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**CESR's guide to clear language and  
layout for the Key Investor  
Information document**

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### **Executive Summary**

This guide describes ways of meeting the regulatory objective for Key Investor Information (KII) to achieve the clarity and simplicity of presentation that is required by retail investors. There may be other ways in which UCITS can meet this requirement.

This guide is intended as a statement of good practice. It does not constitute binding guidance on UCITS or their management companies.

## Part 1: Introduction

### Background and purpose

The Simplified Prospectus (SP) has failed as a consumer communication because the rules have led to long documents. In addition, many have been written in technical or legalistic language and have been poorly structured and designed, resulting in unattractive documents, which are unlikely to be read. The Key Investor Information document (KII) is a radical attempt to address these shortcomings by giving management companies more scope to produce a document that is readily understandable by the average retail investor.

The KII has a prescribed structure and headings. You can include only the information applicable to those headings and not add other information. The limit of two A4 pages (three for structured UCITS) places added emphasis on the requirements that:

- only information necessary for investors to make an informed decision is included; and
- the information selected is lucid and succinct.

You must not seek to bypass the page limit by using dense or small print or by relying on cross-references to other documents to cover information material to understanding of the investment. The KII must be well designed to attract rather than repel the reader. If it is not read it will fail, regardless of the quality of the text.

The rules set a framework which facilitates an effective document, but it is up to management companies to write and design KIIs in a way which makes them understandable. You should not copy any text from a prospectus or a SP unless you have critically reviewed it in the light of this guide. Similarly, do not copy text from the Commission Regulation or CESR guidelines (unless it is mandatory) because this is not normally addressed to the retail investor.

CESR does not believe there is a single right way to write and design a KII; you can meet the objective in many ways. This guide is intended to help you to craft a KII by giving pointers to widely accepted good practice.

### The contents and nature of this guide

General good practice guidance about clear language and layout is already available<sup>1</sup> as well as guidance more relevant to investment literature<sup>2</sup>. There are also plain language agencies that can help management companies write and design their KIIs. SPs have failed partly because they have not followed this widely accepted good practice.

CESR endorses this good practice and does not seek to repeat its detailed characteristics. Instead, drawing on experience of the SP, this guide concentrates on those elements of the KII for which CESR believes management companies will find guidance most helpful.

National regulators may provide language-specific guidance.

All references to a management company in this guide should be read as applying to an investment company that has not designated a management company.

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<sup>1</sup> For example the Oxford Guide to Plain English by Martin Cutts, Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> A Plain English Handbook, How to create clear SEC disclosure documents <http://www.sec.gov/pdf/handbook.pdf>

## **Who should use this guide?**

Everyone involved in the drafting and design of a KII needs to share an understanding both of its aims and of their company's approach to clear language and layout. An effective KII will have a consistent style and not appear to be written by a committee. This may best be achieved if the KII has an "owner" who is responsible for final decisions on its content, language and design. But it will be rare for a single author to have all the knowledge and skills needed to produce an effective KII. It will almost always benefit from input from others provided they share the same objectives.

Do not assume that because you and your colleagues understand what the text means, an investor will understand it in the same way. It is good practice to be guided by research and testing on average retail investors.

As you hone a KII into a precise document, be ready for it to take longer to prepare than a much lengthier SP.

*"I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." (Blaise Pascal)*

## Part 2: Using plain language

### Understanding your audience

Most UCITS are marketed to a wide range of consumers with varying levels of financial literacy and experience. Few consumers will be lawyers or industry specialists, and even those who are financially experienced will still welcome clearly designed, well-written documents. It is best to assume that your audience is reading about an investment fund for the first time.

If a document is hard to understand, the aims, risks and charges of an investment may be misunderstood or not understood at all. This will not be in the interests of the management company or the investor.

Your company may already have a ‘style guide’ for the way it seeks to portray itself in its publications, such as your marketing documents. This is very likely to follow clear language principles. Therefore such a style guide is just as appropriate for KIIs, because they are aimed at the same audience at the same time.

### What is meant by plain language?

“Plain language is not just about avoiding jargon. It is about the writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a co-operative, motivated person a good chance of understanding it at first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood.” *Oxford Guide to Plain English* by Martin Cutts.

Using plain language is not about dumbing-down or avoiding complex concepts. Instead it means:

- writing so that your audience is not alienated by unfamiliar and pompous vocabulary and convoluted construction;
- giving complex information in a clear way.

You should aim to enable an average retail investor to understand each statement at their first reading – they will easily become frustrated if they have to re-read the information.

Writing in plain language may require the ‘unlearning’ of habits inherited from the traditional formal or legalistic ways of writing fund documents. Nothing is gained by the presumed certainty of legalistic, technical or complex language, if the reader does not understand it or, worse, is misled by it.

Apart from improving clarity clear language techniques have great potential for reducing the word count – an important quality in the context of the page limitation of the KII.

### Dealing with jargon

The investment industry is notorious for its use of jargon, specialist language and peculiar expressions (such as *negative growth*). This results in a style that is likely to be alien to many consumers; as in the following example:

Where, in the Manager’s judgement, there is significant uncertainty that a bond holding will be redeemed at par; the amortised capital component for that holding is retained in the fund’s capital and not distributed. This has the effect of reducing the estimated redemption, distribution and underlying yields and the actual distribution rate.

You can tackle jargon by:

- trying to avoid jargon altogether e.g. by explaining the feature without naming it. For example, saying that a performance fee includes a feature *known as a high watermark* does not necessarily help to explain what it is;

- explaining jargon in brackets after its first use;
- explaining jargon in a footnote to the section or the page; or
- cross-referring to a glossary in a supporting document. However, if this would result in numerous cross-references you should question the need for the jargon and your approach to explaining it.

For cross-references it can be helpful to use a graphic or other indicator to show that the term is so explained.

### **Words which have different meanings in normal usage**

In addition to jargon, the investment industry tends to use many terms which may mean different things to the average retail investor. A dictionary may give a different meaning to the one intended by the management company. The following are examples of terms that might be confusing or misleading.

*Allocation date* (as in income date), *appreciation*, *denominated*, *equity*, *erosion*, *establishment*, *expire*, *exposure*, *liquid*, *redemption*, *repurchase*, *volatile*.

### **Other barriers to clear language**

Removing jargon or potentially confusing words will not necessarily make a document clear and engaging. There are other barriers to clear language, such as legalistic words and phrases and the use of foreign words when there is an adequate alternative in the native language of the KII. A formal, passive and impersonal style can lead to redundant words and phrases as well as being unengaging to the reader.

### **Short sentences**

Clear language techniques will naturally lead to shorter sentences, but aim to break up any that are over 25 words.

### **Clear layout**

Plain language needs to be supported by a clear layout. Once you have decided what you want to say and how to say it, Part 3 gives guidance on how to present it.

## Part 3: Designing a KII

The KII must appear to the average retail investor to be both important and attractive, so as to maximise the likelihood they will read it. This means it must be distinguishable from other documents and appear important and easily readable. When compared to marketing literature, it should not appear to be a legal document like the terms and conditions.

Although the structure and length of a KII are mandated, you should use a combination of good design elements such as those described below. A good design makes a document easier to read and understand. A poor design may mean well-written messages are undermined or not even read.

### **Typeface (font), line width and line spacing**

Use a typeface that is easy to read, such as Arial (or similar sans serif) or Times New Roman (or similar serif).

### **Type size**

Use a legible type size which is balanced with the line width and the line spacing.

- Wide lines of small type are a problem for the eye to follow. It is best to keep to 50-75 characters (including spaces) in a line of 10-point type. You can use 'newspaper' columns or wide margins to achieve this.
- Typefaces vary, but when using the full width of A4 paper, aim for at least 11pt for serif fonts and 10pt for sans serif fonts; a slightly smaller type size is legible when narrow columns are used.
- Keep the space between lines in balance with the type size.

### **Headings**

Use a clear hierarchy for the headings and sub-headings. This can be supported by boldening, shading, colour, different type sizes or by indenting the text.

### **Page layout**

Maximise 'white space' by using:

- small paragraphs
- newspaper columns where appropriate
- bulleted lists, rather than continuous text whenever appropriate
- clear gaps between sections.

### **Colour and shading**

Colour adds visual appeal, and more design options. But remember that the KII may be photocopied or downloaded in black and white. If you use colour, do so sparingly and ensure there is enough contrast between the text and its background – the effect is better if the text is dark and the background pale. It may therefore be better to use shading.



## Part 4: Guidance for each section of the KII

### a) Title and introductory statements

See Article 4 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010 for the required content.

Make the title *Key Investor Information* sufficiently prominent for it to catch the eye of the potential investor.

The explanatory wording is mandatory, as well as the name and identification of the UCITS (and investment compartment if the UCITS is an umbrella) by code number and the name of the management company (if applicable).

### b) Heading – Objectives and Investment Policy

See Article 7 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010 for the required content.

This section of the KII is to tell the average retail investor:

- what the fund aims to do; provide growth, an income or a combination; and
- the main ways it intends to achieve the aim(s). This should enable investors to get a sufficient understanding of how the fund seeks to achieve the objective so that they can make an informed decision. Avoid long, legalistic and technical text, which is unlikely to be read, let alone understood.

You can, if appropriate, describe the objective and the policy in a single paragraph. But if this results in a large block of text, you can split the objectives and investment policy into separate paragraphs or describe them under sub-headings.

Do not copy from the prospectus unless that is in clear language. It may be that some elements of the prospectus wording:

- are immaterial for a summary document like the KII; and
- belong in other sections of the KII. For example information about the riskiness of any of the assets belongs in the *Risk and reward profile*.

But remember that the regulations require you to give a balanced description of the objectives and investment policy. Where necessary you may go beyond the specific prospectus wording on investment objectives and policy and include elements covered in other sections of the prospectus.

Your approach will depend on the length and complexity of the prospectus wording. Clear language techniques may make a shorter wording possible without removing elements. For example by:

- removing redundant text such as *In order to achieve the investment objective, the Company on behalf of the Fund will enter into...*
- personalising the style; by using *you* instead of *the potential investor* or *the incoming unit holder* and *we* instead of *ABC International Asset Managers Limited* (provided this does not create uncertainty about who is meant by *we*)
- removing unnecessary or self-evident text; such as *to the extent permitted by the regulations*, or *The Fund will generally seek to achieve its investment objective through investing by reference to...*
- avoiding vague statements such as *The Fund aims to deliver attractive positive long term returns*.

If, after following the practices suggested above, the result is still too long, critically assess the need for all of the information. For example, if there is the potential to invest in a wide variety of investment instruments in different markets, analyse their materiality based on past and expected usage.

## Special considerations for structured UCITS

See Articles 7 and 36 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010 for the required content. Select at least three example performance scenarios as described in CESR's level 3 guidelines on the selection and presentation of performance scenarios in the Key Investor Information document (KII) for structured UCITS (Ref. CESR/10-530).

Structured funds have many and varied formulae for calculating the possible pay-out at the end of the term. Ensure that the formula (or formulae) is presented in a balanced manner without over-emphasis on the potential for positive returns.

When explaining the formula, consider the following, where applicable.

- Make it clear that a fund's structure will alter its risk and reward profile when compared to a direct investment in the same underlying assets.
- Make it clear that a reduced risk is compensated by a reduced potential return. Consequently, avoid using words such as *performance* or *return* side by side with words such as *security*.
- If there is no legally enforceable guarantee the term *guarantee* may mislead consumers about the security of their investment.
- If there is a risk of capital loss at one of the trigger dates in the formula, clearly describe this risk within the *Objectives and investment policy* and state that investors' capital is not guaranteed.
- Where less than 100% of an investor's capital is guaranteed or protected, avoid phrases such as *partial guarantee applicable to 90% of the invested principal*, which could be misunderstood. Clearly state that the capital is not fully guaranteed or, where there is no legally enforceable guarantee, that the capital is not fully protected.
- Where a fund's formula is pegged to the average performance of an index up to 100% or where it is pegged to the index's capped performance, balance the level of indexing with the explanation of the effect of the averaging or the capping.
- Use positive wordings like *if the index falls by more than 30%* rather than *if the index performance is less than -30%*.
- Where structured funds are offered in consecutive dated issues, avoid over-use of templated text. For example, instead of using *start date* and *end date* state the actual dates.

### c) Heading – Risk and reward profile

See Article 8 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010 for the required content.

The risk and reward section must give a fair and balanced description of the inherent chance for growth or loss.

Consider what impression the title of the fund may give to an investor. For example, *cautious*, *balanced* and *total or absolute return* may give the average retail investor an impression of the riskiness of a fund which needs to be balanced by further explanations. Therefore, explain the nature of the investments these funds make (or cross-refer to the *Objectives and investment policy*) so that the information in the *Risk and reward* section can be read in context.

### Synthetic risk and reward indicator

CESR's guidelines on the methodology for the calculation of the synthetic risk and reward indicator in the KII (Ref. CESR/10-673) explain the calculation of the indicator for UCITS funds, including structured UCITS.

See Article 8 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010 for the statements that must support the indicator. These statements include a clear and succinct explanation of the *material* risks that are

not, or not fully, reflected by the indicator. This section gives guidance on these statements within the context of the space limit of the KII.

The aim is for the investor to understand the uncertainties – both for loss and for growth – that may affect their investment. There are two main elements:

- the mandated synthetic risk and reward indicator and its explanation; and
- the narrative explanation of risks not captured by the synthetic indicator.

Where applicable, explain that the indicator is not a measure of the risk of capital loss but is a measure of the fund's previous ups and downs in value. For new funds, explain how the indicator has been worked out. For structured funds, explain that the indicator seeks to show the risk of capital loss at the end date.

## **Explanations of risks not adequately reflected by the indicator**

Firstly be clear about what a risk is.

### ▪ *Risk for reward*

Remember that the section covers both risk and reward and therefore should not be merely a list of bad things that can happen. Briefly explain why a risk is being taken so investors gain a more balanced understanding.

### ▪ *Consider risk as uncertainty*

Describe only the *uncertainties* which may affect the value of the fund.

It is not a risk where investors can lose money as a predictable consequence of their own actions, as a function of the way the investment plan or fund works. If such consequences are material, they are better explained in the other sections of the KII where they can be placed into context. For example:

- Explain the likelihood of capital loss in *Objectives and investment policy*, where a structured UCITS is cashed in early.
- Explain the deduction of an exit charge, and therefore the possibility of capital loss, in *Charges* if an investor cashes in early.

### ▪ *Risks are judged on their impact and probability*

Go beyond a bald statement of the risk by briefly explaining its implications to the investor. For the information to be helpful, a potential investor will need an idea of your assessment of a risk's materiality. For example: how much of the fund is being exposed to a particular risk, how likely it is that the risk will materialise, and how severe the impact would be if it did. Where relevant, explanations of ways by which a risk is mitigated may help a consumer understand the impact and probability.

### ▪ *Effect of guarantees or protections*

Explain if the risk is modified by a legally enforceable guarantee or a protection. Also explain the implications of cashing in the investment outside of any associated set period.

In analysing the volatility data over the last five years, you will identify which risks are reflected in the synthetic indicator and which are not.

The typical risks that may not be reflected in the synthetic indicator are counterparty, default, liquidity, operational and some of the various emerging market risks.

- Where material (bearing in mind that all UCITS should be liquid enough to enable investments to be cashed in quickly), clearly explain the risk and its potential impact. But giving the risk its technical name may not be helpful to investors. It may be sufficient simply to describe the nature and implications of each risk separated by a bullet or other design device.

- Do not include immaterial risks in the KII, even if there is space for them. The required signpost to the prospectus will allow interested investors to find out full details of all the risks.
- Rather than itemising each risk, it may be appropriate to categorise them by the asset or strategy that gives rise to them; for example, by grouping together the risks arising from bonds or from emerging markets.
- For an umbrella structure with no legal segregation between investment compartments, explain the possible impact on such a sub-fund in the *Practical information* section.

Note that a statement about the impact of tax in the investor’s home State belongs in the *Practical information* section, not in the risk and reward profile.

#### d) Heading – Charges

See Articles 10-13 and 24 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010.

Charges information is summarised in a mandatory table, with each charge then explained in turn.

One-off charges taken before or after you invest	
<b>Entry charge</b>	[ ]%
<b>Exit charge</b>	[ ]%
This is the maximum that might be taken out of your money [before it is invested] [before the proceeds of your investment are paid out].	
Charges taken from the fund over each year	
<b>Ongoing charge</b>	[ ]%
Charges taken from the fund under specific conditions	
<b>Performance fee</b>	[ ]% a year of any returns the fund achieves above its benchmark, the [name of benchmark].

Explain briefly each of the charges in the table. In doing so note the following:

- State where necessary that detailed charges information is in the prospectus.
- The entry and exit charges are the maximum amounts which could be taken. Refer investors to the financial advisor where it is possible that lower charges may apply to certain investors.
- The entry charge must include any difference between the buying and selling prices.
- If the ongoing charges are taken from capital rather than income and you consider their effect on final returns may be material, explain this in this section rather than as a risk.
- Avoid industry terms such as *subscription*, *redemption* and *re-purchase*.
- Explain if a charge for a fund switch differs from the normal charge for buying units.
- If no charge is payable under a particular sub-heading (e.g. “Charges taken from the fund under specific conditions”) put “none” or “not applicable” in the relevant box beneath that sub-heading.

#### e) Heading – Past performance

See Articles 15-19 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010.

This section is not required for structured UCITS funds.

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This section includes a bar chart that must be no larger than half of an A4 page and prominent supporting statements. Standards for the fair presentation of the bar chart are given in Annex III of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010.

#### **f) Heading – Practical information**

See Article 20 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 583/2010. The extra information required for umbrella structures is given in Article 25, for share classes (where applicable) in Article 27 and for feeder UCITS in Article 34. No other information is permitted but, where it will help an investor, it is good practice to put the information into context.

The mandated statement below emphasises the precision of wording required for the KII and should stimulate a final check on the content.

[Name of investment company or management company] may be held liable solely on the basis of any statement contained in this document that is misleading, inaccurate or inconsistent with the relevant parts of the prospectus for the fund.