

I

(Legislative acts)

DIRECTIVES

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/822

of 25 May 2018

amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation in relation to reportable cross-border arrangements

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 113 and 115 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament ⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee ⁽²⁾,

Acting in accordance with a special legislative procedure,

Whereas:

- (1) In order to accommodate new initiatives in the field of tax transparency at the level of the Union, Council Directive 2011/16/EU ⁽³⁾ has been the subject of a series of amendments over the last few years. In this context, Council Directive 2014/107/EU ⁽⁴⁾ introduced the Common Reporting Standard ('CRS') developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for financial account information within the Union. The CRS provides for the automatic exchange of information on financial accounts held by non-tax residents and establishes a framework for that exchange worldwide. Directive 2011/16/EU was amended by Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376 ⁽⁵⁾, which provided for the automatic exchange of information on advance cross-border tax rulings, and by Council Directive (EU) 2016/881 ⁽⁶⁾, which provided for the mandatory automatic exchange of information on country-by-country reporting of multinational enterprises between tax authorities. In light of the use that anti-money-laundering information can have for tax authorities, Council Directive (EU) 2016/2258 ⁽⁷⁾ placed an obligation on Member States to give tax authorities access to customer due diligence procedures applied by financial institutions under Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European

⁽¹⁾ Opinion of 1 March 2018 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

⁽²⁾ Opinion of 18 January 2018 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

⁽³⁾ Council Directive 2011/16/EU of 15 February 2011 on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation and repealing Directive 77/799/EEC (OJ L 64, 11.3.2011, p. 1).

⁽⁴⁾ Council Directive 2014/107/EU of 9 December 2014 amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation (OJ L 359, 16.12.2014, p. 1).

⁽⁵⁾ Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376 of 8 December 2015 amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation (OJ L 332, 18.12.2015, p. 1).

⁽⁶⁾ Council Directive (EU) 2016/881 of 25 May 2016 amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation (OJ L 146, 3.6.2016, p. 8).

⁽⁷⁾ Council Directive (EU) 2016/2258 of 6 December 2016 amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards access to anti-money-laundering information by tax authorities (OJ L 342, 16.12.2016, p. 1).

Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾. Although Directive 2011/16/EU has been amended several times in order to enhance the means tax authorities can use to react to aggressive tax planning, there is still a need to reinforce certain specific transparency aspects of the existing taxation framework.

- (2) Member States find it increasingly difficult to protect their national tax bases from erosion as tax-planning structures have evolved to be particularly sophisticated and often take advantage of the increased mobility of both capital and persons within the internal market. Such structures commonly consist of arrangements which are developed across various jurisdictions and move taxable profits towards more beneficial tax regimes or have the effect of reducing the taxpayer's overall tax bill. As a result, Member States often experience considerable reductions in their tax revenues, which hinder them from applying growth-friendly tax policies. It is therefore critical that Member States' tax authorities obtain comprehensive and relevant information about potentially aggressive tax arrangements. Such information would enable those authorities to react promptly against harmful tax practices and to close loopholes by enacting legislation or by undertaking adequate risk assessments and carrying out tax audits. However, the fact that tax authorities do not react to a reported arrangement should not imply acceptance of the validity or tax treatment of that arrangement.
- (3) Considering that most of the potentially aggressive tax-planning arrangements span across more than one jurisdiction, the disclosure of information about those arrangements would bring additional positive results where that information was also exchanged amongst Member States. In particular, the automatic exchange of information between tax authorities is crucial in order to provide those authorities with the necessary information to enable them to take action where they observe aggressive tax practices.
- (4) Recognising how a transparent framework for developing business activity could contribute to clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion in the internal market, the Commission has been called on to embark on initiatives on the mandatory disclosure of information on potentially aggressive tax-planning arrangements along the lines of Action 12 of the OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project. In this context, the European Parliament has called for tougher measures against intermediaries who assist in arrangements that may lead to tax avoidance and evasion. It is also important to note that in the G7 Bari Declaration of 13 May 2017 on fighting tax crimes and other illicit financial flows, the OECD was asked to start discussing possible ways to address arrangements designed to circumvent reporting under the CRS or aimed at providing beneficial owners with the shelter of non-transparent structures, considering also model mandatory disclosure rules inspired by the approach taken for avoidance arrangements outlined within the BEPS Action 12 Report.
- (5) It is necessary to recall how certain financial intermediaries and other providers of tax advice seem to have actively assisted their clients in concealing money offshore. Furthermore, although the CRS introduced by Directive 2014/107/EU is a significant step forward in establishing a framework of tax transparency within the Union, at least in terms of financial account information, it can still be improved.
- (6) The reporting of potentially aggressive cross-border tax-planning arrangements can contribute effectively to the efforts for creating an environment of fair taxation in the internal market. In this light, an obligation for intermediaries to inform tax authorities of certain cross-border arrangements that could potentially be used for aggressive tax planning would constitute a step in the right direction. In order to develop a more comprehensive policy, it would also be necessary that as a second step, following the reporting, the tax authorities share information with their peers in other Member States. Such arrangements should also enhance the effectiveness of the CRS. In addition, it would be crucial to grant the Commission access to a sufficient amount of information so that it can monitor the proper functioning of this Directive. Such access to information by the Commission does not discharge a Member State from its obligations to notify any State aid to the Commission.
- (7) It is acknowledged that the reporting of potentially aggressive cross-border tax-planning arrangements would stand a better chance of achieving its envisaged deterrent effect where the relevant information reached the tax authorities at an early stage, in other words before such arrangements are actually implemented. To facilitate the work of Member States' administrations, the subsequent automatic exchange of information on such arrangements could take place every quarter.

⁽¹⁾ Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC (OJ L 141, 5.6.2015, p. 73).

- (8) To ensure the proper functioning of the internal market and to prevent loopholes in the proposed framework of rules, the reporting obligation should be placed upon all actors that are usually involved in designing, marketing, organising or managing the implementation of a reportable cross-border transaction or a series of such transactions, as well as those who provide assistance or advice. It should not be ignored either that, in certain cases, the reporting obligation would not be enforceable upon an intermediary due to a legal professional privilege or where there is no intermediary because, for instance, the taxpayer designs and implements a scheme in-house. It would thus be crucial that, in such circumstances, tax authorities do not lose the opportunity to receive information about tax-related arrangements that are potentially linked to aggressive tax planning. It would therefore be necessary to shift the reporting obligation to the taxpayer who benefits from the arrangement in such cases.
- (9) Aggressive tax-planning arrangements have evolved over the years to become increasingly more complex and are always subject to constant modifications and adjustments as a reaction to defensive countermeasures by the tax authorities. Taking this into consideration, it would be more effective to endeavour to capture potentially aggressive tax-planning arrangements through the compiling of a list of the features and elements of transactions that present a strong indication of tax avoidance or abuse rather than to define the concept of aggressive tax planning. Those indications are referred to as 'hallmarks'.
- (10) Given that the primary objective of this Directive concerning the reporting of potentially aggressive cross-border tax-planning arrangements should focus on ensuring the proper functioning of the internal market, it is critical not to regulate at the level of the Union beyond what is necessary to achieve the envisaged aims. This is why it would be necessary to limit any common rules on reporting to cross-border situations, namely those involving either more than one Member State or a Member State and a third country. In such circumstances, due to the potential impact on the functioning of the internal market, one can justify the need for enacting a common set of rules, rather than leaving the matter to be dealt with at the national level. A Member State could take further national reporting measures of a similar nature, but any information collected in addition to what is reportable in accordance with this Directive should not be communicated automatically to the competent authorities of the other Member States. That information could be exchanged on request or spontaneously according to applicable rules.
- (11) Considering that the reportable arrangements should have a cross-border dimension, it would be important to share the relevant information with the tax authorities in other Member States in order to ensure the maximum effectiveness of this Directive in deterring aggressive tax-planning practices. The mechanism for the exchange of information in the context of advance cross-border rulings and advance pricing arrangements should also be used to accommodate the mandatory and automatic exchange of reportable information on potentially aggressive cross-border tax-planning arrangements amongst tax authorities in the Union.
- (12) In order to facilitate the automatic exchange of information and enhance the efficient use of resources, exchanges should be carried out through the common communication network ("CCN") developed by the Union. In this context, information would be recorded in a secure central directory on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation. Member States should have to implement a series of practical arrangements, including measures to standardise the communication of all requisite information through the creation of a standard form. This should also involve specifying the linguistic requirements for the envisaged exchange of information and upgrading the CCN accordingly.
- (13) In order to minimise costs and administrative burdens both for tax administrations and intermediaries and to ensure the effectiveness of this Directive in deterring aggressive tax-planning practices, the scope of automatic exchange of information in relation to reportable cross-border arrangements within the Union should be consistent with international developments. A specific hallmark should be introduced to address arrangements designed to circumvent reporting obligations involving automatic exchanges of information. For the purposes of that hallmark, agreements on the automatic exchange of financial account information under the CRS should be treated as equivalent to the reporting obligations laid down in Article 8(3a) of Directive 2014/107/EU and in Annex I thereto. In implementing the parts of this Directive addressing CRS avoidance arrangements and arrangements involving legal persons or legal arrangements or any other similar structures, Member States could use the work of the OECD, and more specifically its Model Mandatory Disclosure Rules for Addressing CRS Avoidance Arrangements and Opaque Offshore Structures and its Commentary, as a source of illustration or interpretation, in order to ensure consistency of application across Member States, insofar those texts are aligned with the provisions of Union law.

- (14) While direct taxation remains within the competence of Member States, it is appropriate to refer to a corporate tax rate of zero or almost zero, solely for the purpose of clearly defining the scope of the hallmark that covers arrangements involving cross-border transactions, which should be reportable under Directive 2011/16/EU by intermediaries or, as appropriate, taxpayers, and about which the competent authorities should exchange information automatically. Moreover, it is appropriate to recall that aggressive cross-border tax-planning arrangements, the main purpose or one of the main purposes of which is to obtain a tax advantage that defeats the object or purpose of the applicable tax law, are subject to the general anti-abuse rule as set out in Article 6 of Council Directive (EU) 2016/1164 ⁽¹⁾.
- (15) In order to improve the prospects for the effectiveness of this Directive, Member States should lay down penalties against the violation of national rules that implement this Directive. Such penalties should be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
- (16) In order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of this Directive and in particular for the automatic exchange of information between tax authorities, implementing powers should be conferred on the Commission to adopt a standard form with a limited number of components, including the linguistic arrangements. For the same reason, implementing powers should also be conferred on the Commission to adopt the necessary practical arrangements for upgrading the central directory on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation. Those powers should be exercised in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾.
- (17) The European Data Protection Supervisor was consulted in accordance with Article 28(2) of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁾. Any processing of personal data carried out within the framework of this Directive must comply with Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽⁴⁾ and Regulation (EC) No 45/2001.
- (18) This Directive respects the fundamental rights and observes the principles recognised in particular by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- (19) Since the objective of this Directive, namely to improve the functioning of the internal market by discouraging the use of aggressive cross-border tax-planning arrangements, cannot sufficiently be achieved by the Member States but can rather, by reason of the fact that it targets schemes which are developed to potentially take advantage of market inefficiencies that originate in the interaction amongst disparate national tax rules, be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. In accordance with the principle of proportionality as set out in that Article, this Directive does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve that objective, especially considering that it is limited to cross-border arrangements concerning either more than one Member State or a Member State and a third country.
- (20) Directive 2011/16/EU should therefore be amended accordingly,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

Article 1

Directive 2011/16/EU is amended as follows:

(1) Article 3 is amended as follows:

(a) point 9 is amended as follows:

(i) in the first subparagraph, point (a) is replaced by the following:

‘(a) for the purposes of Article 8(1) and Articles 8a, 8aa and 8ab, the systematic communication of predefined information to another Member State, without prior request, at pre-established regular intervals. For the purposes of Article 8(1), reference to available information relates to information in the tax files of the Member State communicating the information, which is retrievable in accordance with the procedures for gathering and processing information in that Member State;’;

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive (EU) 2016/1164 of 12 July 2016 laying down rules against tax avoidance practices that directly affect the functioning of the internal market (OJ L 193, 19.7.2016, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 laying down the rules and general principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission's exercise of implementing powers (OJ L 55, 28.2.2011, p. 13).

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 8, 12.1.2001, p. 1).

⁽⁴⁾ Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 281, 23.11.1995, p. 31).

(ii) in the first subparagraph, point (c) is replaced by the following:

‘(c) for the purposes of provisions of this Directive other than Article 8(1) and (3a) and Articles 8a, 8aa and 8ab, the systematic communication of predefined information provided in points (a) and (b) of this point.’;

(iii) in the second subparagraph, the first sentence is replaced by the following:

‘In the context of Articles 8(3a), 8(7a) and 21(2), Article 25(2) and (3) and Annex IV, any capitalised term shall have the meaning that it has under the corresponding definitions set out in Annex I.’;

(b) the following points are added:

‘18. “cross-border arrangement” means an arrangement concerning either more than one Member State or a Member State and a third country where at least one of the following conditions is met:

(a) not all of the participants in the arrangement are resident for tax purposes in the same jurisdiction;

(b) one or more of the participants in the arrangement is simultaneously resident for tax purposes in more than one jurisdiction;

(c) one or more of the participants in the arrangement carries on a business in another jurisdiction through a permanent establishment situated in that jurisdiction and the arrangement forms part or the whole of the business of that permanent establishment;

(d) one or more of the participants in the arrangement carries on an activity in another jurisdiction without being resident for tax purposes or creating a permanent establishment situated in that jurisdiction;

(e) such arrangement has a possible impact on the automatic exchange of information or the identification of beneficial ownership.

For the purposes of points 18 to 25 of this Article, Article 8ab and Annex IV, an arrangement shall also include a series of arrangements. An arrangement may comprise more than one step or part.

19. “reportable cross-border arrangement” means any cross-border arrangement that contains at least one of the hallmarks set out in Annex IV.

20. “hallmark” means a characteristic or feature of a cross-border arrangement that presents an indication of a potential risk of tax avoidance, as listed in Annex IV.

21. “intermediary” means any person that designs, markets, organises or makes available for implementation or manages the implementation of a reportable cross-border arrangement.

It also means any person that, having regard to the relevant facts and circumstances and based on available information and the relevant expertise and understanding required to provide such services, knows or could be reasonably expected to know that they have undertaken to provide, directly or by means of other persons, aid, assistance or advice with respect to designing, marketing, organising, making available for implementation or managing the implementation of a reportable cross-border arrangement. Any person shall have the right to provide evidence that such person did not know and could not reasonably be expected to know that that person was involved in a reportable cross-border arrangement. For this purpose, that person may refer to all relevant facts and circumstances as well as available information and their relevant expertise and understanding.

In order to be an intermediary, a person shall meet at least one of the following additional conditions:

(a) be resident for tax purposes in a Member State;

(b) have a permanent establishment in a Member State through which the services with respect to the arrangement are provided;

(c) be incorporated in, or governed by the laws of, a Member State;

(d) be registered with a professional association related to legal, taxation or consultancy services in a Member State.

22. “relevant taxpayer” means any person to whom a reportable cross-border arrangement is made available for implementation, or who is ready to implement a reportable cross-border arrangement or has implemented the first step of such an arrangement.

23. for the purposes of Article 8ab, “associated enterprise” means a person who is related to another person in at least one of the following ways:
- (a) a person participates in the management of another person by being in a position to exercise a significant influence over the other person;
 - (b) a person participates in the control of another person through a holding that exceeds 25 % of the voting rights;
 - (c) a person participates in the capital of another person through a right of ownership that, directly or indirectly, exceeds 25 % of the capital;
 - (d) a person is entitled to 25 % or more of the profits of another person.

If more than one person participates, as referred to in points (a) to (d), in the management, control, capital or profits of the same person, all persons concerned shall be regarded as associated enterprises.

If the same persons participate, as referred to in points (a) to (d), in the management, control, capital or profits of more than one person, all persons concerned shall be regarded as associated enterprises.

For the purposes of this point, a person who acts together with another person in respect of the voting rights or capital ownership of an entity shall be treated as holding a participation in all of the voting rights or capital ownership of that entity that are held by the other person.

In indirect participations, the fulfilment of requirements under point (c) shall be determined by multiplying the rates of holding through the successive tiers. A person holding more than 50 % of the voting rights shall be deemed to hold 100 %.

An individual, his or her spouse and his or her lineal ascendants or descendants shall be treated as a single person.

24. “marketable arrangement” means a cross-border arrangement that is designed, marketed, ready for implementation or made available for implementation without a need to be substantially customised.
25. “bespoke arrangement” means any cross-border arrangement that is not a marketable arrangement.”;

(2) the following Article is inserted:

‘Article 8ab

Scope and conditions of mandatory automatic exchange of information on reportable cross-border arrangements

1. Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to require intermediaries to file information that is within their knowledge, possession or control on reportable cross-border arrangements with the competent authorities within 30 days beginning:

- (a) on the day after the reportable cross-border arrangement is made available for implementation; or
- (b) on the day after the reportable cross-border arrangement is ready for implementation; or
- (c) when the first step in the implementation of the reportable cross-border arrangement has been made,

whichever occurs first.

Notwithstanding the first subparagraph, intermediaries referred to in the second paragraph of point 21 of Article 3 shall also be required to file information within 30 days beginning on the day after they provided, directly or by means of other persons, aid, assistance or advice.

2. In the case of marketable arrangements, Member States shall take the necessary measures to require that a periodic report be made by the intermediary every 3 months providing an update which contains new reportable information as referred to in points (a), (d), (g) and (h) of paragraph 14 that has become available since the last report was filed.

3. Where the intermediary is liable to file information on reportable cross-border arrangements with the competent authorities of more than one Member State, such information shall be filed only in the Member State that features first in the list below:

- (a) the Member State where the intermediary is resident for tax purposes;

- (b) the Member State where the intermediary has a permanent establishment through which the services with respect to the arrangement are provided;
- (c) the Member State which the intermediary is incorporated in or governed by the laws of;
- (d) the Member State where the intermediary is registered with a professional association related to legal, taxation or consultancy services.

4. Where, pursuant to paragraph 3, there is a multiple reporting obligation, the intermediary shall be exempt from filing the information if it has proof, in accordance with national law, that the same information has been filed in another Member State.

5. Each Member State may take the necessary measures to give intermediaries the right to a waiver from filing information on a reportable cross-border arrangement where the reporting obligation would breach the legal professional privilege under the national law of that Member State. In such circumstances, each Member State shall take the necessary measures to require intermediaries to notify, without delay, any other intermediary or, if there is no such intermediary, the relevant taxpayer of their reporting obligations under paragraph 6.

Intermediaries may only be entitled to a waiver under the first subparagraph to the extent that they operate within the limits of the relevant national laws that define their professions.

6. Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to require that, where there is no intermediary or the intermediary notifies the relevant taxpayer or another intermediary of the application of a waiver under paragraph 5, the obligation to file information on a reportable cross-border arrangement lie with the other notified intermediary, or, if there is no such intermediary, with the relevant taxpayer.

7. The relevant taxpayer with whom the reporting obligation lies shall file the information within 30 days, beginning on the day after the reportable cross-border arrangement is made available for implementation to that relevant taxpayer, or is ready for implementation by the relevant taxpayer, or when the first step in its implementation has been made in relation to the relevant taxpayer, whichever occurs first.

Where the relevant taxpayer has an obligation to file information on the reportable cross-border arrangement with the competent authorities of more than one Member State, such information shall be filed only with the competent authorities of the Member State that features first in the list below:

- (a) the Member State where the relevant taxpayer is resident for tax purposes;
- (b) the Member State where the relevant taxpayer has a permanent establishment benefiting from the arrangement;
- (c) the Member State where the relevant taxpayer receives income or generates profits, although the relevant taxpayer is not resident for tax purposes and has no permanent establishment in any Member State;
- (d) the Member State where the relevant taxpayer carries on an activity, although the relevant taxpayer is not resident for tax purposes and has no permanent establishment in any Member State.

8. Where, pursuant to paragraph 7, there is a multiple reporting obligation, the relevant taxpayer shall be exempt from filing the information if it has proof, in accordance with national law, that the same information has been filed in another Member State.

9. Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to require that, where there is more than one intermediary, the obligation to file information on the reportable cross-border arrangement lie with all intermediaries involved in the same reportable cross-border arrangement.

An intermediary shall be exempt from filing the information only to the extent that it has proof, in accordance with national law, that the same information referred to in paragraph 14 has already been filed by another intermediary.

10. Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to require that, where the reporting obligation lies with the relevant taxpayer and where there is more than one relevant taxpayer, the relevant taxpayer that is to file information in accordance with paragraph 6 be the one that features first in the list below:

- (a) the relevant taxpayer that agreed the reportable cross-border arrangement with the intermediary;
- (b) the relevant taxpayer that manages the implementation of the arrangement.

Any relevant taxpayer shall only be exempt from filing the information to the extent that it has proof, in accordance with national law, that the same information referred to in paragraph 14 has already been filed by another relevant taxpayer.

11. Each Member State may take the necessary measures to require that each relevant taxpayer file information about their use of the arrangement to the tax administration in each of the years for which they use it.

12. Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to require intermediaries and relevant taxpayers to file information on reportable cross-border arrangements the first step of which was implemented between the date of entry into force and the date of application of this Directive. Intermediaries and relevant taxpayers, as appropriate, shall file information on those reportable cross-border arrangements by 31 August 2020.

13. The competent authority of a Member State where the information was filed pursuant to paragraphs 1 to 12 of this Article shall, by means of an automatic exchange, communicate the information specified in paragraph 14 of this Article to the competent authorities of all other Member States, in accordance with the practical arrangements adopted pursuant to Article 21.

14. The information to be communicated by the competent authority of a Member State under paragraph 13 shall contain the following, as applicable:

- (a) the identification of intermediaries and relevant taxpayers, including their name, date and place of birth (in the case of an individual), residence for tax purposes, TIN and, where appropriate, the persons that are associated enterprises to the relevant taxpayer;
- (b) details of the hallmarks set out in Annex IV that make the cross-border arrangement reportable;
- (c) a summary of the content of the reportable cross-border arrangement, including a reference to the name by which it is commonly known, if any, and a description in abstract terms of the relevant business activities or arrangements, without leading to the disclosure of a commercial, industrial or professional secret or of a commercial process, or of information the disclosure of which would be contrary to public policy;
- (d) the date on which the first step in implementing the reportable cross-border arrangement has been made or will be made;
- (e) details of the national provisions that form the basis of the reportable cross-border arrangement;
- (f) the value of the reportable cross-border arrangement;
- (g) the identification of the Member State of the relevant taxpayer(s) and any other Member States which are likely to be concerned by the reportable cross-border arrangement;
- (h) the identification of any other person in a Member State likely to be affected by the reportable cross-border arrangement, indicating to which Member States such person is linked.

15. The fact that a tax administration does not react to a reportable cross-border arrangement shall not imply any acceptance of the validity or tax treatment of that arrangement.

16. To facilitate the exchange of information referred to in paragraph 13 of this Article, the Commission shall adopt the practical arrangements necessary for the implementation of this Article, including measures to standardise the communication of the information set out in paragraph 14 of this Article, as part of the procedure for establishing the standard form provided for in Article 20(5).

17. The Commission shall not have access to information referred to in points (a), (c) and (h) of paragraph 14.

18. The automatic exchange of information shall take place within one month of the end of the quarter in which the information was filed. The first information shall be communicated by 31 October 2020.;

(3) in Article 20, paragraph 5 is replaced by the following:

‘5. The Commission shall adopt standard forms, including the linguistic arrangements, in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 26(2), in the following cases:

- (a) for the automatic exchange of information on advance cross-border rulings and advance pricing arrangements pursuant to Article 8a before 1 January 2017;
- (b) for the automatic exchange of information on reportable cross-border arrangements pursuant to Article 8ab before 30 June 2019.

Those standard forms shall not exceed the components for the exchange of information listed in Articles 8a(6) and 8ab(14), and such other related fields which are linked to these components which are necessary to achieve the objectives of Articles 8a and 8ab, respectively.

The linguistic arrangements referred to in the first subparagraph shall not preclude Member States from communicating the information referred to in Articles 8a and 8ab in any of the official languages of the Union. However, those linguistic arrangements may provide that the key elements of such information shall also be sent in another official language of the Union.;

(4) in Article 21, paragraph 5 is replaced by the following:

'5. The Commission shall by 31 December 2017 develop and provide with technical and logistical support a secure Member State central directory on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation where information to be communicated in the framework of Article 8a(1) and (2) shall be recorded in order to satisfy the automatic exchange provided for in those paragraphs.

The Commission shall by 31 December 2019 develop and provide with technical and logistical support a secure Member State central directory on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation where information to be communicated in the framework of Article 8ab(13), (14) and (16) shall be recorded in order to satisfy the automatic exchange provided for in those paragraphs.

The competent authorities of all Member States shall have access to the information recorded in that directory. The Commission shall also have access to the information recorded in that directory, however within the limitations set out in Articles 8a(8) and 8ab(17). The necessary practical arrangements shall be adopted by the Commission in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 26(2).

Until that secure central directory is operational, the automatic exchange provided for in Article 8a(1) and (2) and Article 8ab(13), (14) and (16) shall be carried out in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article and the applicable practical arrangements.;

(5) in Article 23, paragraph 3 is replaced by the following:

'3. Member States shall communicate to the Commission a yearly assessment of the effectiveness of the automatic exchange of information referred to in Articles 8, 8a, 8aa and 8ab as well as the practical results achieved. The Commission shall, by means of implementing acts, adopt the form and the conditions of communication for that yearly assessment. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 26(2).;

(6) Article 25a is replaced by the following:

'Article 25a

Penalties

Member States shall lay down the rules on penalties applicable to infringements of national provisions adopted pursuant to this Directive and concerning Articles 8aa and 8ab, and shall take all measures necessary to ensure that they are implemented. The penalties provided for shall be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.;

(7) Article 27 is replaced by the following:

'Article 27

Reporting

1. Every five years after 1 January 2013, the Commission shall submit a report on the application of this Directive to the European Parliament and to the Council.

2. Every two years after 1 July 2020, the Member States and the Commission shall evaluate the relevance of Annex IV and the Commission shall present a report to the Council. That report shall, where appropriate, be accompanied by a legislative proposal.;

(8) Annex IV, the text of which is set out in the Annex to this Directive, is added.

Article 2

1. Member States shall adopt and publish, by 31 December 2019 at the latest, the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive. They shall immediately inform the Commission thereof.

They shall apply those provisions from 1 July 2020.

When Member States adopt those provisions, they shall contain a reference to this Directive or be accompanied by such a reference on the occasion of their official publication. Member States shall determine how such reference is to be made.

2. Member States shall communicate to the Commission the text of the main provisions of national law which they adopt in the field covered by this Directive.

Article 3

This Directive shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Article 4

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 25 May 2018.

For the Council
The President
V. GORANOV

ANNEX

'ANNEX IV

HALLMARKS

Part I. Main benefit test

Generic hallmarks under category A and specific hallmarks under category B and under points (b)(i), (c) and (d) of paragraph 1 of category C may only be taken into account where they fulfil the "main benefit test".

That test will be satisfied if it can be established that the main benefit or one of the main benefits which, having regard to all relevant facts and circumstances, a person may reasonably expect to derive from an arrangement is the obtaining of a tax advantage.

In the context of hallmark under paragraph 1 of category C, the presence of conditions set out in points (b)(i), (c) or (d) of paragraph 1 of category C can not alone be a reason for concluding that an arrangement satisfies the main benefit test.

Part II. Categories of hallmarks

A. Generic hallmarks linked to the main benefit test

1. An arrangement where the relevant taxpayer or a participant in the arrangement undertakes to comply with a condition of confidentiality which may require them not to disclose how the arrangement could secure a tax advantage vis-à-vis other intermediaries or the tax authorities.
2. An arrangement where the intermediary is entitled to receive a fee (or interest, remuneration for finance costs and other charges) for the arrangement and that fee is fixed by reference to:
 - (a) the amount of the tax advantage derived from the arrangement; or
 - (b) whether or not a tax advantage is actually derived from the arrangement. This would include an obligation on the intermediary to partially or fully refund the fees where the intended tax advantage derived from the arrangement was not partially or fully achieved.
3. An arrangement that has substantially standardised documentation and/or structure and is available to more than one relevant taxpayer without a need to be substantially customised for implementation.

B. Specific hallmarks linked to the main benefit test

1. An arrangement whereby a participant in the arrangement takes contrived steps which consist in acquiring a loss-making company, discontinuing the main activity of such company and using its losses in order to reduce its tax liability, including through a transfer of those losses to another jurisdiction or by the acceleration of the use of those losses.
2. An arrangement that has the effect of converting income into capital, gifts or other categories of revenue which are taxed at a lower level or exempt from tax.
3. An arrangement which includes circular transactions resulting in the round-tripping of funds, namely through involving interposed entities without other primary commercial function or transactions that offset or cancel each other or that have other similar features.

C. Specific hallmarks related to cross-border transactions

1. An arrangement that involves deductible cross-border payments made between two or more associated enterprises where at least one of the following conditions occurs:
 - (a) the recipient is not resident for tax purposes in any tax jurisdiction;
 - (b) although the recipient is resident for tax purposes in a jurisdiction, that jurisdiction either:
 - (i) does not impose any corporate tax or imposes corporate tax at the rate of zero or almost zero; or
 - (ii) is included in a list of third-country jurisdictions which have been assessed by Member States collectively or within the framework of the OECD as being non-cooperative;

- (c) the payment benefits from a full exemption from tax in the jurisdiction where the recipient is resident for tax purposes;
 - (d) the payment benefits from a preferential tax regime in the jurisdiction where the recipient is resident for tax purposes;
2. Deductions for the same depreciation on the asset are claimed in more than one jurisdiction.
 3. Relief from double taxation in respect of the same item of income or capital is claimed in more than one jurisdiction.
 4. There is an arrangement that includes transfers of assets and where there is a material difference in the amount being treated as payable in consideration for the assets in those jurisdictions involved.
- D. Specific hallmarks concerning automatic exchange of information and beneficial ownership
1. An arrangement which may have the effect of undermining the reporting obligation under the laws implementing Union legislation or any equivalent agreements on the automatic exchange of Financial Account information, including agreements with third countries, or which takes advantage of the absence of such legislation or agreements. Such arrangements include at least the following:
 - (a) the use of an account, product or investment that is not, or purports not to be, a Financial Account, but has features that are substantially similar to those of a Financial Account;
 - (b) the transfer of Financial Accounts or assets to, or the use of jurisdictions that are not bound by the automatic exchange of Financial Account information with the State of residence of the relevant taxpayer;
 - (c) the reclassification of income and capital into products or payments that are not subject to the automatic exchange of Financial Account information;
 - (d) the transfer or conversion of a Financial Institution or a Financial Account or the assets therein into a Financial Institution or a Financial Account or assets not subject to reporting under the automatic exchange of Financial Account information;
 - (e) the use of legal entities, arrangements or structures that eliminate or purport to eliminate reporting of one or more Account Holders or Controlling Persons under the automatic exchange of Financial Account information;
 - (f) arrangements that undermine, or exploit weaknesses in, the due diligence procedures used by Financial Institutions to comply with their obligations to report Financial Account information, including the use of jurisdictions with inadequate or weak regimes of enforcement of anti-money-laundering legislation or with weak transparency requirements for legal persons or legal arrangements.
 2. An arrangement involving a non-transparent legal or beneficial ownership chain with the use of persons, legal arrangements or structures:
 - (a) that do not carry on a substantive economic activity supported by adequate staff, equipment, assets and premises; and
 - (b) that are incorporated, managed, resident, controlled or established in any jurisdiction other than the jurisdiction of residence of one or more of the beneficial owners of the assets held by such persons, legal arrangements or structures; and
 - (c) where the beneficial owners of such persons, legal arrangements or structures, as defined in Directive (EU) 2015/849, are made unidentifiable.
- E. Specific hallmarks concerning transfer pricing
1. An arrangement which involves the use of unilateral safe harbour rules.
 2. An arrangement involving the transfer of hard-to-value intangibles. The term “hard-to-value intangibles” covers intangibles or rights in intangibles for which, at the time of their transfer between associated enterprises:
 - (a) no reliable comparables exist; and

- (b) at the time the transaction was entered into, the projections of future cash flows or income expected to be derived from the transferred intangible, or the assumptions used in valuing the intangible are highly uncertain, making it difficult to predict the level of ultimate success of the intangible at the time of the transfer.
3. An arrangement involving an intragroup cross-border transfer of functions and/or risks and/or assets, if the projected annual earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT), during the three-year period after the transfer, of the transferor or transferors, are less than 50 % of the projected annual EBIT of such transferor or transferors if the transfer had not been made.'
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