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CREDIT OPINION
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Update

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Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe

Update to credit analysis

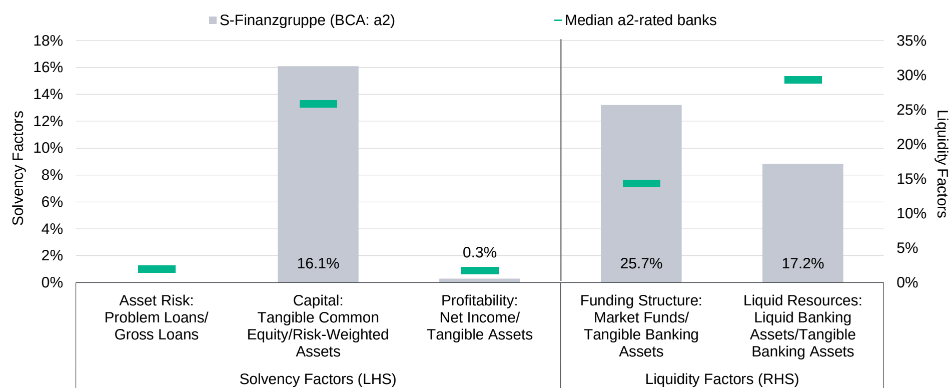
Summary

Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe's (S-Finanzgruppe) Corporate Family Rating (CFR) is Aa2(negative) and its Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) a2. The negative outlook reflects our expectation that sustained and increasingly adverse operating conditions for banks in Germany will elevate the risk on profitability and credit quality for S-Finanzgruppe and weaken its overall financial resilience; these pressures are further amplified by the implications of the coronavirus outbreak.

S-Finanzgruppe's Aa2 Corporate Family Rating (CFR) reflects the group's a2 BCA and Adjusted BCA; two notches of rating uplift from our Advanced Loss Given Failure (LGF) analysis which results in a very low loss-given-failure; and one notch of rating uplift from our assumption of moderate government support reflecting the size and high relevance of S-Finanzgruppe to Germany's financial stability.

S-Finanzgruppe's a2 BCA reflects its sound asset quality, its strong and stable capitalisation, as well as its conservative, deposit-focused funding profile and sizeable liquidity. The BCA also takes into account that S-Finanzgruppe's profitability will face sustained challenges from the low interest rates, mostly pressuring member banks' revenues because of their high dependence on net interest income.

Rating Scorecard - Key financial ratios*



Note: *The capital ratio shown is S-Finanzgruppe's Tier 1 ratio at the end of 2019 (latest available) as a proxy for its TCE/CET1 ratio, which is not disclosed.
Source: Moody's Financial Metrics

In assigning the BCA and CFR to S-Finanzgruppe, we assess the group as if it operates as a single entity. This approach considers group member institutions' cohesion, solidarity - particularly between the savings banks - as well as their high level of co-operation. However, the members of S-Finanzgruppe do not constitute a single economic entity that functions with centralised management and control at the group level. The BCA and CFR apply only to the creditworthiness of the group as a whole rather than to individual members of the group.

Credit strengths

» Strong cohesion among member institutions of S-Finanzgruppe, codified in institutional protection schemes (IPS).

» Strong capital provides ample cushion for unexpected shocks.

» Sizeable liquidity benefits from prime access to German depositors and balances the market funding dependence of Landesbanks.

Credit challenges

» Profitability is under pressure from low interest rates, compounded by negative economic repercussion from the coronavirus pandemic

» Moderate tail risks from German Landesbanks' international exposures persists and mainly relate to commercial real estate lending.

Outlook

» The negative outlook reflects our expectation that sustained low interest rates, as well as the increasingly adverse operating conditions, also associated with the coronavirus shock, will elevate the risk on the group's solvency.

Factors that could lead to an upgrade

» Upward pressure on S-Finanzgruppe's CFR could only arise from upward pressure on its BCA driven by a significantly and sustainably higher profitability of the sector together with improvements of its asset risk profile through reduced concentration risks in combination with sustained levels of capitalisation.

Factors that could lead to a downgrade

» Downward pressure on S-Finanzgruppe's CFR could originate from pressure on its BCA, in particular if the group's overall solvency remains vulnerable because of its low profitability.

» A support scenario for a number of member banks, in which necessary funds significantly compress the sector's overall capitalisation, could also exert downward pressure on the rating.

» A deterioration in the Strong+ macro profile of Germany could lead to downward rating pressure.

Key indicators

Exhibit 2

Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe (Consolidated Financials) [1]

	12-19[2]	12-18[2]	12-17[2]	12-16[2]	12-15[2]	CAGR/Avg.[3]
Total Assets (EUR Billion)	2,273.5	2,178.2	2,129.5	2,118.8	2,157.7	1.3[4]
Total Assets (USD Billion)	2,552.0	2,490.0	2,557.1	2,234.8	2,343.9	2.1[4]
Net Interest Margin (%)	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.4[5]
PPI / Average RWA (%)	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2[6]
Net Income / Tangible Assets (%)	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3[5]
Cost / Income Ratio (%)	73.3	70.8	68.7	66.8	69.2	69.8[5]
Market Funds / Tangible Banking Assets (%)	25.7	26.6	26.8	27.1	28.4	26.9[5]
Liquid Banking Assets / Tangible Banking Assets (%)	17.2	17.1	16.8	14.9	15.1	16.2[5]
Gross Loans / Due to Customers (%)	97.4	98.0	97.5	99.5	--	98.1[5]

[1] All figures and ratios are adjusted using Moody's standard adjustments. [2] Basel III - fully loaded or transitional phase-in; LOCAL GAAP. [3] May include rounding differences because of the scale of reported amounts. [4] Compound annual growth rate (%) based on the periods for the latest accounting regime. [5] Simple average of periods for the latest accounting regime. [6] Simple average of Basel III periods.

Sources: Moody's Investors Service and company filings

Profile

S-Finanzgruppe is a German financials institutions group that consists of more then 500 independent enterprises, including 371 savings banks[1], as well as six Landesbanks, including Bayerische Landesbank (BayernLB, Aa3 stable/Aa3 stable, baa2)[2], Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg (LBBW, Aa3 stable/Aa3 stable, baa2), Landesbank Berlin AG (LBB, Aa2 stable/Aa2 stable, baa2), Landesbank Hessen-Thueringen GZ (Helaba, Aa3 stable/Aa3 stable, baa2), Landesbank Saar (SaarLB, A1 stable/A1 stable, ba1), Norddeutsche Landesbank GZ (NORD/LB, A3 stable/A3 stable, ba3), the asset manager DekaBank Deutsche Girozentrale (DekaBank, Aa2 stable/Aa2 stable, baa2), eight Landesbausparkassen (regional building societies) and 11 primary insurance groups and a number of other financial service companies. Aggregate data for S-Finanzgruppe includes these entities, as well as Hamburg Commercial Bank AG (HCOB, Baa2 stable/Baa2 stable, ba2) which is still affiliated with the group via the institutional protection scheme (Haftungsverbund).

As Germany's largest banking group, S-Finanzgruppe commands a market share for lending to domestic corporates and self-employed of around 40%, as well as around 35% for mortgage lending to private households. As of 31 December 2019 (latest available), S-Finanzgruppe reported total aggregated assets of €2.27 trillion (2018: €2.18 trillion), of which around 60% relate to the group of savings banks.

The German Savings Banks Association (*Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband*, DSGV) is the umbrella organisation of S-Finanzgruppe. Entities of S-Finanzgruppe are independent and managed on a decentralised basis. Most of the group's savings banks are institutions incorporated under public law and operated under municipal trusteeship.

For more information, please see S-Finanzgruppe's issuer profile, the German Banking System Profile, as well as the update on the German banking system, published on 25 March 2021, and our comprehensive analysis which concludes that German banks need large cost cuts to stay profitable, published on 25 January 2021.

Recent developments

Based on DSGV numbers announced on 10 March, German savings banks reported a net income after taxes of €1.6 billion in 2020, compared with €1.8 billion in 2019 and 2018. Pre-tax profits slightly declined to €4.1 billion in 2020 from €4.2 billion the year before (2018: €4.5 billion).

The savings banks' lower earnings were driven by around 2% lower pre-provision income to €9.4 billion in 2020 (2019: €9.6 billion; 2018: €10.0 billion), reflecting around 3.3% lower net interest income at €19.6 billion (2019: €20.2 billion; 2018: 21.3 billion), balanced by around 2.4% higher fee and commission income of €8.5 billion (2019: €8.3 billion; 2018: €7.8 billion). The revenue pressure was mitigated by around 1.3% lower operating expenses at €19.0 billion in 2020 (2019: €19.2 billion; 2018: €18.9 billion), reflecting 1.4% reduction in personnel expense to around €12.1 billion and around 1.2% lower administrative expenses of €6.9 billion. In 2020, savings banks' booked credit provisions of around €1.3 billion (2019: €0.6 billion), impaired financial securities by €0.6 billion (2019: reversal of €0.6 billion) and added to capital reserves around €2.7 billion, compared with €4.2 billion in 2019 (2018: €3.1 billion).

The coronavirus pandemic is causing an unprecedented shock to the global economy and the full extent of the economic downswing will be unclear for some time. In Europe, the pandemic adds to late-cycle risks for banks and will weigh on banks' asset quality and profitability. We expect fiscal policy measures, as implemented by a variety of euro-area governments, to mitigate the economic contraction caused by the pandemic. However, in the current pandemic-induced recession and its aftermath, capital levels will be a key differentiator of credit profiles among banks. Generally, banks are facing a deterioration in asset quality and reductions in profitability from already low levels, while central banks are providing extraordinary levels of liquidity, and governments have strong incentives to support banking systems to foster an eventual recovery. Thus, when comparing a bank with its peers, the level of capital with which it entered this recession and its ability to retain capital throughout the next several years take on particular importance.

The European Central Bank (ECB) announced a series of measures to help European Union (EU) economies weather the widening effects of the pandemic, temporarily increasing banks' liquidity provisions, as well as lowering regulatory capital and liquidity requirements. As part of these temporary measures, the ECB increased its targeted long-term refinancing operations (TLTRO III) under more favorable terms, as well as its financial asset purchase programme, while refraining from lowering the ultralow interest rates further. The temporary suspension of buffer requirements for regulatory capital and the liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) gives banks greater flexibility and additional leeway to absorb the economic impacts, such as asset-quality declines. Overall, the package aims to help the banks continue to finance corporates and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) suffering from the effects of the pandemic. We believe that the ECB's measures will provide limited relief for banks and their borrowers, and that it will require significant fiscal policy measures by the EU and its member states to avert higher default rates in banks' lending books.

Germany launched a large stimulus package, and the government's support is crucial for corporate borrowers in industries immediately hurt by the pandemic like airlines, tourism, retail and the shipping sector, as well as smaller companies experiencing weak liquidity and high leverage. The scale of the support package is unprecedented and is far larger than the support provided during the 2008-09 financial crisis. At the same time, the government made it easier to access its furlough scheme and extended it to a broader pool of workers, which will limit the spike in unemployment and the fall in domestic consumption. The measures, which are adapted according to the evolution of the economic effects of the pandemic, add to Germany's already expansionary fiscal policy stance, as well as to automatic stabilizers that support household incomes when unemployment increases.

Detailed credit considerations

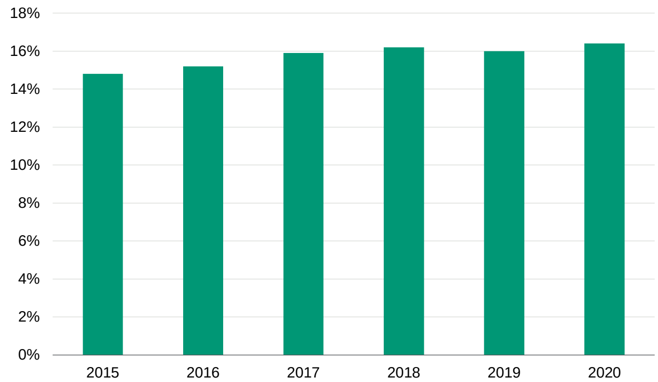
Strong capital provides ample cushion for unexpected shocks

Our assigned aa2 Capital score for S-Finanzgruppe reflects the group's solid capitalization which provides substantial buffer against a severe economic downturn. Our assessment takes into account additional capital-equivalent reserves and limitations around capital fungibility within members of the group. At end-2019 (latest available), S-Finanzgruppe's reported Tier 1 ratio was 16.1%, compared with 15.9% in 2018. The moderate increase reflects higher equity due to the addition to capital reserves (*Fonds für allgemeine Bankrisiken*), which overcompensates rising risk-weighted assets, driven by loan growth.

We believe that the German savings banks have ample capital to absorb considerable adverse market developments, in particular in the context of the coronavirus shock. However, we expect declining capital ratios for member banks of S-Finanzgruppe during 2021, reflecting moderately deteriorating asset quality, which leads to rising risk-weighted assets. In addition to equity and their reported capital ratios, German savings banks have additional fully taxed reserves, which are undisclosed and exist in accordance with local accounting rules (Handelgesetzbuch, HGB).

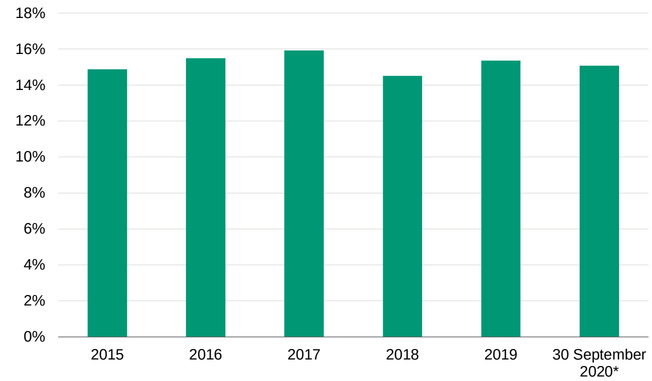
Further, savings banks usually apply the standard approach which leads to higher risk-weighted assets (RWA) compared to the internal rating based approaches, which prevail at Landesbanks, accounting for about at 34% of their assets in 2019 (latest available; 2018: 33%). At the end of 2020, the savings banks' average Tier 1 ratio was 16.4% (2019: 16.0%).[3] This compares with an average[4] Tier 1 ratio of Landesbanks of 15.1% at end-September 2020 (2019: 15.4%), which ranged between 13.3%-16.6% at that time, and 13.4%-16.5% for 2019 (2018: 7.7%-17.0%).

Exhibit 3
Savings banks exhibit Tier 1 ratios of 16.4% at end-2020*
Data in %, comparing Tier 1 capital to risk-weighted assets



Note: *The chart shows the average Tier 1 ratio of savings banks. Savings banks usually apply the standard approach to calculate risk-weighted assets (RWA).
Source: DSGV

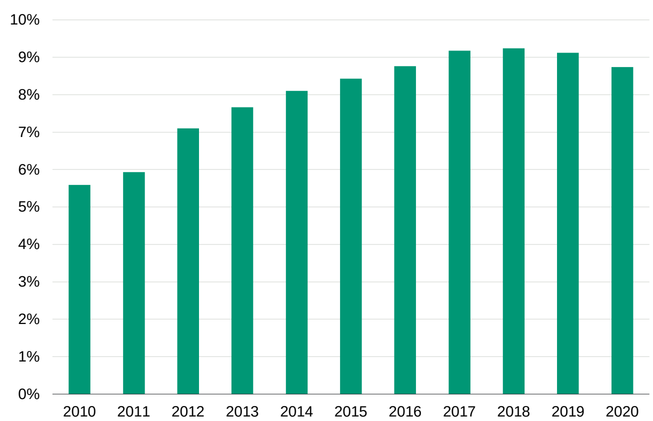
Exhibit 4
Landesbanks' average Tier 1 ratio fluctuates around 15%*
Data in %, comparing Tier 1 capital to risk-weighted assets



Note: *The group of banks includes BayernLB, DekaBank, Helaba, LBBW, NORD/LB, and SaarLB, similar to Deutsche Bundesbank's breakdown of "Landesbanks".
Source: Company reports

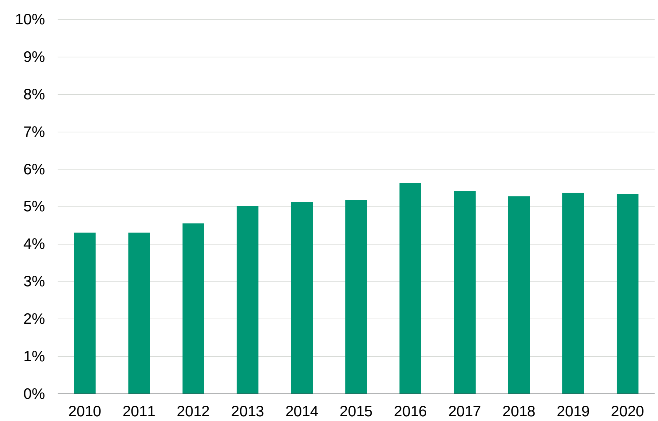
Our favorable capital assessment for S-Finanzgruppe also takes into account the savings banks' high leverage ratio, because equity accounted for 8.7% of their assets at the end of 2020 (2019: 9.1%). This compares to 5.3% for the group of Landesbanks (2019: 5.4%), which is broadly stable at the 5% level since 2013 but meaningfully lower than for savings banks.

Exhibit 5
Savings banks operate with much higher equity compared ...
Data in %, comparing equity to assets (leverage ratio)



Note: The chart shows aggregate equity of all German savings banks.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Exhibit 6
... with the aggregate equity of Landesbanks*
Data in %, comparing equity to assets (leverage ratio)



Note: *This group includes BayernLB, DekaBank, Helaba, LBBW, NORD/LB, and SaarLB.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Our capital assessment for S-Finanzgruppe considers certain advantages which arise from their mutual support, codified in group's set of several institutional protection schemes (IPS).[5] Member banks of S-Finanzgruppe benefit from the omission of large lending limits as well as lower regulatory capital requirements because intragroup exposures benefit from a 0% risk weight. Losing these sector-specific regulations, for example triggered by the absence of support for a troubled member bank, will have negative repercussions for their capital ratios. Although we regard such a scenario unlikely, the effect would be materially negative for creditors.

As a large, diverse group of independent financial institutions capital cannot be freely allocated within S-Finanzgruppe, and the risk of member banks requiring support cannot be ruled out. Following the announced balance sheet clean-up and capital strengthening measures for NORD/LB, we believe that the risk profiles for Landesbanks are better aligned with their core banking activities, rendering them more robust to event risks or adverse economic conditions.

Profitability pressure from low interest rates and coronavirus pandemic

S-Finanzgruppe's assigned b1 Profitability score is two notches below its initial score, the weakest individual factor that we assing to Germany largest financial institutions group. Our assessment is based on the combined results of all member banks and reflects the expectation that savings banks and Landesbanks are increasingly challenged by the low interest rate environment, which, more recently, is compounded by the negative economic repercussion from the coronavirus pandemic which will lead to rising credit provisions.

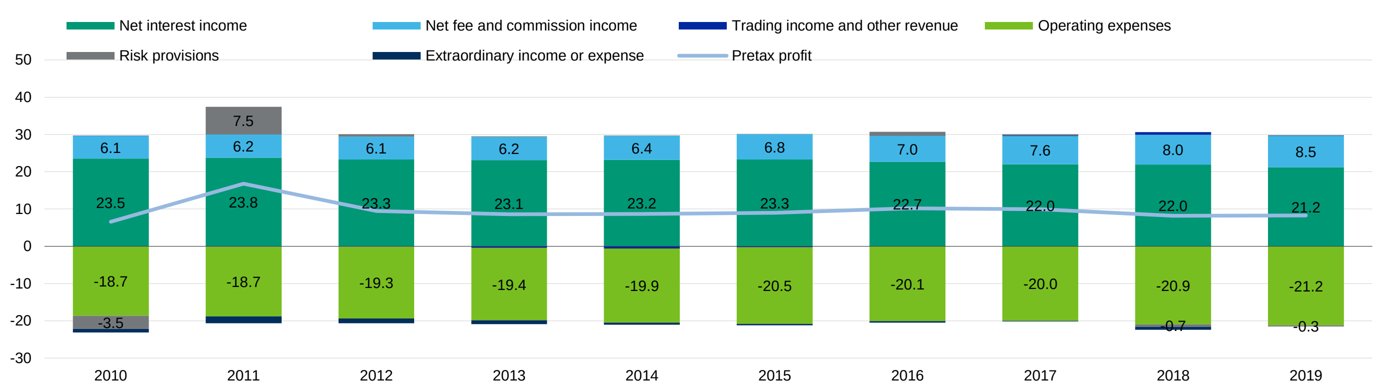
Until the breakout of the pandemic, savings banks benefited from the benign economic conditions in Germany. Benign asset quality and ample loan growth helped to balance declining interest margins and rising operating expenses, with the latter mostly driven by nonpersonnel related costs. Over the three-year period 2018-20, savings banks increased loans in aggregate by 17.6%. In 2020, for example, loans increased by 5.0% (2019: 4.5%), driven by +5.5% higher lending to corporates and self-employed (2019: +5.4%) and mortgages to private households and corporates which increased by 7.1% (2019: +6.4%).[6]

For 2021 and beyond, we expect rising pressure on interest income, driven by lower loan growth and further interest margin pressure, which is partly driven by the savings banks' decision to not introduce broad-based negative interest rates to their retail clientele. We expect that the savings banks will continue to carefully manage their operating expenses. However, given their public mandate to offer financial services through an intensive branch network countrywide, we expect moderate potential for achieving sizeable cost savings. The savings banks' cost pressure is somewhat mitigated by a gradual reduction in work force, at around 3% in 2019 (latest available), as a result of natural fluctuation, a development which is comparable to previous years.

Over the last five years, the savings banks' cost-to-income ratio somewhat deteriorated to 66.8% in 2020, compared with 65.5% in 2018 and 64.8% in 2016, which also reflects rising investments into digital solutions.[7]

Exhibit 7

Savings banks reported stable pretax profits over the last decade and benefited from very benign asset quality
Data in € billion



Note: The savings banks' pretax profit is before the addition to capital reserves.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Pretax and net income figures published by Deutsche Bundesbank for savings banks somewhat differ from numbers disclosed by DSGV. This is mainly because the savings banks' association considers the addition to capital reserves (*Fonds für allgemeine Bankrisiken*) as provision expense, which reduces pretax profits. In contrast, the disclosures by Deutsche Bundesbank follow the breakdown of local accounting rules (HGB), where the fully taxed addition to capital reserves is reported “below the line”, i.e. after net income.

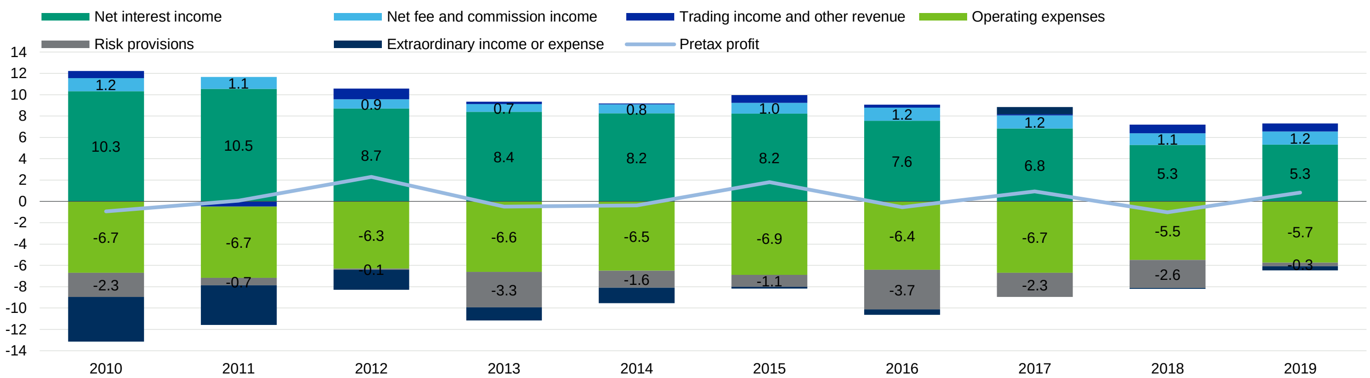
Based on Deutsche Bundesbank data, German savings banks reported pre-tax profits (before the addition to capital reserves) of €8.2 billion in 2019 (latest available), compared with €8.2 billion in 2018 (2017: €9.9 billion). The stable profits were driven by declining pre-provision income to €8.5 billion in 2019 (2018: €9.7 billion, 2017: €9.8 billion), reflecting lower net interest income at €21.2 billion (2018: 22.0 billion), balanced by slightly higher fee income of €8.5 billion (2018: €8.0 billion), broadly stable operating expenses of €21.2 billion (2018: €20.9 billion) and further declining credit provisions to €0.3 billion, compared with €0.7 billion in 2018. In 2019, the savings banks added around €4.4 billion to capital reserves, compared with €4.1 billion in 2018.

Since 2010, pretax profits for the group of German Landesbanks oscillated around break even, reflecting large swings in trading income and risk provisions, with the latter mostly driven by changing asset quality of ship loans. The sizeable reduction of revenues over the last decade from around €12.2 billion in 2010 to around €7.3 billion in 2019 reflects the reduction of assets by around 43% over the same period and a declining number of banks included in this group.[8]

Exhibit 8

Compared to savings banks, Landesbank's pretax profits are very low and volatile*

Data in € billion



Note: *Included banks are BayernLB, DekaBank, Helaba, LBBW, NORD/LB, and SaarLB. 2020 figures not yet published from Deutsche Bundesbank.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Based on aggregate data for S-Finanzgruppe, Germany's largest financial institutions group, reported pre-tax profits of €4.6 billion in 2019 (latest available), compared with €3.1 billion in 2018 (2017: €5.7 billion). The higher result reflects lower credit provisions, which went down to €0.3 billion from €3.6 billion in 2018 which was due to restructuring measures, which NORD/LB announced in October 2018. Pre-provision income declined by around 10% to €10.2 billion, compared with €11.3 billion in 2018, driven by lower net interest income (2019: €27.8 billion; 2018: €28.7 billion), slightly higher operating expenses (2019: €28.0 billion; 2018: €27.5 billion), and balanced by around 9% higher net fee income (2018: €9.6 billion).

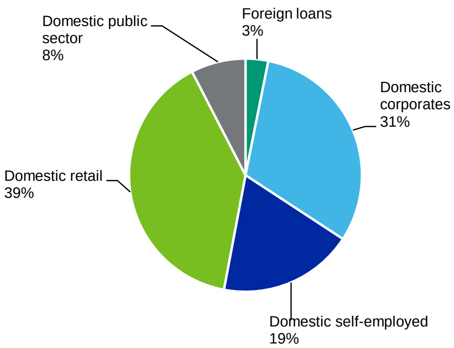
At around 75%, S-Finanzgruppe's revenues are highly dependent on net interest income. During 2019, the group's aggregate net interest margin (calculated as net interest income compared with customer loans) further declined to 2.12%, compared with 2.29% in 2018 and from 2.46% in 2017. The sector's efficiency metrics compare less favorably with those of its international peers, as reflected by a cost-to-income ratio of around 73% in 2019 and 71% in 2018. We consider cost containment a key challenge for the group on back of the low interest-rate environment and investments into digitalization.

Sound asset quality reflecting almost exclusive lending to the German economy

S-Finanzgruppe's Asset Risk score of a2 primarily reflects the average risk profile of German households and the corporate sector throughout the economic cycle. Risk concentrations in export-driven industries, such as the automotive and the cyclical construction sector, are a key feature of Germany's economic structure. Savings bank's manage a very diversified loan book with usually low to medium loan sizes, a credit positive. However, we expect the credit conditions for member banks of S-Finanzgruppe to weaken, reflecting economic uncertainties associated with the coronavirus outbreak.

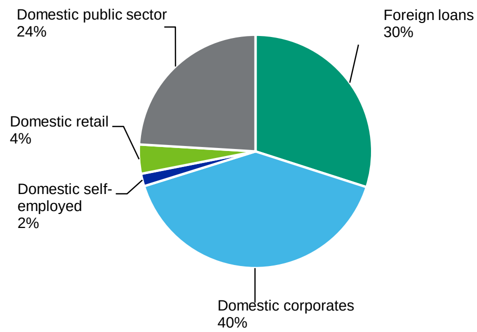
Between 2015 and 2020, savings banks increased the exposure to domestic corporate loans (including self-employed) from around 52.5% to around 55.4%.[9] We believe that the sizeable loan growth to these borrowers to €490[10] billion at end-2020 exposes the banks to the risk of higher credit provisions under stressed economic conditions. Germany's savings banks exhibit high concentrations to residential properties, accounting for around 57% of total loans (2015: around 51%). We believe that the banks apply conservative underwriting criteria, leading to moderate loan-to-values. However, German residential real estate prices continue to accelerate, with indications of price growth outpacing fundamentals, particularly in large metropolitan areas. The savings banks' high exposure to this asset class could impose future risks to asset quality and profitability, for example if significant price corrections or rising unemployment trigger higher problem loans and thus higher loan-loss charges.

Exhibit 9
Loan book breakdown for savings banks
Data as of year-end 2020



Note: The chart shows selected loan categories in accordance with the classification of Deutsche Bundesbank.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Exhibit 10
Landesbanks have sizeable foreign loans*
Data as of year-end 2020



Note: *Included banks are BayernLB, DekaBank, Helaba, LBBW, NORD/LB, and SaarLB.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

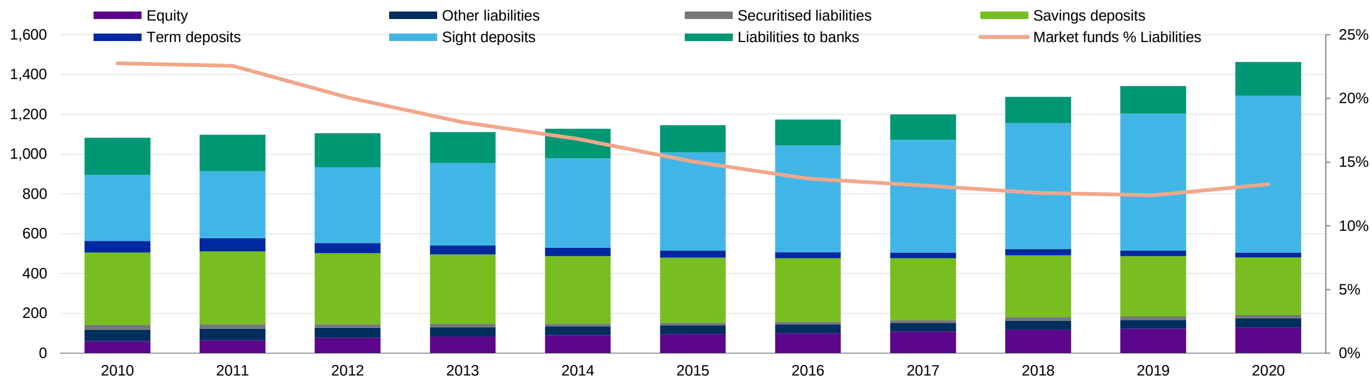
Over the last decade, S-Finanzgruppe's risk profile benefited from the reduction of Landesbanks' assets, which declined by around 47% to €807 billion at the end of 2020, compared with €1.5 trillion in 2010. [11] However, S-Finanzgruppe remains exposed to asset concentration risks, reflecting commercial real estate exposures, international lending and asset-based finance activities at Landesbanks, as well as investment portfolios, which may lead to valuation and credit losses during the global uncertainties, even if exposures have been reduced significantly in the meantime.

Strong funding which benefits from prime access to German depositors

S-Finanzgruppe's credit strength is strongly supported by sizeable and well diversified deposits. This view is reflects in our assigned a2 Funding Structure score which is three notches above the group's baa2 initial score. The positive adjustments take into account (1) S-Finanzgruppe's high deposits granularity, reflecting its market leadership across Germany; (2) the significant potential of savings banks to use their substantial mortgage books for secured funding in the capital market, if needed; and (3) the existence of sizeable covered bonds and promotional loans, provided by sovereign-related entities. We consider these funding sources less sensitive to credit developments and hence more reliable. However, our assessment also reflects the wholesale funding dependence for German Landesbanks.

The strong funding profile for S-Finanzgruppe is based on the savings banks' country-wide branch network in Germany. This allows the collection of diversified and highly granular deposits. At end-2020, the savings banks's aggregate deposits of €1.1 trillion compare with aggregate loans of €933 billion, resulting in a very favorable and gradually improving loan-to-deposit ratio of 84.7%, compared with 87% in 2015 and 88% in 2010.[12] A large portion of the savings banks excess funding - reflecting the difference between deposits and loans - of around €169 billion at the end of 2020 (2019: €131 billion), is shared within member institutions of S-Finanzgruppe.[13]

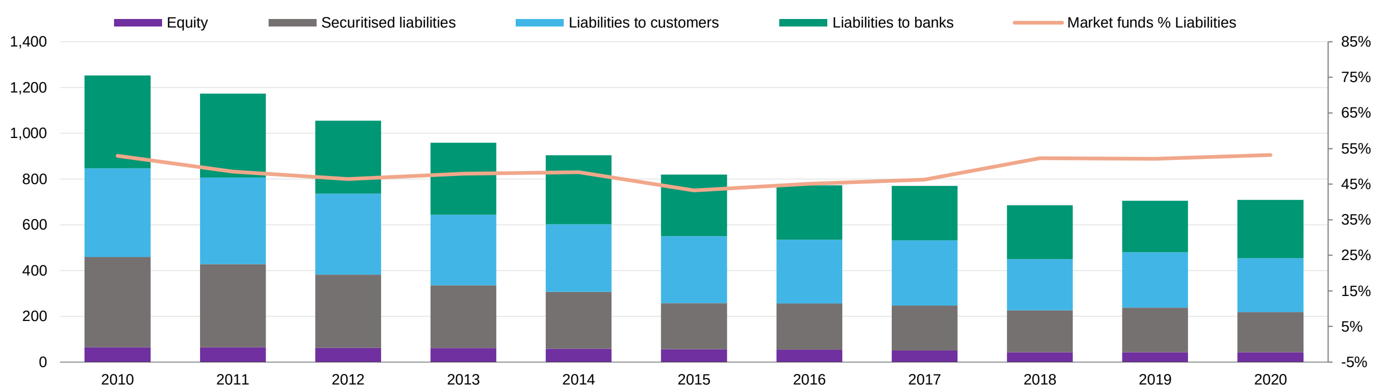
Exhibit 11
Rising deposits at savings banks helped to reduce their dependence on market funding
Data in € billion



Note: We include liabilities to banks and securitised liabilities to calculate a proxy for the savings banks' market funding dependence.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

The savings banks' sizeable and very granular deposits support the Landesbanks' funding needs which exhibit a high dependence on market funds. At the end of 2020, Landesbanks' loan-to-deposit ratio was 147%, reflecting that loans of €348 billion are higher than liabilities to customers of €236 billion (2018: 148%).[14] Despite the Landesbanks' significant deleveraging efforts - between 2008 and 2017 their aggregate assets declined from €1.7 trillion to €807 billion - their relative market funding dependence remained broadly stable, as expressed by a loan-to-deposit ratio, which ranged between 135% to 156% over the period.

Exhibit 12
Landesbanks' market funding dependence remained broadly unchanged over the last decade
Data in € billion



Note: We include liabilities to banks and securitised liabilities to calculate a proxy for the Landesbanks' market funding.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Sizeable liquidity supported by high-quality financial securities

S-Finanzgruppe's assigned Liquid Resources score of a3 is two notches above the group's baa2 initial score. Our assessment considers (1) the high quality of liquid assets; (2) additional, ECB eligible securities held in savings banks' held-to-maturity portfolios, and is balanced by (3) asset encumbrance, which arises from issued covered bonds, repurchase (repo) activities, and intra-group exposures.

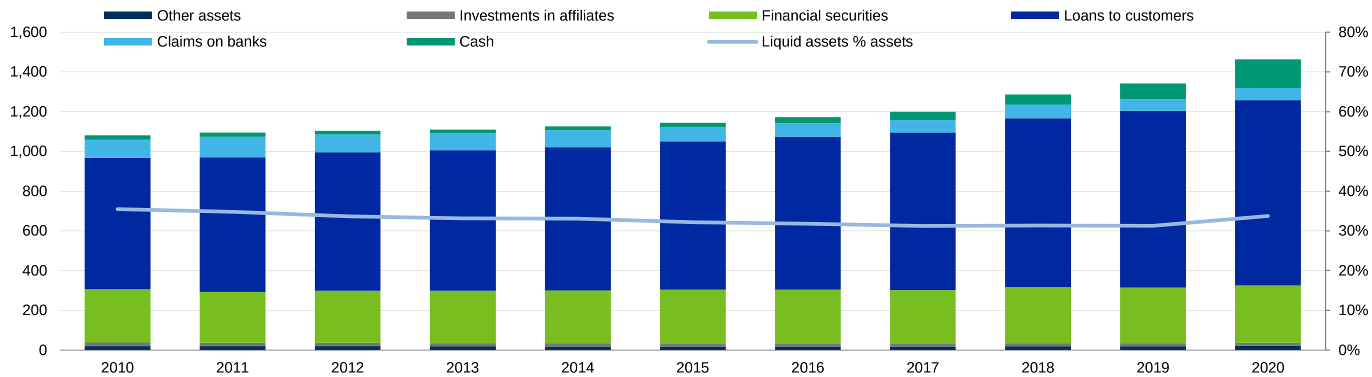
S-Finanzgruppe's liquidity strongly supports our assessment of the group's credit profile. At end-2019 (latest available), aggregate liquid assets within the group were €711 billion and included €121 billion in cash, €269 billion claims on banks and €321 billion financial securities (2018: €701 billion).[15]

At the end of 2020, liquid assets at savings banks accounted for 34% of their balance sheet, a moderate increase from around 31% the year before, largely due to higher cash (10% of assets; 2019: 6%), while claims on banks (4%) and financial securities (20%) remained broadly unchanged.[16] Rising loans over the last decade in combination with declining interest rates triggered a moderate, relative reduction of savings banks' liquidity. The savings banks' Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) was around 204% at the end of 2020, compared with 188% in 2019 and 200% in 2018.[17]

Exhibit 13

In 2020, the savings banks' liquid assets has somewhat increased reflecting higher cash positions

Data in € billion



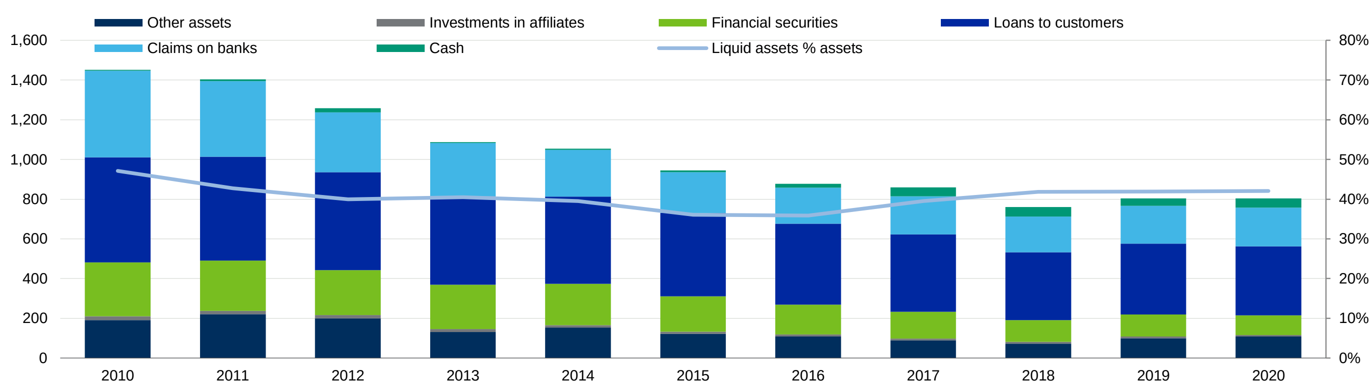
Note: We include cash, claims on banks, and financial securities for calculating the savings banks' liquid assets.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

In 2020, liquid assets at German Landesbanks remained unchanged, accounting for 42% of assets. The ratio broadly is stable since 2010, and included cash (6% of assets), claims on banks (24%), as well as financial securities (12%).[18] Reported Liquidity Coverage Ratios (LCR) for Landesbanks ranged between 124% and 225% at the end of 2019 (2018: 115%-223%).

Exhibit 14

Compared with savings banks, Landesbanks operate with relatively larger claims on banks (light blue) and lower financial securities (light green)

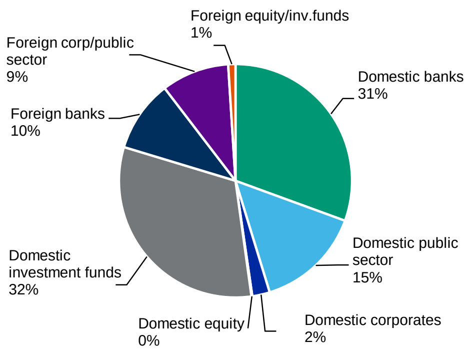
Data in € billion



Note: We include cash, claims on banks, and financial securities for calculating the Landesbanks' liquid assets.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

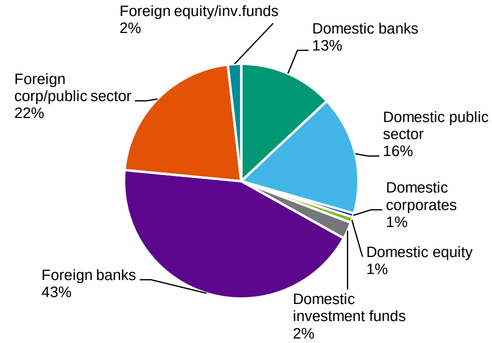
We consider the savings banks' financial securities of very high quality, reflecting the large share of domestic issuers, including German public sector entities. This view is supported by the near absence of exposure to equities and somewhat balanced by the relatively high portion of investment funds, which we believe mostly relates to fixed income securities.

Exhibit 15
Around 80% of savings banks' financial securities are to domestic issuers
Data in percent, as of end-2020



Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Exhibit 16
Around two thirds of Landesbanks' financial securities are exposed to foreign issuers*
Data in percent, as of end-2020



Note: *This group includes BayernLB, DekaBank, Helaba, LBBW, NORD/LB, and SaarLB.
Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

Macro Profile of "Strong+"

S-Finanzgruppe's BCA is supported by its Strong+ macro profile, which is derived from the group's weighted average credit exposures, reflecting around 80% exposure to Germany, around 15% to the European Union, and around 5% worldwide. S-Finanzgruppe's Strong+ macro profile matches the assigned German macro profile, which is largely determined by the country's very high economic, institutional and government financial strength and very low susceptibility to event risk.

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations

In line with our general view on the banking sector, S-Finanzgruppe and its member banks have an overall low exposure to Environmental risks (see our environmental risk heat map[19] for further information).

For social risks, we also place S-Finanzgruppe and its member banks in line with our general view on the banking sector, which indicates a moderate exposure (see our social risk heat map[20] for further information). This includes considerations in relation to the rapid and widening spread of the coronavirus outbreak, given the substantial implications for public health and safety and deteriorating global economic outlook, creating a severe and extensive credit shock across many sectors, regions and markets.

Some savings banks in Germany have started to cancel certain types of deposit contracts (*Prämiensparverträge*) which offered relatively high interest rates to depositors. We believe that the cancelation may have negative repercussions on certain clients relationships but consider the overall impact on the savings banks' brand name and banking franchises to be very limited. In May 2018, Germany's Federal Court of Justice had approved the cancelation of these contracts under certain conditions.

Governance[21] is highly relevant for S-Finanzgruppe and its member banks, as it is to all banks. While we do not see meaningful governance risks and do not apply any corporate behavior adjustments to Germany's largest banking sector or its member institutions, we consider the group's overall setup complex and diverse. This view reflects different ownership structures, including municipalities and federal states, and individual risk management frameworks as well as corporate governance set-ups. The unusual diverse group of stakeholders slows down the decision-making process within S-Finanzgruppe. However, we acknowledge the centralized risk management oversight, housed under the Berlin-based Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband e.V., which is partly a requirement under S-Finanzgruppe's Institutional Protections Schemes.

Support and structural considerations

Notching for Corporate Family Rating (CFR)

S-Finanzgruppe represents a conglomerate of diverse financial institutions in Germany. As such, it is not considered a banking group in the context of the European Capital Requirement Regulation. S-Finanzgruppe is, therefore, not a regulated group ("*Konzern*"), but all of its affiliated institutions are subject to applicable regulation for banks or other financial institutions. As a result, the EU's Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive, which we consider to be an operational resolution regime, does not apply to S-Finanzgruppe but only to its member banking institutions individually. Thus, our CFR on S-Finanzgruppe represents the risk characteristics of a notional single class of debt assumed to fund its aggregate balance sheet.

Our Advanced Loss Given Failure analysis suggests that this notional instrument would face very low losses in resolution. This results in two notches of uplift to the CFR compared with S-Finanzgruppe's BCA of a2, and hence, a Preliminary Rating Assessment of aa3.

Government support considerations

We expect a moderate probability of government support, resulting in a one-notch rating uplift for S-Finanzgruppe. Our government support assumption reflects the size and high relevance of S-Finanzgruppe to Germany's financial stability.

Methodology and Scorecard

Methodology

The principal methodology we use in rating S-Finanzgruppe is the Banks Methodology, published in March 2021.

About Moody's Bank Scorecard

Our scorecard is designed to capture, express and explain in summary form our Rating Committee's judgement. When read in conjunction with our research, a fulsome presentation of our judgement is expressed. As a result, the output of our scorecard may materially differ from that suggested by raw data alone (though it has been calibrated to avoid the frequent need for strong divergence). The scorecard output and the individual scores are discussed in rating committees and may be adjusted up or down to reflect conditions specific to each rated entity.

Rating methodology and scorecard factors

Exhibit 17

Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe

Macro Factors							
Weighted Macro Profile	**Strong +**	**100%**					
Factor		**Historic Ratio**	**Initial Score**	**Expected Trend**	**Assigned Score**	**Key driver #1**	**Key driver #2**
Solvency							
Asset Risk							
Problem Loans / Gross Loans		-	-	-	a2	Quality of assets	Sector concentration
Capital							
Tangible Common Equity / Risk Weighted Assets (Basel III - transitional phase-in)		-	-	-	aa2	Risk-weighted capitalisation	Expected trend
Profitability							
Net Income / Tangible Assets		0.3%	ba2	↔	b1	Return on assets	Expected trend
Combined Solvency Score			a2		a3		
Liquidity							
Funding Structure							
Market Funds / Tangible Banking Assets		25.7%	baa2	↔	a2	Market funding quality	Deposit quality
Liquid Resources							
Liquid Banking Assets / Tangible Banking Assets		17.2%	baa2	↔	a3	Quality of liquid assets	Additional liquidity resources
Combined Liquidity Score			baa2		a2		
Financial Profile					a3		
Qualitative Adjustments					Adjustment		
Business Diversification					0		
Opacity and Complexity					0		
Corporate Behavior					0		
Total Qualitative Adjustments					0		
Sovereign or Affiliate constraint					Aaa		
BCA Scorecard-indicated Outcome - Range					a2 - baa1		
Assigned BCA					a2		
Affiliate Support notching					0		
Adjusted BCA					a2		

Balance Sheet is not applicable.

[1] Where dashes are shown for a particular factor (or sub-factor), the score is based on non-public information.
Source: Moody's Investors Service

Ratings

Exhibit 18

Category	Moody's Rating
SPARKASSEN-FINANZGRUPPE	
Outlook	Negative
Baseline Credit Assessment	a2
Adjusted Baseline Credit Assessment	a2
Corporate Family Rating -Dom Curr	Aa2

Source: Moody's Investors Service

Endnotes

1 As of 10 March 2021.

2 The ratings shown are the bank's deposit rating and outlook/senior unsecured rating and outlook, and its Baseline Credit Assessment.

3 Source: DSGV.

4 This reflects the end-2020 ratio for LBBW, 3Q20 ratios for BayernLB, Helaba, and DekaBank, as well as end-June 2020 ratio for SaarLB.

5 This scheme includes rules for mutual support within groups of banks in order to ensure the liquidity and solvency of their member institutions.

6 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

7 Source: DSGV.

8 In 2010, Deutsche Bundesbank's group of Landesbanks included 10 banks and 6 banks in 2019.

9 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

10 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank

11 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

12 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

13 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

14 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

15 Source: DSGV.

16 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

17 Source: DSGV.

18 Source: Deutsche Bundesbank.

19 Environmental risks can be defined as environmental hazards encompassing the impacts of air pollution, soil/water pollution, water shortages and natural and man-made hazards (physical risks). Additionally, regulatory or policy risks, such as the impact of carbon regulation or other regulatory restrictions, including the related transition risks such as policy, legal, technology and market shifts, that could impair the evaluation of assets are an important factor. Certain banks could face a higher risk from concentrated lending to individual sectors or operations exposed to the aforementioned risks.

20 Social risk considerations represent a broad spectrum, including customer relations, human capital, demographic and social trends, health and safety, and responsible production. The most relevant social risks for banks arise from the way they interact with their customers. Social risks are articularly high in the area of data security and customer privacy, which are partly mitigated by sizeable technology investments and banks' long track record of handling sensitive client data. Fines and reputational damage because of product mis-selling or other types of misconduct are further social risks. Social trends are also relevant in a number of areas, such as shifting customer preferences towards digital banking services increasing information technology costs, ageing population concerns in several countries affecting demand for financial services or socially driven policy agendas translating into regulations that affect banks' revenue bases.

21 Corporate governance is a well-established key driver for banks and related risks are typically included in our evaluation of the banks' financial profile. Further factors such as specific corporate behaviour, key-person risk, insider and related-party risk, strategy and management risk factors, and dividend policy may be captured in individual adjustments to the BCA, if deemed applicable. Corporate governance weaknesses can lead to a deterioration in a company's credit quality, while governance strengths can benefit its credit profile. When credit quality deteriorates because of poor governance, such as a breakdown in controls resulting in financial misconduct, it can take a long time to recover. Governance risks are also largely internal rather than externally driven.

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