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| Response Form to the Consultation Paper |
| Guidelines on performance fees in UCITS |

**Responding to this paper**

ESMA invites comments on all matters in this consultation paper and in particular on the specific questions summarised in Annex I. Comments are most helpful if they:

* respond to the question stated;
* indicate the specific question to which the comment relates;
* contain a clear rationale; and
* describe any alternatives ESMA should consider.

ESMA will consider all comments received by **31/10/2019.**

All contributions should be submitted online at [www.esma.europa.eu](http://www.esma.europa.eu) under the heading ‘Your input - Consultations’.

**Instructions**

In order to facilitate analysis of responses to the Consultation Paper, respondents are requested to follow the below steps when preparing and submitting their response:

1. Insert your responses to the questions in the Consultation Paper in the present response form.
2. Please do not remove tags of the type <ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_1>. Your response to each question has to be framed by the two tags corresponding to the question.
3. If you do not wish to respond to a given question, please do not delete it but simply leave the text “TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE” between the tags.
4. When you have drafted your response, name your response form according to the following convention: ESMA\_PFG\_nameofrespondent\_RESPONSEFORM. For example, for a respondent named ABCD, the response form would be entitled ESMA\_PFG\_ABCD\_RESPONSEFORM.
5. Upload the form containing your responses, in Word format, to ESMA’s website ([www.esma.europa.eu](http://www.esma.europa.eu) under the heading “Your input – Open consultations” 🡪 “Consultation on Position limits and position management in commodities derivatives”).

**Publication of responses**

All contributions received will be published following the close of the consultation, unless you request otherwise. Please clearly and prominently indicate in your submission any part you do not wish to be publically disclosed. A standard confidentiality statement in an email message will not be treated as a request for non-disclosure. A confidential response may be requested from us in accordance with ESMA’s rules on access to documents. We may consult you if we receive such a request. Any decision we make not to disclose the response is reviewable by ESMA’s Board of Appeal and the European Ombudsman.

**Data protection**

Information on data protection can be found at [www.esma.europa.eu](http://www.esma.europa.eu) under the heading [Legal Notice](http://www.esma.europa.eu/legal-notice).

**Who should read this paper**

This document will be of interest to asset managers managing retail funds and their trade associations, as well as institutional and retail investors investing into such funds and their associations.

**General information about respondent**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of the company / organisation | European Federation of Financial Advisers and Financial Intermediaries (FECIF) |
| Activity | Investment Services |
| Are you representing an association? | ☒ |
| Country/Region | Belgium |

**Introduction**

***Please make your introductory comments below, if any***

<ESMA\_COMMENT\_PFG\_1>

TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_COMMENT\_PFG\_1>

**Questions**

1. : Do you agree that greater standardisation in the field of funds’ performance fees is desirable? What should be the goal of standardisation?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_1>

Yes, we do. In particular we agree with the proposal of common definitions and standards envisaged by Guideline 1, being functional to the creation of a level playing field among market players. These common definitions and standards should also be utilized in the documents for investors, starting with the KID. At the same time, the envisaged standardisation should not sacrifice the necessary market flexibility in order to make it possible for each player to convey its value to clients, on the basis of the principle of economic freedom.

Standardisation might be more a list of options and not only one solution. The Prospectus and Kid would express the choice made by the manufacturer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_1>

1. : Are there any obstacles to standardisation that could be removed by regulatory action? Please elaborate.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_2>

Perhaps should we consider the fact that translation and implementation are Key issues. We also have to consider that for citizens from several State Members, some words or concepts are not understood and agreed te same way. It means that ESMA must offer a clear analysis of the differencies and focused its answers or propositions on the expect result. <ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_2>

1. : What should be taken into consideration when assessing consistency between the index used to calculate the performance fees and the investment objectives, strategy and policy of the fund? Are there any specific indicators which should be considered (eg: historical volatility, asset allocation composition, etc.) to ensure this consistency? Please provide examples and give reasons for your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_3>

With regards to benchmark models, the consistency with the fund’s objectives, strategy and policy is an essential element which also depends on the clarity of the benchmark. We believe that in the interest of investors it is necessary to utilize benchmarks which are easily identifiable on the basis of the relevant market, avoiding excessive complexity (for instance, avoiding benchmarks which combine an excessive number of market indexes). The performance fee rate should be defined as a percentage in relation to the performance of the benchmark.

With regard to par. 18 of Guideline 2, we assume that “*net of costs*” concerns the performance fees which are applied to the total net value of the fund and not the single cost items for the investors (which also include, for example, taxes); we believe that a clarification on this paragraph of the Guideline is necessary.

Another way for us to look at the problem might be to consider such ratios as the Calmars’ one (Max Drawdown / Volatility) compared to a Benchmark.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_3>

1. : What is the anticipated impact of the introduction of Guideline 3? Do you agree with setting a minimum crystallisation period of one year? Do you think this could help better aligning the interests of fund managers and investors? Please provide examples.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_4>

We think that the crystallisation period should be one year. More in general, we think that all time parameters (the crystallisation period and also the reference period) should be one year.

Nevertheless in some cases the investment period would not be a short term one. That case, it must be clearly expressed, explained shortly within the Prospectus and Kid. For those specific cases, crystallization might be done on a period of time linked to the explained minimum management term.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_4>

1. : Are there any other models or methodologies currently employed that, in your view, should be exempted from this requirement? For example, do you think that the requirement of a minimum crystallisation period of 12 months should also apply to HWM models? Please provide examples on how these models achieve the objectives pursued by Guideline 3.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_5>

We do not see any case the rule should not be the same.TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_5>

1. : In your view, should performance fees be charged only when the fund has achieved absolute positive performance? What expected financial impact (e.g. increase or decrease of the manager’s remuneration or increase or decrease of the financial return for investors) would the proposed Guideline 4 have for you/the stakeholder(s) you represent? Are there models or methodologies currently employed where the approach set out in Guideline 4 would not be appropriate?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_6>

TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

No, as we explain in Question 15, we believe that the Guidelines should contextualise and take into account the management activities of investment funds in relation to specific market trends and, accordingly, the ability of the asset manager to outperform in case of positive market returns and limit losses in case of negative returns; i.e. the activities of the asset manager also result in the ability to limit negative impacts for investors in adverse market phases – as experienced over the last few years – and this ability should be recognised and adequately remunerated.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_6>

1. : If the performance fee model that you currently use provides for performance fees to be payable in times of negative returns, is a prominent warning on this provided to investors in the legal and marketing documents of the fund? If not, should this be provided? Please give examples for your answer and details on how the best interests of investors are safeguarded.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_7>

ESMA must keep in mind that UCITS are sold or adviced and in those cases, the intermediary must explain the costs. More, the cost is supposed to be detailed every year. Then yes, a disclaimer should appear but in any case the explanation should be offered to the client by a professional. TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_7>

1. : What are your views on setting a performance reference period for the purpose of resetting the HWM? What should be taken into account when setting the performance reference period? Should this period be defined, for example, based on the whole life of the fund (starting from the fund’s inception date), the recommended holding period of the investor or the investment horizon as stated in the prospectus? Please provide examples and reasons for your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_8>

As explained in Q4, we think that the setting of all time parameters (the reference period and also the crystallisation period) should be one year. Accordingly, we believe that the reference period should not be based on the whole life of the fund or the recommended holding period, considering that the investor might not hold the investment up to the recommended holding period, as well as the need for harmonisation among different types of funds (whereas harmonisation can be achieved by considering a reference period of one year).

For some special cases, du to the management/investment constraints it could be based on a more suitable period of time. For those cases a clear transparency must be insured.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_8>

1. : Alternatively, would it be possible to envisage predefined time horizons for the purpose of resetting the HWM, such as 3 or 5 years? Please provide examples and details on what you think would be the best practice in order to better align the interests of fund managers and investors.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_9>

Please refer to Q8.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_9>

1. : How long do you think the performance reference period should be for performance fee models based on a benchmark index? What should be taken into account when setting the performance reference period for a performance fee benchmark model? Would it be possible to envisage predefined time horizons for the purpose of resetting the performance fee based on a benchmark, such as 3 or 5 years? Please provide examples and details on what you think would be the best practice in order to better align the interests of fund managers and investors.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_10>

For the sake of harmonisation, in this case the performance reference period should also be one year, except for specific cases (cf. Q8).

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_10>

1. : Alternatively, do you think the performance reference period should coincide with the minimum crystallisation period or should it be longer/shorter? Please provide examples and reasons for your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_11>

For the sake of consistency and simplicity, we think that the two periods should coincide and be one year.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_11>

1. : What are your views on when the Guidelines should become applicable? How much time would managers require to adapt existing fee mechanisms to comply with the requirements of these Guidelines?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_12>

We believe that the transitional regime for the application of the Guidelines should consider a minimum of 12 months and, preferably, a minimum of 24 months.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_12>

1. : Do you consider that the principles set out in the Guidelines should be applied also to AIFs marketed to retail investors in order to ensure equivalent standards in retail investor protection? Please provide reasons.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_13>

Although we have considered the opportunity to also introduce Guidelines for AIFs, we believe that at this current stage the provisions envisaged by this Consultation Paper would be difficult to apply to AIFs, due to substantial differences between AIFs and UCITS funds.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_13>

1. : Do you agree with the above-mentioned reasoning in relation to the possible costs and benefits as regards the consistency between the performance fees model and the fund’s investment objective? What other types of costs or benefits would you consider in this context? Please provide quantitative figures, where available.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_14>

TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_14>

1. : In relation to Guideline 2, do you think that models of performance fee without a hurdle rate, or with a hurdle rate not linked to the investment objective (but clearly stated in the offering documents), should be permissible? For example, do you think that equity funds with a performance fee linked to EONIA, or a performance fee which is accrued as long as there are positive returns, should be allowed? Please give examples and reasons for your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_15>

We believe that, at a general level, the Guidelines should contextualise and take into account the management activities of investment funds in relation to specific market trends and, accordingly, the ability of the asset manager to outperform in the case of positive market returns and limit losses in the case of negative returns; i.e., the activities of the asset manager also result in the ability to limit negative impacts for investors in adverse market phases – as experienced over the last few years – and this ability should be recognised and adequately remunerated. The same reasoning should apply to hurdle rates, i.e. models without a hurdle rate should be permissible: the use of a hurdle rate would not suit diverse market contexts, especially in the case of negative returns whereby, as previously explained, the asset manager limits losses when compared to the market.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_15>

1. : What additional costs and benefits would compliance with the proposed Guideline bring to you/the stakeholder(s) you represent? Please provide quantitative figures, where available.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_16>

TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_16>

1. : What is the anticipated impact from the introduction of this proposed Guideline? Are there models or methodologies currently employed where this Guideline would not be appropriate? If so, please provide examples of these and details of how the best interests of investors are safeguarded.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_17>

TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_17>

1. : What additional costs and benefits would compliance with the proposed Guideline bring to the stakeholder(s) you represent? Please provide quantitative figures, where available.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_18>

TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_18>

1. : Which other types of costs or benefits would you consider in the disclosure of the performance fees model? Please provide quantitative figures, where available.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_19>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_PFG\_19>