

## CREDIT OPINION

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Update

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## Atradius N.V.

Update following upgrade to subordinated debt due to a change in methodology

### Summary

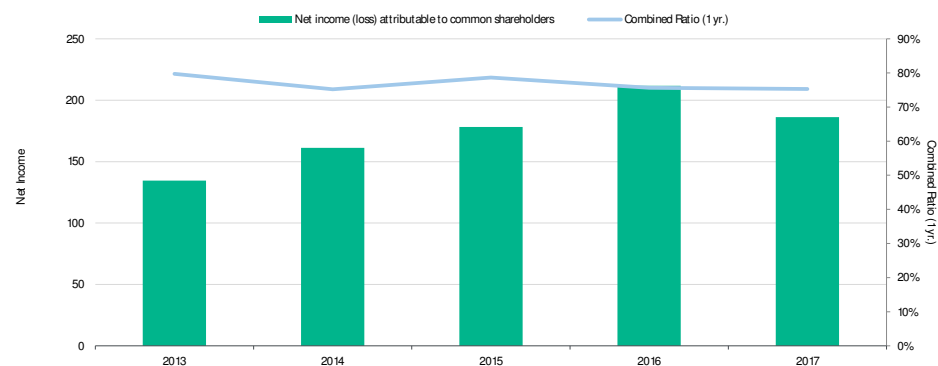
The A2 Insurance Financial Strength (IFS) ratings of Atradius N.V.'s (Atradius) main operating companies reflects steady strengthening of Atradius' financial profile over the past five years, including strong and consistent profitability, strong capital adequacy and good risk management and reserving practices. In addition, Atradius has upheld its strong market position as the second largest global trade credit insurer, and continues to invest in defending and strengthening its market position. These strengths are partially offset by Atradius' limited diversification beyond credit insurance, its meaningful exposure to the Spanish economy (Government of Spain, Baa1 stable), especially in terms of contribution to profit (21% premiums generated in Iberia during 2017) via Atradius Credito y Caucion S.A. (ACyC), the group's main operating company, domiciled in Spain.

The A2 IFS ratings of Atradius' main operating entities are positioned above the credit profile of its parent, Grupo Catalana Occidente (GCO). GCO is a Spanish insurance group with its business split approximately evenly between Spanish retail Life and P&C insurance and globally diversified credit insurance through Atradius, of which it has a 83% shareholding. The credit profile of GCO is constrained by the Spanish sovereign rating ([Government of Spain, Baa1 stable](#)), because of its investment concentration in Spanish sovereign bonds. Although Atradius' ratings are linked to the rating of Spain, the global nature of its business and minimal exposure to Spanish assets limits the constraint on Atradius' ratings.

Exhibit 1

### Net Income and Combined ratio, gross (1 yr.)

Good profitability, although some recent pressure on combined ratio



Source: Company reports and Moody's Investors Service

## Credit Strengths

- » Leading market position as the second largest global credit insurer
- » Conservative balance sheet profile with a modest level of investment risk and sound liquidity
- » Strong capitalisation, with low net underwriting leverage and moderate credit limit exposure relative to capital
- » Moderate financial leverage

## Credit Challenges

- » Pursuing growth in revenues whilst maintaining a strong underwriting discipline in the challenging global macro economic environment
- » Limited diversification from credit insurance, a cyclical industry
- » A relatively high exposure to Spain which, although currently showing strong loss ratios against the backdrop of an improved economic outlook, has a track record of volatile profitability
- » Highly competitive environment in credit insurance as a whole

## Outlook

The outlook is stable, reflecting Atradius' consistently strong business and financial profile.

## Factors that Could Lead to an Upgrade

The following factors could place upward pressure on Atradius' credit profile relative to peers:

- » Meaningful improvement in market share without deterioration in profitability and quality of exposure
- » Improvement in the group's business diversification towards a higher proportion of fee-based services
- » Increased geographic diversification

## Factors that Could Lead to a Downgrade

The following factors could place downward pressure on Atradius' ratings:

- » Material deterioration in underwriting profitability, with a 5-year combined ratio consistently above 95% through-the-cycle
- » Material decline in capital adequacy, including Solvency II capital coverage consistently below 175% and/or considerable volatility in stressed scenarios
- » Significant erosion of the company's market position and franchise
- » Meaningful weakening in the credit profile of GCO or the Spanish sovereign

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## Key Indicators

Exhibit 2

Atradius N.V. [1][2]	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
<b>As Reported (Euro Millions)</b>					
Gross Premiums Written	1,612	1,565	1,554	1,504	1,405
Net Premiums Written	930	900	877	843	761
Net income (loss) attributable to common shareholders	186	212	178	161	135
Total Shareholders' Equity	1,753	1,626	1,500	1,393	1,287
<b>Moody's Adjusted Ratios</b>					
High Risk Assets % Shareholders' Equity	22.1%	22.3%	20.6%	19.6%	20.8%
Reinsurance Recoverable % Shareholders' Equity	34.9%	38.9%	47.5%	49.7%	52.7%
Goodwill & Intangibles % Shareholders' Equity	16.8%	17.7%	15.8%	16.6%	18.3%
Net Total Exposure % Shareholders' Equity	210.1x	213.4x	216.7x	211.7x	207.9x
Net Underwriting Leverage (Credit Insurers)	86.8%	90.8%	99.0%	99.4%	103.5%
Combined Ratio (1 yr.)	75.3%	75.7%	78.6%	75.2%	79.7%
Sharpe Ratio of FOC (5 yr. avg)	1207.8%	934.8%	1293.7%	1241.2%	NA
Financial Leverage	19.7%	21.3%	19.6%	22.4%	19.5%
Total Leverage	22.4%	24.2%	22.8%	25.7%	19.5%
Earnings Coverage (1 yr.)	12.1x	13.0x	13.3x	16.6x	12.6x

Source: Company reports and Moody's investors Service

## Profile

Atradius Insurance Holding N.V. (Atradius) is the Netherlands based holding company for the group of insurance operating companies that primarily include Atradius Crédito y Caucción S.A. de Seguros y Reaseguros (ACyC), Atradius Trade Credit Insurance Inc. (ATCI, USA) and Atradius Reinsurance DAC (AtradiusRe, Ireland). On 30 December, 2016, Atradius N.V. announced completion of the merger of its two European credit insurance entities, Atradius Credit Insurance (ACI) and Compañía Española de Seguros y Reaseguros de Crédito y Caucción, S.A.U. (CyC) into one single legal entity, ACyC. On completion of the merger, ACI has ceased to exist.

Grupo Catalana Occidente (GCO, unrated), the parent of Atradius, owns 83% of its capital. GCO is a listed Spanish insurance group with a diversified portfolio of life and non-life insurance operations, including credit insurance. The group operates through several insurance entities and brands, including Atradius which accounted for approximately 43% of GCO's revenue for 2017.

## Detailed credit considerations

Moody's rates Atradius A2, stable, for insurance financial strength, which is two notches below the Aa3 unadjusted score produced by Moody's rating scorecard, and primarily reflects Atradius' limited diversification beyond credit insurance, elevated exposure to Spain and Portugal, and partial linkage to GCO and therefore the Spanish sovereign.

### Market Position and Distribution: Strong franchise as top tier insurer in the global credit insurance market

As the second largest trade credit insurer by premiums (24.0% of 2016 global credit insurance premiums, according to the latest available data compiled by the International Credit Insurance & Surety Association, "ICISA"), Atradius has a very strong position in the global credit insurance market.

Consistent with its credit insurance peers, third-party brokers are Atradius' main form of distribution, followed by direct sales through tied agents. Tied agents comprise a meaningful portion of the group's distribution capabilities, particularly in Spain, where it has a strong distribution network. In addition to its primary credit insurance business, Atradius provides reinsurance to a number of smaller credit insurers, through its Irish based reinsurer, Atradius Re, which further broadens its market access and adds to the diversification of its portfolio. However, despite its direct sales and reinsurance business, Atradius remains heavily dependent on third-party brokers, a feature that we believe reduces the group's ability to control pricing and access to markets.

Notwithstanding Atradius's very strong position in the credit insurance market, we believe the group's overall franchise strength is somewhat constrained by its limited diversification beyond credit insurance, an industry that we view as highly competitive and exposed to economic cycles.

### **Product Risk and Diversification: Strong sector and country diversification amongst insured exposures, but limited diversification beyond credit insurance**

Consistent with its peers, Atradius is heavily focused on credit insurance, with only 14% of its 2017 revenues being sourced from business lines not related to credit insurance or bonding, and includes revenue from credit checking and debt collection services. In addition, Atradius earns fee income for the export credit guarantee business it conducts as an agent of the Dutch state. As a specialist credit insurer, Atradius' product risk focus is typically dependent on market-specific credit and economic dynamics. The group's exposure is granular and well diversified by country and by sector, although Atradius has elevated concentrations to certain countries, including Spain and Portugal, two of the Eurozone countries with weaker credit profiles. At YE2017, the group's largest country exposures were Spain/Portugal (15.8%), Germany (13.9%), USA (7.9%), France (7.2%) and UK (7.0%).

Atradius had meaningfully reduced its exposure to Spain following the deterioration in the economic environment during the sovereign crisis and the surge in insolvencies in the aftermath of 2008. Furthermore, following the risk mitigating actions and Spain's economic recovery, Atradius has consistently reported exceptionally low claims ratios in Spain. We expect loss ratios in Spain to remain strong, in-line with Spain's economic recovery; nevertheless we think the Spanish loss ratios will likely increase from the very low level reached in recent years and remain more volatile compared to rest of the group.

Atradius has meaningful exposure to multi-year policies which could potentially restrict the flexibility of underwriting, however we believe this risk is mitigated by the fact that the vast majority of multi-year policies still have cancelable limits, and many contain break clauses or premium surcharge features that allow the group to either cancel the policy or change pricing and/or policy features if the claims environment deteriorates substantially. While multi-year policies could have a negative impact on underwriting flexibility, they also benefit the group as a protection against price decreases, and year-to-year competition to secure renewal business. Similar to its peers, Atradius has a small, but growing, special products business that provides non-cancelable trade credit insurance. The absence of cancelable limits is a negative, however, it is largely offset by more stringent policy conditions and underwriting relative to policies with cancelable limits.

### **Asset Quality: High quality, conservative investment portfolio adds strength to balance sheet**

Asset quality is a key credit strength for Atradius, and reflects a modest level of investment risk and low level of intangible assets, slightly offset by an elevated level of reinsurance recoverables, relative to peers. The group's high-risk assets as a percentage of shareholders' equity is very low at 22.1% as at YE2017, and is comprised mainly of equities. The majority of the portfolio is comprised of high-quality short-term and fixed income securities, with no exposure to investments in Eurozone peripherals.

Reinsurance recoverables have decreased significantly in recent years, down to 35% of shareholders' equity at YE2017, from 83% at YE2009, and reflect the growth in Atradius' equity capital and reducing reliance on quota share reinsurance. Reliance on reinsurance to support capital requirements on new business exposes the group to potential capacity constraints in the reinsurance markets in stressed scenarios. However, the group also benefits from strong and long-standing relationships with its panel of quality reinsurers that provides a valuable source of capital and loss management capacity in down cycles. Atradius' reinsurance exposure is to strong reinsurance counterparties, rated single-A or higher, mitigating the credit risk associated with the group's reinsurance recoverables.

Moody's also considers Atradius' liquidity to be good, as the group's assets are predominantly invested in high-quality and liquid assets with relatively short durations. In addition, reinsurance treaties benefit from certain liquidity covenants (e.g. cash call agreements) enabling the group to settle large claims in a very short period of time, if necessary.

Atradius holds a moderate amount of intangible assets, at 17% of shareholders' equity at YE2017.

### **Capital Adequacy: Strong capital adequacy metrics supported by high quality of capital and robust reinsurance program**

Moody's views Atradius' capitalization as strong, driven by strong capital metrics and good quality of capital. The group's net exposure to shareholders equity has improved slightly to 210x in 2017 (2016: 213x) mainly reflecting higher shareholders' equity, as exposure

grew slightly too (up by 6%). Net underwriting leverage, a measure of insurance premiums relative to equity, has improved to 0.87x at year-end 2017 from 1.19x at year-end 2012, and remains significantly stronger than pre-2008 levels.

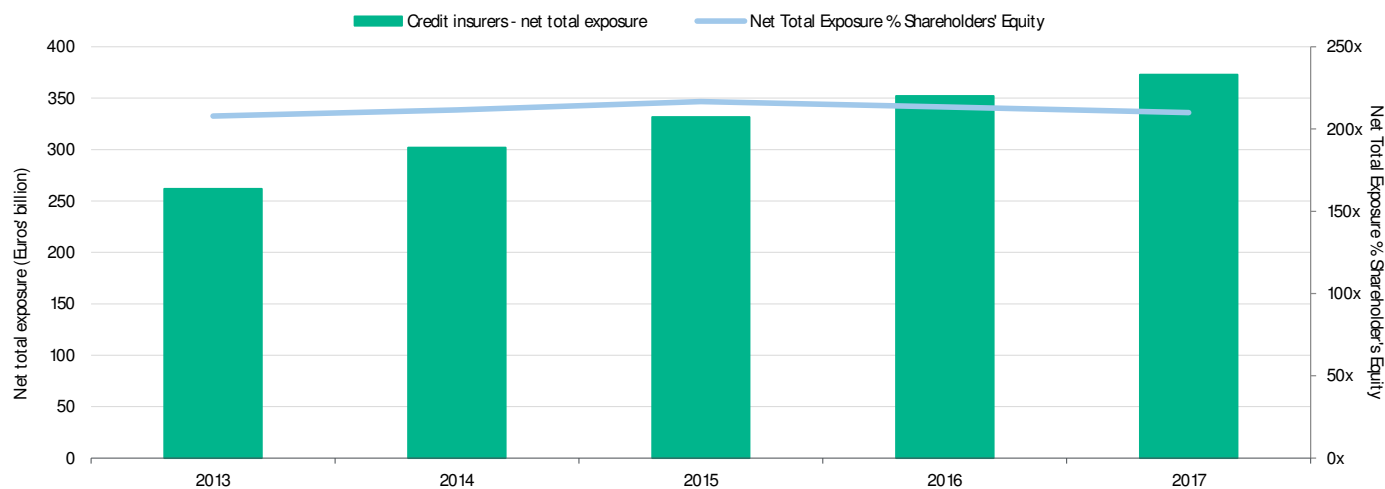
Atradius has continued to build up its capitalisation, thanks to its relatively high retained earnings which has allowed the company to reinvest a significant portion of its profits into the business. In 2017 the College of Supervisors (Spanish DGSFP and Irish CBI) approved the Partial Internal Model (PIM), allowing GCO to use it for the underwriting risk requirements of credit and bonding lines of business. As of year-end 2017, Atradius N.V.'s Solvency II coverage ratio, under the PIM, was in excess of 200%

Shareholders' equity has increased significantly over recent years, to EUR1.8 billion at YE2017, up from EURO.9 billion at YE2009. The primary drivers of the growth in equity included robust earnings, and a conservative dividend policy post-financial crisis. The group has improved its risk management framework, including more conservative limits on insured exposure relative to equity, and a focus on improved insured portfolio quality, including increased geographic diversification, and significant reductions in the exposure to lower-rated buyers and countries with more difficult operating environments.

Atradius' solid capitalisation is supported by a robust reinsurance program, that includes quota-share and excess-of-loss facilities that protect the group's profitability and capital in the event of high-loss scenarios.

Exhibit 3

### Net Total Exposure and Net Total Exposure % Shareholders' Equity



\* Estimated based on the reported gross total exposure and the premium retention rate  
Source: Company reports and Moody's Investors Service

### Profitability: Good profitability through-the-cycle despite susceptibility to period of volatility

Atradius' underwriting profitability has improved significantly over recent years, with the group's combined ratio improving to 75.3% for 2017 from 84% in 2010, in part driven by the strengthening of the Spanish economy, but also due to Atradius' improved cost efficiencies and stricter underwriting. Atradius was also able to avoid some of the recent losses that some of its peers experienced on their emerging markets exposures.

Consistent with peers, our view of Atradius' profitability is tempered by the intrinsic volatility of credit insurance through the cycle. However, Atradius has taken tangible steps to limit the volatility of its underwriting results, including reducing its exposure to the Iberian market to approximately 16% as of 2017 from 24% in 2011. In addition, Atradius has strengthened its underwriting practices, evaluation of buyer risk, and overall enterprise risk management, which we expect will contribute to less volatile profitability through the cycle

We expect the loss ratios of the Spanish business to remain strong in line with Spain's economic recovery, even though we expect some deterioration from the exceptionally low levels reached over recent years. Nevertheless, we note that loss ratios in Spain are still potentially more volatile than some other large Eurozone countries. In addition, we note that rates in continental Europe have

remained under pressure at a time of tepid growth, which we believe will likely weigh on underwriting profitability in the next 12 months.

**Reserve Adequacy: Short-tail business and consistent positive reserve development moderates reserving risk**

Atradius has reported reserve releases in the last six years, demonstrating meaningful improvement compared to the period after the 2008 financial crisis when the company had to strengthen reserves. While the group's Spanish exposures were a large contributor to the adverse development, reserve development on the Spanish book has been on an improving trend since 2012. The group's reserves on its bonding business have been somewhat volatile, although the exposure to bonding remains modest relative to the group's overall exposures.

The group has made significant progress in aligning reserving policies and practices on its Spanish book, with Atradius more broadly, which represents a materially more conservative approach to reserving than had been in place during the Spanish sovereign crisis. These enhancements, together with strong performance of the Spanish book, in the current benign economic environment, have contributed to favourable reserve development. Recent developments in the global economic environment point to an elevated potential for deterioration of the operating environment and headwinds for credit insurers - possibly increasing pressure on the group's reserves and testing the enhancements made to its reserving and risk management framework in recent years. That notwithstanding, we believe the more conservative reserving stance reduces the risk of material reserve increases.

**Financial Flexibility: Very strong stand-alone financial flexibility constrained by linkage to Spain**

Atradius' standalone financial flexibility metrics are very strong, with Moody's adjusted financial leverage of 19.7% at YE2017 and earnings coverage of debt service at 12.1x (5YR average: 13.5x). The group's capital structure consists of Tier I equity capital, along with EUR 250 million in subordinated notes, guaranteed by Atradius N.V., which qualify as Tier II capital.

Notwithstanding our view that Atradius remains partially insulated from potential credit pressures at its parent we believe that its ownership by GCO creates a link between the credit profile of Atradius and its parent, GCO, which could create potential headwinds for Atradius' access to capital markets in times of stress. Therefore, because of the link to GCO and domicile of its most material operating company, ACyC, in Spain, Atradius' financial flexibility is constrained at the rating of the Spanish sovereign (Baa1, stable), notwithstanding its very strong financial flexibility on a standalone basis.

## Rating methodology and scorecard factors

Exhibit 4

Financial Strength Rating Scorecard [1][2]	Aaa	Aa	A	Baa	Ba	B	Caa	Score	Adj Score
<b>Business Profile</b>								A	A
<b>Market Position and Brand (10%)</b>								A	A
- Relative Market Share Ratio			X						
- Distribution and Access to New Markets			X						
<b>Product Focus and Diversification (20%)</b>								A	A
- Business Diversification				X					
- Flexibility of Underwriting			X						
- Risk Diversification		X							
<b>Financial Profile</b>								Aa	A
<b>Asset Quality (15%)</b>								Aaa	Aa
- High Risk Assets % Shareholders' Equity	22.10%								
- Reinsurance Recoverable % Shareholders' Equity	34.90%								
- Goodwill & Intangibles % Shareholders' Equity	16.80%								
<b>Capital Adequacy (20%)</b>								Aa	A
- Net Total Exposure % Shareholders' Equity		210.1x							
- Net Underwriting Leverage (Credit Insurers)	0.9x								
<b>Profitability (20%)</b>								Aa	A
- Combined Ratio (5 yr. avg)			76.90%						
- Sharpe Ratio of ROC (5 yr. avg)	1207.80%								
<b>Reserve Adequacy (5%)</b>								Caa	A
- Worst Reserve Development for the Last 10 Years % Beg. Reserves							11.20%		
<b>Financial Flexibility (10%)</b>								Aa	Baa
- Financial Leverage		19.70%							
- Earnings Coverage (5 yr. avg)	13.5x								
<b>Operating Environment</b>								Aaa - A	Aaa - A
<b>Aggregate Profile</b>								Aa3	A2

[1] Information based on IFRS financial statements as of Fiscal YE2016 December 31

[2] Certain items may have been relabelled and/or reclassified for global consistency

Source: Company reports and Moody's Investors Service

## Support and structural considerations

Atradius' A2, stable, IFS rating reflects its standalone credit fundamentals and its partial insulation from GCO due to a combination of: (i) its limited correlation with GCO's credit profile due to the different business models within the group, and (ii) Moody's expectation that GCO will remain committed to maintaining Atradius' solid capitalisation. While we consider the partial insulation of Atradius from the GCO group to be meaningful, and sufficient to support our assessment of its credit profile on a standalone basis, there remains a link between the credit profiles of Atradius and its parent, GCO.

GCO's link to, and constraint by, the Spanish sovereign is primarily driven by its fixed income portfolio that has significant exposure to domestic assets, in the extent of 53% of the total portfolio at YE2017. Similar to other domestic, Spanish insurers, GCO maintains significant domestic assets to match its domestic life insurance technical liabilities. GCO is currently well capitalized (consolidated Solvency II ratio: 210% at YE2017) and its traditional businesses have a low-risk business profile, a strong track record of profitability (combined ratio consistently below 90%) and very modest financial leverage.

The backed subordinated notes issued by Atradius Finance B.V. are rated Baa2(hyb), stable, three notches below Atradius's A2, stable, IFS rating, and reflects the unconditional and irrevocable subordinated guarantee from Atradius N.V. In addition, the notes benefit from

narrower notching between the ratings of the holding company (Atradius N.V.) and the operating entities (ACyC) due to the holding company being within the ambit of enhanced regulatory supervision under a Solvency II regime.

The P-1, stable, short term IFSR of ACyC reflects its solid liquidity including a highly liquid investment portfolio of relatively short duration, supported by contractual accommodations specific to credit insurers, such as simultaneous settlement provisions in reinsurance agreements which provide the Group with additional sources of liquidity in the event of large claims.

## Ratings

Exhibit 5

Category	Moody's Rating
<b>ATRADIUS CREDITO Y CAUCION S.A.</b>	
Rating Outlook	STA
Insurance Financial Strength	A2
ST Insurance Financial Strength	P-1
<b>ATRADIUS TRADE CREDIT INSURANCE INC.</b>	
Rating Outlook	STA
Insurance Financial Strength	A2
<b>ATRADIUS REINSURANCE DAC</b>	
Rating Outlook	STA
Insurance Financial Strength	A2
<b>ATRADIUS FINANCE B.V.</b>	
Rating Outlook	STA
BACKED Subordinate	Baa2 (hyb)

Source: Moody's Investors Service



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