

5 New euro area statistics on insurance corporations

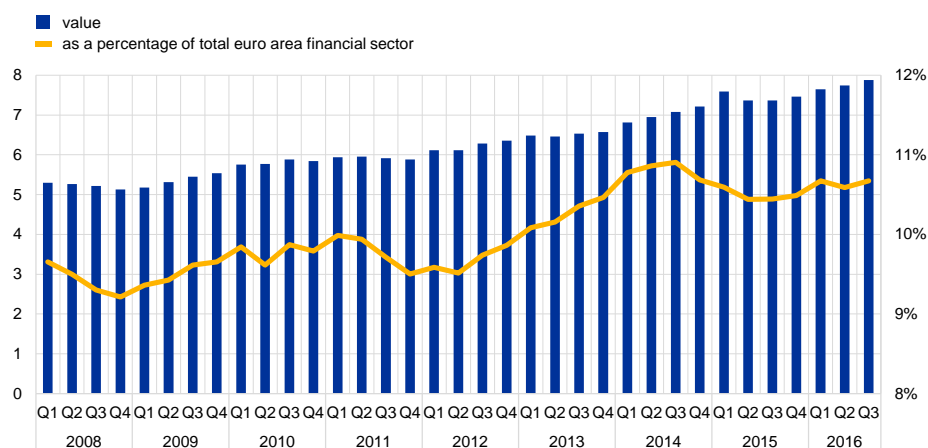
Insurance corporations comprise a sizeable subsector within the euro area financial sector, representing 11% of total assets in the third quarter of 2016.

This subsector has grown steadily in recent years, with total assets amounting to €7.9 trillion in the third quarter of 2016 (equivalent to 74% of annual euro area GDP) as shown in the chart below.

Chart

Total assets of euro area insurance corporations

(EUR trillions; percentages)



Sources: ECB and ECB calculations.

In February 2017 the ECB released harmonised statistics on insurance corporations for the first time. The dataset consists of assets and liabilities of insurance corporations aggregated quarterly across the euro area, beginning with data for the third quarter of 2016. These data (together with a separate new dataset on pension funds) further increase the quality, coverage and granularity of ECB statistics on the euro area financial sector. At this initial stage the dataset covers outstanding amounts; further improvements such as the addition of transaction data, more detailed breakdowns and more timely data releases are envisaged for the future.

The dataset on euro area insurance corporations and pension funds released by the ECB from June 2011 until October 2016 had certain shortcomings. In particular, data were not harmonised across the euro area. Furthermore, some data were estimated where actual data were not available at the national level. This dataset was discontinued after the data release for the second quarter of 2016.

However, users of the statistics on insurance corporations have the benefit of a link between the old and new datasets, as data on insurance corporations for the third quarter of 2016 under the previous framework have also been made available as estimates.

The new statistics on insurance corporations improve on the previous dataset in several respects. The new dataset features (i) harmonised concepts that comply with international statistical standards; (ii) full coverage of institutions; (iii) detailed

breakdowns of assets and liabilities; (iv) breakdowns by type of insurance corporation into life, non-life, composite and reinsurance corporations; and (v) more timely releases of data.

In designing the statistical compilation framework for the new dataset, the ECB has made a concerted effort to minimise the reporting burden on insurance corporations by integrating the European statistical and supervisory data reporting requirements. In this way, the statistical data collection framework allows the statistical information to be derived, to a large extent, from data reported for supervisory purposes under the EU's Solvency II framework. Many national competent authorities have opted to receive a single reporting flow for statistical and supervisory data, based on reporting templates prepared by the ECB – in close cooperation with the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) – that consolidate statistical and supervisory data reporting requirements. A common technical framework, based on the eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL) taxonomy, has been set up by EIOPA to facilitate the integration.