests in common or in conflict for past provision of services, other than statutory audit or valuation services, having regard **to all relevant circumstances, including any structural separation or other arrangements in place**. This might be seen as a benchmark of what safeguards could consist of.
- 108 Safeguards could apply in, for instance:
- A situation that generates a potentially material Col (e.g. through past provision of services) which is by virtue of a safeguard attenuated until the existence of an interest is rendered acceptable in the view of the appointing authority.
 - A situation where no material Col has been identified for past or current provision of services, but safeguards may be required as pre-emptive, forward-looking measures, targeting future engagement of the valuer in relation with the relevant entity. This aspect is particularly important when the timeline for the commencement or completion of the valuation is not clear and could cover a medium term (1- to 2-year) time period.

Practical application of safeguards

- 109 As already highlighted in this Handbook, in accordance with Article 36(1) of Directive 2014/59/EU, the RAs shall ensure that the appointed valuer is independent. Thus, they should

assess materiality of a common or conflict of interest when appointing an independent valuer. The RA should, as a best practice, base its decision on the information provided by the valuer, notably the self-assessment of the valuer where this is requested by the RA, and any other information the RA may hold or obtain from other sources, such as from other relevant public or competent authorities. The valuer may propose any safeguards that are deemed useful in its self-assessment or at a later stage, if a dialogue is possible between the RA and the candidate valuer. Whenever a compromise of the valuer's independence cannot be reasonably excluded, despite the provision of safeguarding measures, the candidate should not be appointed as independent valuer.

110 As a best practice, the RAs should consider the use of certain potential safeguards that could be incorporated into the assessment of materiality of any common or conflicting interest. The measures could include, without prejudice to the existing ones, relevant applicable legal framework, which should be respected:

- **Termination** – this measure envisages the termination of a current or future provision of services or relationship by the proposed valuer with the relevant entity. Termination may not be easy or feasible to be put in place considering that contracts with clients, or even the relevant applicable law, may envisage specific terms and conditions governing the termination of services, including notice periods, termination clauses and potential penalties. However, as a best practice, it would be useful to assess the feasibility to implement the relevant safeguards in advance, before resolution action or power is to be exercised. Moreover, without an appropriate transition, there may be impacts on business operations and potential reputational damage.
- **Disconnection/Separation** – this measure implies a separation, at different levels between the persons, teams or entities that provided a service in the past or that are still providing a service and those persons and teams or entities that would provide the valuation for resolution services. Under these measures, if effective, the provision of the service could still continue while ensuring separation or disconnection between the persons and teams involved. Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 indicates that the assessment of the materiality should take into account 'structural separation and other arrangements that may be put in place to differentiate between those staff members who may be involved in the valuation and other staff members'. More details on disconnection/separation are in Annex 4.
- **Restrictions** – this measure is forward-looking and implies that the valuer will not be allowed to engage in the future provision of certain services. It should be implemented if the applicable legal frameworks allow for it, as there could be some constraints depending on the type of contract, relationship and/or restriction to be imposed. This, for instance, could be implemented through a specific contractual clause in the appointment phase of the valuer.

111 Below some illustrative (non-exhaustive) examples of cases and their possible safeguards. These are just examples, and any actual outcome of a suitability assessment should consider the particular circumstances at stake, so no automatic and general conclusion should be drawn

from the cases described in the examples. In addition, any safeguard should be adopted with full respect to the applicable legal framework, namely, the resolution, tax, competition and procurement frameworks, including, of course, respect to the proportionality principle. RAs should carry out then the corresponding proportionality assessment.

Example – termination

A potential valuer currently provides advisory services for personal wealth management and tax to the CEO of the FOLTF entity. In submitting its bid, in response to the request to tender from the RA, the firm proposes to terminate the relationship with the CEO of the FOLTF entity. In addition, the firm proposes that it can put in place a separation between the team that was providing advice to the CEO and the team that will be conducting the valuation, including measures to restrict information-sharing between these two teams. This, unless other circumstances not considered in the example imply the existence of a potential or actual material CoI could appear as satisfactory safeguards are put in place to avoid material conflict of interest.

Example – termination

A potential valuer has provided consultancy services in the domains of IT and HR to the FOLTF entity. The relevant entity has not yet fully paid the resulting invoices. The RA is satisfied that the specific services provided in the past by the firm to the entity would not amount to a material common or conflict of interest. However, the RA is still in doubt whether the outstanding receivables, which are under dispute, could create a material independence issue. In this case, the potential valuer could agree to waive the amounts due and release of any further obligation of compensation from the entity for these past services provided, removing any doubts of common or conflicting interest for the RA.

Example – restriction

The RA appoints a valuer. The valuer was in discussions with the FOLTF entity to perform a future audit, but did not start any work related to this task. To clarify and impede potential material conflict of interest, the RA will restrict the possibility for the valuer to perform such future audit of the FOLTF entity.

Example – Safeguard assessment against materiality

In the past, the potential valuer has performed a service of valuing a non-performing loan portfolio of a value of less than 1% of the balance sheet of the entity failing or likely to fail and where

the overall portfolio losses could not by its own put the entity in a difficult situation either directly or indirectly via contagion or impacting the market confidence. Without other aggravating elements, it is unlikely this situation could be considered a material common or Col. However, the fact that the candidate valuer would indicate the existence of ethics rules and the separation of the team that performed the NPL valuation exercise from the one that would perform the valuation, could facilitate the conclusion that there is no material conflict of interest.

If, however, a similar service had been provided for a portfolio of much higher importance relative to the balance sheet, a much more thorough application of safeguards would be required to arrive at a similar conclusion.

Proposing and imposing safeguards

- 112 During the self-assessment, possible safeguards to avoid material common or conflicting interests should be considered. When safeguards (or a combination of them) are proposed to the RA, as a best practice, the RA should assess whether the safeguards can sufficiently mitigate the risks of perceived material interests. In doing so, the RA should consider holistically all relevant aspects of the case, and the intended purpose of the valuation.
- 113 If the RA is still in doubt, whether the proposed safeguards suffice, the RA should, as a best practice, discuss the matter openly with the candidate valuer with the purpose to review and resubmit before declaring them not sufficient. The lack of a re-submission by the candidate may result in the consideration that the significance of the relevant aspect of the common or Col cannot be overcome.
- 114 In certain circumstances, the RA may consider requiring from the valuer some specific arrangements subject to the legal framework, including the principle of proportionality. The valuer may agree and demonstrate how these would be put in place so that the RA can conclude whether the relevant proposed safeguards are deemed to be effective or not to the satisfaction of the RA. If the safeguards are not suitable in the opinion of the RA and the candidate refuses to implement them according to the RA's proposed amendments, the RA would likely conclude that a material conflict of interest could not be excluded, so the valuer could not be assessed as independent, as required by Article 36(1) of Directive 2014/59/EU.

Final considerations on safeguards

- 115 Other **mitigating aspects** may exist and could be applied in a case-specific way. Any such mitigating aspects may be proposed by the candidates to remedy the situations of material Col and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the RA.

Considerations at and after contract signature

116 Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, in recital 41, based on the EBA RTS, states that following the appointment of the independent valuer, it is essential that the independent valuer maintain policies and procedures according to the applicable codes of ethics and professional standards to identify any actual or potential interest which the valuer considers may amount to a material interest in common or in conflict. The appointing authority should be notified immediately of any actual or potential interests identified and should consider whether these amount to a material interest in which case the independent valuer's appointment should be terminated and a new valuer appointed.

117 All these requirements announced in the mentioned recital, and applicable from the signing of the valuation contract, are included as a norm in Article 41(6) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, which shall be complied with.

118 Therefore, RAs should be in a position to assess the valuer's independence at any point in time following the signature of the specific valuation contract. To promote the operationalisation of these provisions, the following best practices may be envisaged by the RA when assessing the specific valuation contract:

- The framework or the specific valuation engagements may include provisions creating an obligation for the valuer to inform the RA, without delay, of any circumstances that may pose a Col and that come to the valuer's awareness during the course of the assignment.
- That the selected valuer should put in place (and maintain throughout the valuation) measures¹⁵ to preserve its independence, among others, such as the following:
 - Impose via the framework or the specific valuation engagement the obligation to maintain, in particular, policies and procedures to identify any actual or potential interest which may be considered to constitute a material interest.
 - Be in a position to provide information related to the safeguards put in place and ethics codes used. Any safeguards put in place as well as details on the teams and staff involved should be made accessible to the RA upon its request. The possibility to make the information available to the RA should cover a period that the RA indicates after the project concludes.

119 Article 39(3) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075 prevents the independent valuer from seeking or taking instructions or guidance from any relevant public authority or the relevant

¹⁵ These measures are in line with those envisaged in Article 41(6) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075.

entity or accepting financial or other advantages from any relevant public authority or the relevant entity.

120 RAs should, as a best practice, consider and assess that the forms of support mentioned in Article 39(4)(a) of Delegated Regulation 2016/1075, where needed, are proportionate and necessary for achieving the goals of the valuation, and that the payment of costs and remuneration are reasonable. As regards what instructions, guidance, premises or technical equipment or support might be considered necessary, it should be a reasonable best practice to assess 'necessary'/necessity of those exchanges between the RA and the valuer when aimed at ensuring:

- i. the purpose of the valuation as well as relevant resolution scenarios;
- ii. an appropriate level of clarity, quality, consistency of the valuer's deliverables;
- iii. observance of the national or EU legal framework; and
- iv. the use of technical means necessary to gather the information in the possession of the RA that is necessary for the exercise of valuation, among other situations that could fall under Article 39(4)(a) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075.

121 RAs may consider as a best practice requiring from candidates a safeguard regarding independence from relevant public authorities to be included in their applications. Such a safeguard should be able to operate forward-looking, as this rule of conduct needs to continue to operate throughout the valuation process in order to not affect independence.

122 The valuers are expected to report information when their initial independence assessments change during the course of the project. In such cases, safeguards and ethical rules could be used to the extent that independence is maintained.

123 To this end, as a best practice, the RA should request the valuer to have in place a procedure ready to be implemented in case CoI materialises during the performance of the valuations. The procedure should include an acceptable time frame for addressing the CoI, if it should arise. At the end of the performance of this procedure, the RA should be in a position to determine whether it is possible to continue cooperation with the valuer or whether other measures should be taken.

124 As a best practice, the RA should have in place its own procedure to deal with potential CoI arising during the performance valuation. This procedure should identify responsible persons, chain of information and decision, and information needed to take a decision if the RA can continue the project with the valuer, if additional safeguards are needed or if there should be a discontinuation of the valuation process.

Other considerations on independent valuers for resolution purposes

- 125 The EU framework does not preclude the independent valuer for the valuation before resolution to be the same as the independent valuer of the valuation after resolution, neither a single valuer to perform various valuations¹⁶ (e.g. so-called valuations 1 and 2¹⁷). Furthermore, Article 36(10) of Directive 2014/59/EU explicitly states that the same independent valuer can perform the *ex post* definitive valuation and the valuation referred to in Article 74 of that Directive (so-called valuation 3).
- 126 Against this background, a same valuer for more than one valuation (1, 2 or 3), as a best practice, should not be seen as automatically impinging upon such valuer's independence, including in cases where the first valuation performed or to be performed by such valuer is provisional¹⁸. Assigning multiple valuations to the same pre-selected independent valuer might be seen as a best practice, in the absence of evidence that in this particular case the valuer's independence would be compromised by multiple assignments, as it could help carry out the required expedited valuation in an effective and efficient manner. Time and resource constraints, together with the lack of enough suitable valuers could jeopardise resolution execution, it being in the public interest to ensure the smooth implementation of the relevant resolution action to protect the resolution objectives. It is recommended that valuers' assignments include revocation clauses to be activated by the RAs when the latter consider that independence may be compromised by multiple assignments.
- 127 Appointing the same independent valuer to perform valuation 1 and 2 could help in the event of urgent circumstances requiring fast valuations. In the same vein, the performance of valuation 2 and 3 by the same valuer could shorten the timeline for the performance of valuation 3 and avoid significant delays in taking the decision as to whether shareholders and creditors would have to be compensated. Integrating different valuations into one single framework or specific contracts could allow the independent valuer to get synergies from having unique access to banks' management and data, which are key to supporting a robust valuation.

¹⁶ EBA Q&A 2015_2186 confirmed that the same valuer can prepare the provisional and *ex post* definitive valuation.

¹⁷ Refer to the EBA HANDBOOK ON VALUATION FOR PURPOSES OF RESOLUTION for details on the so-called valuations 1, 2 and 3 and, in particular, to see their definitions and considerations – <https://www.eba.europa.eu/publications-and-media/press-releases/eba-publishes-handbook-valuation-purposes-resolution>.

¹⁸ Regarding this situation, the judicial cases n. cases with numbers of case: T-330/20¹⁸, 340/20¹⁸ and T-302/20¹⁸, T-303/20¹⁸ and T-307/20¹⁸ might be useful references, always considering that the case law or jurisprudence could vary from time to time and might relate to particular cases with their specificities.

Annex 1 – list of templates that could be used by RAs

a. Framework contract templates:

- reference template providing information on firm’s qualifications, experience, ability, knowledge and resources – in format preferred by the RA;
- price template providing the maximum hourly prices for experts’ seniority to be used by the firm for all engagements under the framework contract;
- template for any subcontractors to be used;
- details on information security requirements required and applied by the RA (when applicable);
- template for framework contract;
- template for security contract (when applicable);
- template for non-disclosure agreement;
- template for valuation contract to be applied and finalised at the time of the tender process;
- description of the use of personal data by the RA (to comply with the data protection rules, when applicable);
- possible general contract terms to be applied (when applicable);
- possible translations, if the RA wishes internationally operating service providers to attend.

b. Documents generally expected to be provided by candidate valuation companies where framework contracts are used:

- completed offer form to respond the RAs request for services;
- completed reference document;
- completed price document;
- completed subcontractor document (when applicable);
- completed European Single Procurement Documents for offeror and all subcontractor (EU templates required to be filled in when public authority is obtaining services);
- approval to contract templates attached to the RAs’ request for services.

c. Other potential templates for preparing the tender process for specific valuation services (the actual valuation engagement or contract) could include:

- draft RA description for services (to be finalised at the time of tender process with the case-specific facts and required scope of works);
- finalised template of the non-disclosure agreements;
- finalised template of the valuation engagement or contract;
- template to provide engagement specific prices per experts seniority (including info on the scoring mechanism to be applied by the RA);
- template to provide information on the offered project team and expert’s individual qualifications, experience and skills (in form instructed by the RA and including information on the scoring mechanism to be applied by the RA);
- template to provide any other project-specific information, project plan or other detail, which the RA wishes to include for the tender process (including information on the scoring mechanism to be applied by the RA).

d. Documents generally provided by candidate valuers for the tender process:

- offer document;
- completed contract-specific price document;
- completed contract-specific information on the project team to be used;
- completed other contract-specific information (when applicable and required by the RA);
- relevant documents for any new subcontractor to be named for the project team;
- approval to the finalised contract templates.

e. Templates covering the RA's decision on the procurement:

- outcome/result of comparison of the received offers;
- decision on the appointment;
- decision on the refusal based on the existence of CoI;
- instructions for complaint process (based on national administrative laws).

Annex 2 – list of information to assess by RA in valuer’s self-assessment report

A. Declarations

- **Declaration of Interest**, whereby the valuer confirms that:
 - it is not aware of any CoI or potential CoI, whether absolute or potential, which might be relevant to the performance of its functions or obligations under the stipulated agreement.
 - it will avoid any CoI or potential CoI throughout the duration of the stipulated agreements, as well as for a future period after its termination, on all new engagements.
 - it will immediately inform the RA of any conflicts of interest and/or potential CoI that may be identified during the engagement period and undertakes to agree with the RA on an appropriate course of action to mitigate any such conflicts.
 - in the event that a CoI or potential CoI is identified and the parties fail to agree on the appropriate course of action, the RA reserves the right to terminate the stipulated agreement with immediate effect upon written notice to the valuer.

- **Declaration of Confidentiality** whereby the valuer would:
 - confirm that it may not disclose to third parties the contents of the stipulated agreement, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the RA.
 - ensure that any confidential information and/or documents which come into possession of the valuer, whether verbally or in writing, in connection with the stipulated agreement shall be used solely and exclusively to carry out the functions and other obligations under the stipulated agreements and shall be treated in the strictest confidence; confirm that upon termination of the stipulated agreement, the valuer shall, delete or return to the RA all confidential information, and delete existing copies of such confidential information, unless otherwise provided by law.

- **Declaration on subcontracting or joint venture:**
 - The valuer should indicate the extent to which it will rely on subcontracting or if it will make use of a joint venture. In these cases, each company subcontracted or part of the joint venture should be named and identified. The process of conflict of interest should be run for each of those firms.

- A declaration of communication of any situation that could arise in a conflict of interest or in a possible conflict of interest.
- A declaration of non-executing any act in order to obtain any benefit related to the specific project or any act that may harm the specific project.
- A declaration of non-accepting any advantage of any of the stakeholders involved in the project if the advantage is against the market good practice.
- A declaration of knowledge that the RA has the right to review the above declarations and of the consequences of possible misinformation.

B. Direct or indirect financial or personal interest in any credit institution authorised by the RA

- If a role is held in a credit institution or other relevant entity subject to Directive 2014/59/EU, then the following information is required:
 - name;
 - the role held within that credit institution;
 - a brief description of the work performed in the role;
 - the dates during which the role was held;
- If there is an ownership interest, then the following information is required:
 - the nature and amount of the interest owned;
 - the duration for which the interest has been held;
 - any other relevant information.

C. Previous or current activity about the relevant institution

- Any previous or current services provided to the target institution and the link with the elements relevant for a valuation, including inter alia the scope of the services and the time elapsed since the provision of the services.

D. Compliance with relevant legal provisions on independence

- Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075.

E. Professional experience

- references;
- a list of projects carried out in the last 3 years;
- whether the valuer has been involved in a legal dispute, both personally and professionally, that could have an adverse impact on the valuer's impartiality;
- CVs of the team to be deployed (usually senior partner coordinating the delivery of the valuation and senior team members, within 24 hours, while the rest of the team's CVs are to be provided at a later stage).

F. Valuer's transparency report**G. Insurance**

- Proper insurance to compensate potential damages in case of a lawsuit

H. IT capabilities

- Declaration of an appropriate IT infrastructure to carry out the valuation

Annex 3 – information and data points in list of valuers

When the RA sets up and maintains a list of valuers, the information contained on those lists could cover the following aspects and data points, always in compliance with the national and EU applicable General Data Protection legal framework and the obligations therein:

A. Natural person

1. Valuer contact information;

- name;
- role;
- email;
- phone;
- office address;
- registration number and date of registration.

2. Company information (if the natural person holds a direct or indirect participation in a company)

- company name;
- registration number.

3. Expertise and experience

- reference projects, including information on when the projects occurred;
- qualification or certification the valuer has obtained.

B. Company / legal person

1. Company information

- company name;
- registration number
 - date of registration;
- residence (registered office);
- geographical presence;
- principal activities and additional activities as defined in its statutes;
- name and residence of each of its members (shareholders) with direct or indirect shareholdings.

2. Local branch of a foreign company

- geographical presence;
- company information;
- registration number of the foreign company (parent company).

3. Contact information

- partners in charge of the valuation services;
- senior executive;
- auditor;
- other contact person and their role;
- email;
- phone;
- office address.

4. **Qualification** or certification, portfolio
- valuer has obtained.

5. **Expertise and experience**
- information on expertise required to execute the services of an independent valuer and be party to the RA's framework agreement;
 - reference projects (for a certain period, e.g. last 3 years)
 - o time (when did the projects occur);
 - o framework agreement (which framework contract was concluded).

6. **Direct or indirect participation in another legal entity**
- company name;
 - VAT;
 - residence (registered office).

7. **Direct or indirect shareholders**
- company name;
 - residence (registered office).

Annex 4 – Examples of disconnection / separation practices

The Annex provides some examples of several practices which could be considered or explored as best practices to address Col through separation or disconnection, without prejudice to any assessment of independence or lack of it, which would need to be determined after a case-by-case test.

- **Personal Interest Declaration:** one of the practices is that all staff involved in the project keeps up to date and declares any personal interest or conflict that may affect the valuation, such as previous work, financial interest or family ties with the target.
- **Information barriers:** another practice is to use information barriers to restrict access to confidential information and prevent leakage. This includes using code names, secure folders, private rooms and clean-desks policy.
- **Separate teams:** a further practice is to separate the teams that provide different services or work on different aspects of the valuation. This can involve physical separation, independent review, ring-fencing memo or conflict management plan.
- **Independent valuation company:** a final practice is to establish an independent valuation company that is legally and economically separate from the rest of the audit or advisory services. This company must have its own resources, partners and income sources, and must report to the national RA.

4. Accompanying documents

4.1 Overview of questions for consultation

During the public consultation for this Handbook, the following six questions were asked:

1. Do you have suggestions to improve the RAs' preparatory arrangements?
2. Do you have comments on the appointment process that could enhance the process?
3. Do you have suggestions to improve the assessment of independence as presented in this draft Handbook taking into account the provisions of the RTS?
4. Do you find the examples provided in this Handbook to be meaningful (i.e. do they have a high frequency of occurrence in reality)? In these examples, do you find the proposed RA's assessment to be clear and satisfactorily explained?
5. Do you find the safeguards proposed satisfactory? Are you aware of other safeguards that could be used in this process? Please detail how you would put such safeguards in place and how they would counter the instances of conflict of interest.
6. Do you have any other comments in relation to the draft Handbook and how it addresses the elements of independence as provided in the EBA RTS?

4.2 Views of the Banking Stakeholder Group (BSG)

The BSG did not submit its views to this consultation.

4.3 Feedback on the public consultation and on the opinion of the BSG

Under the EBA Regulation, the Authority is not required to conduct open public consultations or analyse the related potential costs and benefits for Handbooks. Yet, in the development of this Handbook, to ensure that all relevant feedback was gathered in the preparation phase, the EBA organised a roundtable discussion with valuers and organised a subsequent public consultation. The decision to have a shorter period for the public consultation than the standard 3 months was made on the basis that the previous roundtable with valuers gave these interested parties the opportunity to express their views.

The EBA publicly consulted on the draft proposal contained in this paper. The consultation period lasted for 2 months and ended on 19 September 2024. Five responses were received, of which 4 were published on the EBA website. The fifth comment received by the EBA was from one BSG

member, on its sole behalf. These comments are treated in the general comments section, jointly with the comments received via the EBA consultation form. This BSG member's comments are not published since they were received by email and not via the EBA online form. Therefore, this submission could not be published on the website.

This paper presents a summary of the key points and comments arising from the consultation, the analysis and discussion triggered by these comments from the EBA and the actions taken to address them if deemed necessary.

In many cases several industry bodies made similar comments or the same body repeated its comments in response to different questions. In such cases, the comments and the EBA analysis are included in the section of this paper where the EBA considers them most appropriate.

Changes to the draft Handbook have been incorporated as a result of the responses received during the public consultation.

Summary of key issues and the EBA's response

The EBA notes the overall positive views expressed towards the proposed Handbook from the different parties that responded to the public consultation. Specifically, it was noted that the measures proposed should facilitate the efficient and transparent appointment of an independent valuer at a time of resolution. The EBA welcomes the level of feedback received from respondents, who provided both directly targeted responses to the individual questions raised in the consultation document and more general comments.

Overall, respondents made a call for both greater flexibility as well as clearer rules in the selection process to ensure that a sufficient number of qualified firms are available, especially for large international banks. The respondents highlighted the need to balance independence with the practical availability of firms, suggesting that the largest valuation and audit firms should not be the only ones considered.

Parts of some responses focused on the interaction between the RA and the valuer post appointment and approaches to be adopted in the development and delivery of the valuation (clarity in scope, standardised reporting, use of methodologies for valuation, etc.). The EBA notes all these suggestions are out of scope of this Handbook.

Several parts of the responses received are deemed to be too generic and touch on aspects already covered by the Handbook (e.g. considering the valuer's qualification, ensuring transparent and competitive process, ongoing monitoring of independence, acknowledgement of different separation or disconnection practices). The EBA concluded that no changes are required in the Handbook in respect of these areas.

In considering the flexibility when selecting a valuer, one respondent provided an example where valuation companies often advise both parties to an M&A transaction and this may be similar in determining the independence of a valuer from a resolution perspective. The EBA's view is that in

an M&A transaction, both parties are informed about the dual role of the advisory firm and accept it. In the case of an independent valuer for resolution, the RA has a legal obligation to ensure the appointment of an independent valuer. The RA, therefore, cannot accept a valuer that has a high entanglement with the failing bank and with a lack of adequate safeguards.

Only one respondent requested more concrete examples of those proposed in the Handbook, however pointing to seeking examples of actual valuation undertakings (e.g. valuation of illiquid assets). This is out of scope of this Handbook.

A few respondents indicated that the Handbook should emphasise additional need for oversight of the self-assessment and/or of the valuers' output work where a conflict has been identified. These comments were understood as a build-up to the safeguard of the independent reviewer and based on these comments, the EBA has decided to remove the specific safeguard in paragraph 109.

One specific request was made in relation to the last sentence of paragraph 44, as it was read as emphasising the importance of large valuation firms. Amendments have been made to the sentence to better reflect the intention and emphasise the fact that RAs may consider certain requirements of skills and knowledge, taking into account the specificities of smaller banks, therefore enlarging their list of potential valuation firms.

Summary of responses to the consultation and the EBA's analysis

Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
General comments received for the Consultation Paper EBA/CP/2024/17		
<p>One respondent made certain suggestions on how to expand the pool of suitable valuers, proposing to include the statutory auditor.</p>	<p>Article 41 of the Delegated Regulation on independent valuers adopted pursuant to Article 36(14) of Directive 2014/59/EU explicitly excludes the statutory auditor of a bank from acting as independent valuer. The objective of this Handbook is to provide greater guidance on the appointment process of an independent valuer but cannot amend the legal requirements governing that process.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>One respondent noted the potential role of the failing bank in the selection process of the independent valuers.</p>	<p>Banks may have an ongoing role in assisting the RAs in identifying statutory auditors as part of the preparatory measures to identify potential valuers during the preparatory arrangements (paragraph 31 of the Handbook). The appointment of a valuer is a specific and important task of the RA which will engage with potential suitable parties independently, completing a robust and effective appointment process ensuring the independence of the appointed valuers. No further role of the failing bank is envisaged in this process as a number of concerns may arise, including a perceived conflict of interest between the parties, confidentiality requirements, etc.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>One respondent provided a number of general recommendations, under the headings outlined below, that could further enhance the resolution valuation methodology: valuation methodologies; transparency and reporting; valuation under distressed market conditions; application of international valuation standards; governance and accountability of</p>	<p>The EBA found that these recommendations are not relevant for the scope of this Handbook as they relate to valuation methodologies while this Handbook is focused on the appointment of independent valuers for resolution.</p>	<p>None</p>

Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
valuers; and regulatory compliance and legal considerations of this Handbook.		
<p>One respondent made recommendations on the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Independence and impartiality of valuers is central for the resolution process ii. Qualifications and expertise of valuers (the respondent outlined some specific recommendations regarding qualification and continued professional development for valuers.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The EBA notes the proposals from the respondent around the use of mandatory disclosures of any potential conflict of interest and use of independent reviewers. The Handbook already indicates as a best practice that all firms participating in the selection process complete and submit a self-assessment regarding the conflict of interest. This self-assessment is aligned to mandatory disclosures reporting with options for additional ongoing independence checks after the contract signature as noted in paragraph 118. ii. The Handbook addresses, at a high level, the assessment that should be completed on suitable qualifications and experience in paragraphs 73 and 74. The EBA is not including a specific list of suitable qualifications to allow for individual country specificities and recognising the professional judgement of RAs in this area. 	None

Comments	Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
Responses to questions for the Consultation Paper EBA/CP/2024/17			
Question 1: Do you have suggestions for improving the RAs' preparatory arrangements?	<p>One respondent stressed the need and provided drafting suggestions to ensure a balanced tendering playing field which broadens the market research to establish the list of suitable valuers beyond the biggest global firms noting that firms should have adequate local industry and market experience (targeting paragraph 35).</p> <p>One respondent suggested considering the wording of the last sentence of paragraph 44 in order to avoid favouring large valuation firms.</p> <p>Another respondent emphasised the centrality of preparatory arrangements to ensure the effectiveness of independent valuations and recommended RAs to (i) provide clear instructions and definitions of the scope and purpose of the valuation; (ii) ensure timely access to all necessary and relevant data through a structured data-sharing process; and (iii) engage with key stakeholders in a timely and consistent manner to ensure alignment on the need to respect the valuer's independence throughout the process.</p>	<p>The EBA considers that the specific request to amend paragraph 35 could decrease the pool of available valuers by narrowing down the potential scope of the initial wording. It should be noted that the Handbook requires, in line with the RTS, that the valuers have knowledge and expertise required for the valuation task at hand and the RA needs to assess this dimension.</p> <p>To better reflect the aim of paragraph 44, the last sentence has been amended. This is to provide for greater inclusion of small/medium valuer firms in relation to completing valuation work.</p> <p>All the suggestions made by a respondent highlighting as good practices the centrality of preparatory arrangements are already included in various areas of the Handbook, so no further changes are required.</p>	Update of paragraph 44
Question 2: Do you have comments on the appointment process that could enhance the process?	One respondent recommended that the Handbook specifies that valuers should have recognised expertise and qualifications, including membership in certain relevant professional organisations and associations that guarantee adherence to relevant professional standards.	Section 3 of the Handbook outlines the competitive and transparent process that could be completed by RAs in selecting a valuer, aligned to local procurement process and requirements.	None

Comments	Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
	<p>Two respondents recommended that the Handbook adopt a transparent and competitive selection process for appointing valuers, based on clear criteria that include the valuer's experience, expertise and previous involvement in similar assignments.</p> <p>One respondent also suggested that (i) the appointment process should promote diversity and inclusion by ensuring that candidates from different backgrounds and experiences are considered; (ii) the selection process should include different stakeholders to obtain a broader and more balanced perspective; (iii) the evaluators be well-trained and aware of potential unconscious biases; and (iv) constructive feedback to non-selected candidates be provided to help them improve in future selection processes.</p>	<p>The Handbook, aligning with the RTS provisions, already provides that the valuers need to have adequate expertise and qualifications. Providing for specific requirements in terms of qualifications or adherence to professional organisations could prove unnecessarily limiting.</p>	
<p>Question 3: Do you have suggestions to improve the assessment of independence as presented in this draft Handbook and taking into account the provisions of the RTS?</p>	<p>One respondent considered the assessment of independence an important aspect of ensuring the integrity and objectivity of valuations.</p> <p>Two respondents pointed to the necessity of defining clear and objective criteria to evaluate independence, while one of the respondents further suggested incorporating more stringent independence criteria into the assessment process, including those on prior engagements that may compromise perceived impartiality.</p> <p>Two respondents also suggested providing more emphasis on an ongoing monitoring of valuers' independence both in the preparatory phases, as</p>	<p>Having considered the responses received, the EBA believes that the submissions do not provide concrete suggestions for improvements or changes in the Handbook. In addition, the Handbook also captures, in many different areas throughout the document, a number of these indicated areas.</p> <p>The ongoing monitoring of independence is not considered a good practice in the preparatory phase as it requires a lot of resources and the conclusions become obsolete very quickly. The Handbook therefore indicates that only high-level information is to be</p>	<p>None</p>

Comments	Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
	<p>well as after the appointment. These suggestions include, during the preparatory phase, regular audits or reviews of valuers' work as part of the ongoing assessment of independence. Both also referred to the need to monitor independence on an ongoing basis, after the moment of appointment, including by requiring regular updates or declarations from the valuer.</p> <p>One respondent also referred to the need for a transparent and accessible assessment process, in which evaluators are adequately trained on best practices and new regulations on independence, and which also establishes a feedback system to review the assessment's criteria and processes based on experiences and new information.</p>	<p>kept up to date, in the preparatory work, as a vest practice.</p> <p>From the moment of appointment, the Handbook, in line with the RTS provisions, requires the valuer and the RA to monitor on an ongoing basis the independence and absence of conflict.</p> <p>The RAs are required to assess adequate skills and expertise, but are not in a position to provide specific training to valuers.</p>	
<p>Question 4: Do you find the examples provided in this Handbook to be meaningful (i.e. they have a high frequency of occurrence in reality)? In these examples, do you find the proposed RA's assessment to be clear and satisfactorily explained?</p>	<p>Two respondents proposed improving the practicality and relevance of the examples used pointing, in particular, to specific difficulties that valuers may encounter. One respondent gave concrete examples of those difficulties: asset impairments in distressed markets, illiquid asset valuations, gathering data, applying suitable methodologies or dealing with market volatility. Both respondents also suggested that the Handbook provide more detailed explanations of the RA's assessments, including a breakdown of the valuation methodologies used, key assumptions made and the rationale behind the final conclusions. One respondent also suggested including a mechanism to receive feedback on examples and the proposed evaluation to</p>	<p>The concrete examples proposed are not relevant to the scope of the Handbook since they refer to the valuation of the failing bank rather than the assessment of the independence of the valuer.</p>	<p>None</p>

Comments	Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
	improve the Handbook and ensure it remains relevant and useful.		
<p>Question 5: Do you find the safeguards proposed satisfactory? Are you aware of other safeguards that could be used in this process? Please detail how you would put such safeguards in place and how they would counter the instances of conflict of interest.</p>	<p>Two respondents suggested some additional safeguards for an independent oversight to monitor the conduct of valuers throughout the resolution process. One of the respondents also suggested adding (i) a peer review to ensure that valuations are subject to independent scrutiny to identify any biases or conflicts that may not be evident at the outset; and (ii) mandatory and ongoing disclosure requirements for valuers for any changes in circumstances that might affect their independence during resolution process. Another respondent also suggested adding a division of critical responsibilities among different people or departments to reduce the risk of conflicts of interest and a task rotation to prevent a single person from having too much control or influence in a specific area.</p> <p>Two respondents requested further enhancements on the safeguard of the appointment of an additional reviewer to oversee the work of the independent valuer where a conflict of interest has been identified.</p>	<p>The EBA notes that the ultimate reviewer of the output from the valuation process would be the RA and therefore a peer review process is not considered necessary in the process and goes above the legal obligations. The Handbook also makes reference to ongoing requirements for the valuer to report changes in circumstances as they arise.</p> <p>The EBA has also decided to remove the potential safeguard of an additional reviewer in paragraph 109 in its entirety. The EBA considers that if the conflict of interest is deemed to be of such materiality that it would require an additional third party to re-examine and confirm the valuation assessment, then it is unlikely that the original identified valuer could meet the standards to be deemed independent or that the RA could not be entrusted with the decision of the independence.</p> <p>Still, the independence assessment can consider as a mitigant the fact that a previous valuation or valuation-type services performed by the considered valuer was revised or audited by a third party before the independence assessment begins.</p>	<p>Deletion of paragraph 109 and of safeguard consisting of independent reviewer.</p> <p>New paragraph 100 now indicates as a possible mitigant, the situation of this work being reviewed or audited by a third party before the independence assessment begins.</p> <p>The first example under paragraph 110 is now moved to this new paragraph 100.</p>
<p>Question 6: Do you have any other comments in relation to the draft Handbook and how it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents suggested referring to and aligning with international standards, to ensure that valuations carried out for resolution purposes are consistent with best practices globally. 	<p>The Handbook already refers to international standards relevant to the assessment of independence. References to international standards on the valuation itself are beyond the scope of the Handbook.</p>	<p>None</p>

Comments	Summary of responses received	EBA analysis	Amendments to the proposals
addresses the elements of independence as provided in the EBA RTS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents also suggested that the EBA Handbook encourage continuous professional development for valuers involved in resolution, ensuring that they remain up to date with the latest methodologies, regulatory requirements and market conditions. • It would be useful to include a more precise definition of what is meant by independence in this context. • Detailing the specific criteria that will be used to evaluate the independence of entities could improve the transparency of the process. • Including practical examples of situations that could compromise independence would help better illustrate theoretical concepts. • Establishing a mechanism for the periodic review of independence elements would ensure that the Manual remains up to date with best practices and regulatory changes. 	<p>Likewise, the Handbook, in line with the Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1075, already provides that the valuers need to have adequate expertise and qualifications.</p> <p>On the other points raised, the EBA believe that these matters are sufficiently outlined in different aspects of the Handbook.</p>	



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