



## RATING ACTION COMMENTARY

# Fitch Affirms Landesbank Hessen-Thuringen Girozentrale's Public Sector Pfandbriefe at 'AAA'/Stable

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Fitch Ratings - Frankfurt am Main - 11 Aug 2023: Fitch Ratings has affirmed Landesbank Hessen-Thuringen Girozentrale's (Helaba; A+/Stable/F1+) public sector Pfandbriefe at 'AAA' with a Stable Outlook. The affirmation follows a periodic review of the programme.

The 'AAA' rating of the public sector Pfandbriefe is based on Helaba's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of 'A+' and the various uplifts above the IDR granted to the programme. It also considers over-collateralisation (OC) protection for covered bond holders.

## KEY RATING DRIVERS

The public sector Pfandbriefe are rated four notches above the bank's IDR. This is out of a maximum uplift of 10 notches, consisting of a resolution uplift of two notches, a payment continuity uplift (PCU) of six notches and a two-notch recovery uplift. The Stable Outlook reflects that on Helaba's IDR and a six-notch buffer against an IDR downgrade.

As Helaba's Short-Term IDR is 'F1+' and the programme is not in wind-down, Fitch relies in its analysis on the lowest available OC of the last 12 months of 16.2%, which provides more protection than Fitch's 'AAA' break-even OC of 3.5%.

### 'AAA' Break-Even OC

The unchanged 'AAA' break-even OC of 3.5% is based on the 'AAA' credit loss for the cover pool, as the rating is based on a two-notch recovery uplift above the resolution reference point of 'AA', without testing for timely payments of the covered bonds. We carried forward the results of our asset model as the relied-upon OC is more than 100% above the previous break-even OC for the rating, and also because there has been no material change to the cover pool's credit characteristics.

The cover pool is made up of sovereign-linked and public-entity exposures, mainly concentrated in Germany (92.8% of the cover pool as of June 2023), with significant exposure to the German federal states.

## Uplifts

The two-notch resolution uplift reflects that collateralised Pfandbriefe in Germany are exempt from bail-in, that Fitch deems the risk of under-collateralisation at the point of resolution as sufficiently low, and that a resolution of Helaba is not likely to result in the direct enforcement of recourse against the cover pool. The two-notch resolution uplift also takes into account that Helaba's Long-Term IDR is based on the bank's participation in a mutual support scheme and equalised with the IDR of Sparkassen Finanzgruppe Hessen-Thuringen, of which Helaba is part.

The six-notch PCU reflects the principal liquidity protection provided by the 12-month maturity extension feature provided by the German Pfandbrief framework. The mandatory inclusion of liquid assets in the cover pool matching the maximum cumulative net outflow for the next 180 days provides effective protection for interest payments and senior expenses.

The recovery uplift for the programme is two notches, as the programme's 'AA' resolution reference point is in the investment-grade category and no material downside risk to recoveries has been identified.

## RATING SENSITIVITIES

Factors that Could, Individually or Collectively, Lead to Positive Rating Action/Upgrade:

- The Pfandbriefe are rated 'AAA', which is the highest level on Fitch's scale, and cannot be upgraded.

Factors That Could, Individually or Collectively, Lead to Negative Rating Action/Downgrade:

- Helaba's public sector covered bonds' rating would be vulnerable to a downgrade if the bank's IDR is downgraded by seven notches to 'BB' or below; or if the OC considered by Fitch in its analysis provides less protection than Fitch's 'AAA' break-even OC. Fitch's 'AAA' break-even OC is likely to increase in the event of an IDR downgrade as we would test for timely payments in our cash flow model. However, we expect the relied-upon OC to offer protection that is commensurate with the 'AAA' rating even in that scenario

- If the OC that Fitch considers in its analysis drops to the legal minimum requirement of 2% on a nominal basis, the programme could only achieve a one-notch recovery uplift. As a result, the rating would likely be downgraded to 'AA+', one notch above Helaba's Long-Term IDR as adjusted by the resolution uplift

- Fitch's 'AAA' break-even OC would likely increase to cover for wider credit losses if Germany is downgraded. This is because in tested rating scenarios above the sovereign rating to which the programme is credit-linked, the sovereign can default

Fitch's break-even OC for the covered bond rating will be affected by, among other factors, the profile of the cover assets relative to outstanding covered bonds, which can change over time, even in the absence of new issuance. Therefore, the break-even OC to maintain the covered bond rating cannot be assumed to remain stable over time.

## **BEST/WORST CASE RATING SCENARIO**

International scale credit ratings of Financial Institutions and Covered Bond issuers have a best-case rating upgrade scenario (defined as the 99th percentile of rating transitions, measured in a positive direction) of three notches over a three-year rating horizon; and a worst-case rating downgrade scenario (defined as the 99th percentile of rating transitions, measured in a negative direction) of four notches over three years. The complete span of best- and worst-case scenario credit ratings for all rating categories ranges from 'AAA' to 'D'. Best- and worst-case scenario credit ratings are based on historical performance. For more information about the methodology used to determine sector-specific best- and worst-case scenario credit ratings, visit <https://www.fitchratings.com/site/re/10111579>

## **REFERENCES FOR SUBSTANTIALLY MATERIAL SOURCE CITED AS KEY DRIVER OF RATING**

The principal sources of information used in the analysis are described in the Applicable Criteria.

## **PUBLIC RATINGS WITH CREDIT LINKAGE TO OTHER RATINGS**

Helaba's public sector Pfandbrief rating remains credit-linked to Germany as 38.6% is made up of exposures to, or guaranteed by, the German sovereign, while in the analysis of the German sub-sovereign exposure, which represents 54.2% of total cover assets, the sovereign is not assumed to default.

The Pfandbrief rating is driven by the credit risk of Helaba as measured by its Long-Term IDR.

## **ESG CONSIDERATIONS**

The highest level of ESG credit relevance is a score of '3', unless otherwise disclosed in this section. A score of '3' means ESG issues are credit-neutral or have only a minimal credit impact on the entity, either due to their nature or the way in which they are being managed by the entity. Fitch's ESG Relevance Scores are not inputs in the rating process; they are an observation on the relevance and materiality of ESG factors in the rating decision. For more information on Fitch's ESG Relevance Scores, visit <https://www.fitchratings.com/topics/esg/products#esg-relevance-scores>.

## RATING ACTIONS

ENTITY / DEBT ↕	RATING ↕	PRIOR ↕
Landesbank Hessen-Thueringen Girozentrale		
senior secured, Public Sector Covered Bonds, Public Sector Pfandbriefe	LT AAA Rating Outlook Stable Affirmed	AAA Rating Outlook Stable

[VIEW ADDITIONAL RATING DETAILS](#)

## FITCH RATINGS ANALYSTS

### Sebastian Seitz, CFA, CAIA

Director

Primary Rating Analyst

+49 69 768076 267

sebastian.seitz@fitchratings.com

Fitch Ratings – a branch of Fitch Ratings Ireland Limited

Neue Mainzer Strasse 46 - 50 Frankfurt am Main D-60311

### Adele Trutnau

Analyst

Secondary Rating Analyst

+49 69 768076 166

adele.trutnau@fitchratings.com

### Vessela Krmnicek, CFA

Senior Director

Committee Chairperson

+49 69 768076 298

vessela.krmnicek@fitchratings.com

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

**Athos Larkou**

London

+44 20 3530 1549

athos.larkou@thefitchgroup.com

Additional information is available on [www.fitchratings.com](http://www.fitchratings.com)

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## **APPLICABLE CRITERIA**

[Structured Finance and Covered Bonds Counterparty Rating Criteria: Derivative Addendum \(pub. 01 Aug 2022\)](#)

[Bank Rating Criteria \(pub. 07 Sep 2022\) \(including rating assumption sensitivity\)](#)

[Covered Bonds and CDOs Public Entities' Asset Analysis Rating Criteria \(pub. 21 Sep 2022\) \(including rating assumption sensitivity\)](#)

[Structured Finance and Covered Bonds Counterparty Rating Criteria \(pub. 14 Mar 2023\)](#)

[Covered Bonds Rating Criteria \(pub. 05 Jun 2023\) \(including rating assumption sensitivity\)](#)

[Structured Finance and Covered Bonds Country Risk Rating Criteria \(pub. 07 Jul 2023\)](#)

## **ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURES**

[Dodd-Frank Rating Information Disclosure Form](#)

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Landesbank Hessen-Thueringen Girozentrale

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