EU Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive
Implementation of controlled foreign company rules
February 2020
This document provides insights on the impact and implementation of the controlled foreign company (CFC) rules in the EU Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive 2016/1164 (ATAD) into the domestic legislation of the EU member states.

**This slide deck is a high level overview of the rules** and should not be relied on as tax advice. The surveys used to prepare this deck included certain assumptions, so the actual facts and circumstances should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The survey questions were framed in the context of the choices individual EU member states are expected to make (or have made), and responses are based on developments known as of February 2020. The responses reflect the views of Deloitte colleagues to the extent they are aware of relevant developments in their jurisdictions.

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EU Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive

Introduction

ATAD CFC rule

• The ATAD is part of the Anti-Tax Avoidance Package presented by the European Commission in January 2016. The directive, formally adopted by the Economic and Financial Affairs Council of the EU on 12 July 2016, aims to provide a minimum level of protection for the internal market and ensure a harmonized and coordinated approach in the EU to the implementation of some of the recommendations under the OECD, BEPS project. The ATAD provides for the minimum harmonization of rules in the areas of CFCs, hybrid mismatches, and interest deductions, and requires the introduction of a corporate general anti-abuse rule (GAAR) and an exit tax (the latter two measures are not part of the BEPS project).

• The CFC rules in the ATAD aim to discourage multinational companies from shifting profits from their parent company in a high tax country to controlled subsidiaries in low or no tax countries to reduce the group’s tax liability. The CFC rule will allow the EU member state where the parent company is located to tax certain profits that the company shifts to a country that imposes low or no tax.

• The ATAD CFC rules attribute undistributed income of a foreign company or a permanent establishment (PE) to a domestic parent company, i.e., such income will have to be included in the taxable income of the domestic taxpayer. Article 7(1) of the ATAD provides that an entity or a PE whose profits are not subject to tax or are exempt from tax in a member state will be treated as a CFC if the following requirements are met:

  – A domestic taxpayer/parent company (alone or together with its associated enterprises) holds directly or indirectly more than 50% of the voting rights, capital, or entitlement to the profits of the entity; and

  – The actual corporate tax paid by the entity/PE on its income is lower than the difference between the corporate tax that would have been paid on the same profits in the member state of the domestic taxpayer/parent company and the actual corporate tax paid by the entity/PE in the source state.

• Several approaches are available to member states under the ATAD when implementing the CFC rules (e.g. providing a stricter definition of a CFC, the income on which a CFC charge can be imposed, exemptions from the rules).

• The ATAD provides two options under which member states can choose to impose the CFC charge:

  – Model A: Certain predefined categories of undistributed passive income (e.g. dividends, interest, royalties, and income from financial activities) of the CFC are attributed to the taxpayer/parent company.

  – Model B: Undistributed income of the CFC from non-genuine arrangements that have been put into place for the essential purpose of obtaining a tax advantage is attributed to the taxpayer/parent company.

• Exceptions under Model A: If a member state implements the CFC rules using the undistributed passive income option, it should not include CFC income in the domestic taxpayer’s tax base where the taxpayer can demonstrate that the CFC carries on “substantive economic activities,” as evidenced by sufficient staff, equipment, assets, and premises.

  – A member state may opt not to apply the substantive economic activities exception to CFCs in non-EEA countries.

  – A member state may opt not to treat an entity/PE as a CFC if one-third or less of its income falls within predefined (passive) income categories or, in the case of certain financial undertakings, if one-third or less of the predefined (passive) income categories comes from transactions with the taxpayer or its associated enterprises.

Income to be included under the CFC rules in Model A is calculated in accordance with the rules of the member state in which the taxpayer is resident and according to its participation in the CFC.
• **Exceptions under Model B:** If a member state implements the CFC rules using the non-genuine arrangements option, it should not include CFC income in the domestic taxpayer’s tax base if such income arises from arrangements that have not been put in place for the essential purpose of obtaining a tax advantage. In determining whether an arrangement (or series of arrangements) is (are) genuine, the significant people functions relevant for the income-generating assets and risks undertaken by the CFC must be taken into account.

Further, a member state may choose to exclude such income from a taxpayer’s tax base if the CFC has accounting profits: (i) of no more than EUR 750,000 and nontrading income of no more than EUR 75,000; or (ii) amounting to no more than 10% of its operating costs (excluding the cost of goods sold) for the tax period.

Income to be included under the CFC rules in Model B is limited to amounts generated through assets and risks that are linked to significant people functions carried out by the controlling company. The attribution of CFC income will be calculated in accordance with the arm’s length principle.

• EU member states were required to transpose the CFC rules into their domestic law by 31 December 2018, with the new measures to be effective on 1 January 2019. Not all member states fully transposed the ATAD into their domestic law by 31 December 2018. If a member state fails to comply with EU law, the European Commission may open an infringement procedure, and if necessary, it may bring the case before the Court of Justice of the European Union. The European Commission has launched infringement procedures against nine EU member states (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, and Spain) for failure to fully/correctly implement the directive.

• Some EU member states already had CFC regimes before the ATAD was adopted. It should be noted that EU directives set a minimum level of protection, so EU member states are required to implement only the minimum scope required under the directives, but they are free to introduce or retain rules that are more stringent than the rules prescribed in the directives, provided the rules do not otherwise offend EU law. As a result, where a member state already has rules in the areas covered by the ATAD, these rules have to be amended only to the extent they do not meet the minimum prescribed by the ATAD. Rules that are stricter than those in the ATAD do not have to be modified. If a member state does not have CFC rules, it will be required to introduce rules that give effect to the ATAD CFC rules.

• The UK officially withdrew from the EU on 31 January 2020, so it technically is no longer a member state. However, under the EU-UK withdrawal agreement, a transition period lasting at least until 31 December 2020 is in effect. During this period, the UK effectively will be treated as if it was a member state, and EU law applies to and in the UK, subject to some limited exceptions. As a result, the requirements of EU tax law (including the implementation of the ATAD CFC rules into domestic tax law) remain applicable to the UK.
Model A or Model B

The CFC rule in the ATAD attributes predefined categories of undistributed (passive) income (Model A) or, alternatively, undistributed income from nongenuine arrangements (Model B) to the domestic taxpayer/parent company.
A member state implementing the CFC rules using Model A may elect not to treat an entity/PE as a CFC if one-third or less of its income falls within predefined (passive) income categories or, in the case of certain financial undertakings, if one-third or less of the predefined (passive) income categories comes from transactions with the taxpayer or its associated enterprises.
A member state implementing the CFC rule using Model B may choose to exclude such income from a taxpayer’s tax base if the CFC has accounting profits: (i) of no more than EUR 750,000 and nontrading income not exceeding EUR 75,000; or (ii) amounting to no more than 10% of its operating costs (excluding the cost of goods sold) for the tax period.
A member state implementing the CFC rules using Model A may to choose to refrain from applying the substance carve-out as described in article 7(2)(a) when a CFC is resident or situated in a third country that is not party to the EEA agreement.
Stricter definition of CFC

To ensure a higher level of protection, member states may reduce the control threshold or set a higher threshold when comparing the actual corporate tax paid with the corporate tax that would have been charged in the member state of the domestic taxpayer.
In transposing the CFC rules into national law, member states can use white, grey, or black lists of third countries, based on criteria set out in the ATAD and may include the corporate tax rate level, or use white lists of member states compiled on that basis.