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# HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG

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# **Table Of Contents**

**Rating Score Snapshot** 

Credit Highlights

Outlook

**Key Metrics** 

Anchor: The 'a-' Anchor Reflects Hypo NOE's Focus On Austria

Business Position: A Geographically Concentrated Business Model With Low Efficiency

Capital And Earnings: Very Strong Capitalization Thanks To Low-But-Stable Internal Capital Generation, Supported By Low Dividends

Risk Position: Exposure Mainly In Low-Risk Areas But Some Risks Remain

Funding And Liquidity: The Bank Benefits From Implicit State Support

Support: Two Notches Of Uplift For Government

Environmental, Social, And Governance

# Table Of Contents (cont.)

Issue Ratings

**Key Statistics** 

**Related** Criteria

Related Research

# HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG

# **Rating Score Snapshot**

SACP: bł	ob+		Support: +2 —		Additional factors: 0	
Anchor	a-		ALAC support	0	Issuer credit rating	
Business position	Constrained	-2				
Capital and earnings	Very strong	+2	GRE support	+2		
Risk position	Moderate	-1				
Funding	Adequate	0	Group support	0	A/Stable/A-1+	
Liquidity	Adequate	U				
CRA adjustm	nent	0	Sovereign support	0		

ALAC--Additional loss-absorbing capacity. CRA--Comparable ratings analysis. GRE--Government-related entity. ICR--Issuer credit rating. SACP--Stand-alone credit profile.

# **Credit Highlights**

Overview	
Key strengths	Key risks
Very strong capitalization.	Low operating profitability and efficiency.
Very strong link to and important role for the State of Lower Austria, the bank's 100% owner.	Limited geographic diversity and large reliance on public-sector-related business.

*S&P Global Ratings anticipates Austria-based Hypo NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG's (Hypo NOE's) performance will remain sound, despite the worsening economy.* We expect the bank to uphold its very strong capital buffer and good asset quality throughout 2025. We expect only marginal deterioration of asset quality metrics, reflecting the bank's business focus on the public sector.

*Performance is lagging behind those of most peers, but strong capitalization continues to support the ratings*. With a 6.2% return on equity (S&P Global Ratings-calculated) at end-2022, the bank's performance is behind that of commercial peers, leaving the management team less room to maneuver in adverse scenarios. However, relatively low returns reflect Hypo NOE's focus on very low risk public sector related business, which, together with low dividend payouts to the owners, result in stable and sufficient internal capital generation through the cycle. We expect Hypo NOE's risk-adjusted capital (RAC) ratio will hover at 17%-18% over the next two years.

**Issuer Credit Rating** 

A/Stable/A-1

We expect Hypo NOE's important role for and very strong link to the state of Lower Austria (AA/Stable/A-1+) will continue to support its creditworthiness. The bank is fully owned by the state and has an important role in public sector-related lending. In the event of financial stress, we believe there is a high likelihood that Lower Austria would provide sufficient extraordinary support. This is reflected in the two-notch uplift we incorporate in our 'A' long-term issuer credit rating on Hypo NOE. We also incorporate ongoing support in our stand-alone credit profile (SACP) of the bank, as we believe that state ownership and backing reinforces customer confidence in the bank and contributes to the stability of the franchise and funding.

#### Outlook

The stable outlook balances our view that Hypo NOE will maintain very strong capital, supported by contained loan losses, against moderate bottom-line profitability. We also expect the bank's franchise will continue to benefit from its ownership by Lower Austria and the high likelihood of receiving extraordinary support in the event of financial stress.

#### Downside scenario

A downgrade would require a two-notch downward revision in our view of Hypo NOE's SACP. A downgrade to the owner, Lower Austria, would also result in us downgrading the bank. Although less likely, a change in Hypo NOE's role for or link with the state could lead us to reassess the bank's government-related entity status and result in a downgrade.

#### Upside scenario

An upgrade is a remote scenario, in our view. We could take a positive rating action on Hypo NOE if it continued to improve its operational performance while maintaining a low-risk posture in its strategy and very strong capital, including a RAC ratio sustainably above 15%. However, in this scenario, we would only raise the rating if we considered the bank's creditworthiness in line with that of higher-rated peers, which is unlikely considering its niche and regional focus.

# **Key Metrics**

HTPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und wien AG Key Ratios And Forecasts								
		Fisca	l year ended Dec. 31	l				
(%)	2021a	2022a	2023f	2024f				
Growth in operating revenue	0	1	(1.7)-(2.1)	1.3-1.6	1			

Growth in customer loans	8	(1)	1.8-2.2	1.8-2.2	1.8-2.2
Growth in total assets	2	(10)	1.5-1.8	1.5-1.8	1.5-1.8
Net interest income/average earning assets (NIM)	1	1	1.0-1.1	1.0-1.1	1.0-1.1
Cost to income ratio	61	61	62.0-65.2	62.3-65.5	62.6-65.8
Return on average common equity	6	6	4.9-5.4	4.7-5.2	4.7-5.2

2025f 1.3-1.6

_	Fiscal year ended Dec. 31						
(%)	2021a	2022a	2023f	2024f	2025f		
Return on assets	0	0	0.2-0.3	0.2-0.3	0.2-0.3		
New loan loss provisions/average customer loans	0	0	0.0-0.1	0.0-0.1	0.0-0.0		
Gross nonperforming assets/customer loans	1	1	1.1-1.2	1.1-1.2	1.1-1.2		
Net charge-offs/average customer loans	0	0	0.1-0.1	0.1-0.1	0.1-0.1		

All figures are S&P Global Ratings-adjusted. a--Actual. e--Estimate. f--Forecast. NIM--Net interest margin.

# Anchor: The 'a-' Anchor Reflects Hypo NOE's Focus On Austria

We use our Banking Industry Country Risk Assessment economic risk and industry risk scores to determine the anchor. The 'a-' anchor reflects Hypo NOE's operations and domicile in Austria.

Our economic risk assessment is based on Austria's highly competitive and diverse economy, with strong economic fundamentals, high integration in Western European economies, and strong ties to Eastern and Southeastern Europe. We expect Austria's real economic growth to stagnate this year, after a strong estimated rebound of 4.7% in 2022, as the adverse effects of the Russia-Ukraine war continue to weigh on the open and export-oriented economy. Nonperforming loans (NPLs) are likely to rise throughout 2023 because of risks from the war, but we believe that the secondhand effects on the banking system will be manageable.

We consider that Austria's prudential regulatory standards are in line with the EU's and that banks' funding conditions remain comfortable, reflecting a large share of customer deposits. Austrian banks are among the largest beneficiaries of rising interest rates, also reflecting a still-material share of variable interest rate lending, which allows quick repricing on the asset side. However, trending at about 65%, the consolidated sector's cost-to-income ratio remains average in a broader international context. We highlight that it remains crucial that banks continue to tackle inefficiencies to remain competitive throughout the cycle (see "Various Rating Actions Taken On Austrian Banks On Stabilization Of Operating Performance," published Feb. 24, 2023, on RatingsDirect).

# **Business Position: A Geographically Concentrated Business Model With Low** Efficiency

Business strength lags that of most peers. We view Hypo NOE's concentrated business model, which focuses on the public sector and public sector-related real estate in Lower Austria, as a key factor that constrains the ratings. We believe this concentration makes the bank more sensitive to downside scenarios than more diversified, stronger performing peers. Nevertheless, a very low-risk business focus, strong market shares of about 27% in Lower Austria, and solid brand recognition in its home market, reinforced by the public ownership and backing, result in stable earnings and partly mitigate the risks. We view strategic ownership support from Lower Austria and implicit benefits as critical for the stability of the bank's business model.

*Hypo NOE's business focus is on lending and leasing to the public sector and for nonprofit housing.* The bank is relatively small, with reported total assets of €15 billion at end- 2022. However, on the local scale in Lower Austria, we expect Hypo NOE to remain the dominant player in the public finance niche area. In recent years, the bank has increased its business in higher-margin segments to counter pressure from the low-rate environment and stabilize its net interest margins. This includes selective business outside Austria, such as real estate project finance, which we are more cautious on. However, overall, this exposure has a minor share in the total portfolio, and we don't think this trend is likely to affect the bank's risk profile and creditworthiness.

#### Chart 1





Data as of Sept. 30, 2022. Breakdown excludes the corporate center segment and treasury and ALM. Source: Hypo NOE, S&P Global Ratings.

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#### Operating Income Split

Business segments by operating income



Data as of Sept. 30, 2022. Breakdown excludes the corporate center segment and treasury and ALM. Source: Hypo NOE, S&P Global Ratings. Copyright © 2023 by Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC. All rights reserved.

*Hypo NOE's focus remains on addressing its heavy cost base.* Its cost-to-income ratio, as calculated by S&P Global Ratings, was 61% at year-end 2022, which is broadly in line with that of domestic peers, and is improved from historical levels. We believe Hypo NOE's bottom-line profitability will remain constrained by its low-margin asset profile, and continuing expense for modernization and digitalization.

# Capital And Earnings: Very Strong Capitalization Thanks To Low-But-Stable Internal Capital Generation, Supported By Low Dividends

*We view Hypo NOE's capital buffer as very strong.* We expect the bank's capital position will remain a key rating strength, underpinned by our expectation that our RAC ratio will remain at 17%-18% over the next two years, having been 16.3% as of Dec. 31, 2021. Hypo NOE has a comfortable margin in its regulatory capital requirements, with a consolidated common equity tier 1 ratio of 20.5% at end- 2022. In our base-case scenario, we expect the sole shareholder to keep the capital in the bank with no extraordinary dividends.

The RAC projection reflects our view that benefits of the rising net interest margins on the bottom line will slightly outweigh the increase in risk and operational costs, which result from high inflation and economic slowdown. We project annual net income averaging about  $\in$ 45 million over the next two years. This is based on the improved net

interest margins and loan growth of about 2%. We expect risks costs averaging approximately 10 bps throughout 2025. We believe Hypo NOE's moderate dividend policy will continue to support gradual-but-sustainable internal capital accumulation.

#### Chart 3



# Hypo NOE Relies On Net Interest Income More Than Peers

Breakdown of operating revenues

The selected peer group only includes rated Austrian banks which are focussed predominantely on the Austrian market. Data as of Dec. 31, 2021. Source: S&P Global Ratings. Copyright © 2023 by Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC. All rights reserved.

*While returns are low, we regard the quality of earnings as sufficient in the context of the bank's business focus and only low growth.* We believe Hypo NOE's focus on low-margin segments, such as the public sector or nonprofit housing, will continue to constrain the bank's earnings capacity, but support relatively stable core operating performance. We continue to view the bank as having good quality of capital because our total adjusted capital comprises solely common equity.



#### Hypo NOE's Profitability Lower But More Stable Compared With Peers' 'Return on average common equity

# Risk Position: Exposure Mainly In Low-Risk Areas But Some Risks Remain

We view Hypo NOE's risk position to be on par with that of banks with similar business models operating in Austria or countries with a similar economic risk. The bank's risk position balances the sector and geographic concentration risks in the Lower Austria region and some risks in commercial real estate with the bank's low risk appetite and strong risk metrics. We also view the concentration in real estate as balanced, with the generally highly collateralized nature of its loan book.

We consider most of Hypo NOE's €12.2 billion gross customer loan book low risk. The loans include lending and leasing to the public sector (about 58% of total loans) and nonprofit housing agencies (about 14%). The remaining part of the portfolio consists of retail banking (11%), commercial real estate (11%), and corporate banking (6%), which exhibit comparably weaker risk metrics. The breakdown of Hypo NOE's credit risk exposures similarly highlight the large share of government exposures. Due to the bank's limited size and business model, its single-name concentration is significantly higher than peers with the 20 largest customers accounting for about 500% of total adjusted capital. These exposures are mainly toward the public sector, including Lower Austria, and well-collateralized and low-risk nonprofit housing agencies. We expect losses from these exposures to remain limited in our base-case scenario.

#### Hypo NOE's Public Lending Activities Drive Its Large Government Exposure Credit risk exposure of rated Austrian banks



Others include securitization and other assets. Exposure refers to exposure at default. The selected peer group only includes rated Austrian banks focused predominantely on the Austrian market. Data as of Dec. 31, 2021. Source: S&P Global Ratings.

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Nonperforming loan (NPL) ratio is defined as gross nonperforming assets divided by customer loans. Cost of risk is defined as new loan loss privisions as % of average customer loans. The selected peer group only includes rated Austrian banks focused predominantely on the Austrian market. Source: S&P Global Ratings. Copyright © 2023 by Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC. All rights reserved.

*We expect strong asset quality metrics through the cycle*. Across Austria, we expect NPLs to rise moderately. This will likely be so for Hypo NOE too, although we believe the bank will be less affected than most domestic peers. This is thanks to the composition of its loan book with low exposure to corporates and small and midsize enterprises, high collateralization of its real estate book, and currently strong asset quality metrics. The bank had an NPL ratio (S&P Global Ratings-calculated) of 1.1% at end-2022.

# Funding And Liquidity: The Bank Benefits From Implicit State Support

*We expect that Hypo NOE's link with the state will continue to support its solid funding profile.* We believe the bank's ownership by Lower Austria materially reduces its sensitivity to market confidence and supports stability of customer deposits and its access to capital markets during turbulent times.

*We expect Hypo NOE will continue relying on the capital markets to fund its loan book.* As of end-2022, its wholesale funding (covered bonds, senior unsecured bonds, and other debt instruments) made up 75% of its funding base. This is higher than for most rated Austrian banks, but about half of it relates to public sector and mortgage covered bonds, which we regard as stable and reliable sources of funding in Austria. In this context, we don't see it as a weakness that our stable funding ratio of 98% at end-2022 is lower than that of peers.



#### Hypo NOE Remains Primarily Wholesale Funded

Conversional Market Data as of Dec. 01, 2021. Source. Our Global Mainings.

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The bank's broad liquid asset to short-term wholesale funding ratio was 1.1x at end-2022. We believe available cash reserves and free collateral for retained covered bonds provide sufficient capacity to manage adverse scenarios. Stress testing of liquidity inflows and outflows indicate that in the event of the closure of access to capital market funding and a significant deposit outflow, Hypo NOE could survive for more than six months, although reliance on central bank funding would likely increase significantly in such a scenario.

# Support: Two Notches Of Uplift For Government

Our long-term issuer credit rating on Hypo NOE is two notches higher than the SACP because we see a high likelihood of the bank receiving timely and sufficient extraordinary support from the government of Lower Austria if needed. We expect Lower Austria will remain both supportive of Hypo NOE and a long-term shareholder of the bank. We base our assessment on the bank's:

- Important role for Lower Austria, because a default could tarnish Lower Austria's reputation and Hypo NOE's support of regional economic and social objectives; and
- Very strong link with the government, owing to its very strong and durable relationship with the state. We do not anticipate changes to Lower Austria's full ownership.

We understand Hypo NOE is subject to an open bank resolution scenario, but this does not provide additional protection to senior unsecured creditors in our view. The bank is not required to issue subordinated instruments under its minimum requirement for own funds and eligible liabilities. As long as this is the case, we don't expect Hypo NOE to issue material amounts of senior nonpreferred or other subordinated instruments that serve as buffers for senior unsecured creditors.

# Environmental, Social, And Governance

#### **ESG Credit Indicators**

published Oct. 13, 2021.



We see ESG credit factors for Hypo NOE as broadly in line with those of industry and Austrian peers and not a rating differentiator. We acknowledge the bank's increasing focus on green lending, and believe its ownership and business model, with a focus on public lending and real estate, supports these efforts. Hypo NOE began to use green capital market funding and issued a green senior bond in 2020, which accounts for about 4% of its total funding base.

### **Issue Ratings**

The 'BBB-' issue rating on Hypo NOE's nondeferrable subordinated debt is two notches lower than the bank's SACP. The SACP indicates our view of a bank's creditworthiness without extraordinary support from the government. We believe that by notching from the SACP assessment, instead of from the long-term issuer credit rating, we better capture the risk of an increased uncertainty of government support for subordinated debt issues.

## **Key Statistics**

#### Table 1

HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AGKey Figures						
	Year ended Dec. 31					
(Mil. €)	2022	2021	2020			
Adjusted assets	15,121	16,763	16,416			
Customer loans (gross)	12,163	12,270	11,383			
Adjusted common equity	775	730	692			
Operating revenue	168	166	166			
Noninterest expense	103	101	105			
Core earnings	47	42	32			

#### Table 2

#### HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG--Business Position

	Year		
(%)	2022	2021	2020
Total revenue from business line (currency in millions)	168	166	167
Commercial and retail banking/total revenue from business line	80.91	86.11	79.37
Trading and sales income/total revenue from business line	27.26	23.99	20.33
Other revenue/total revenue from business line	(8.17)	(10.10)	0.30
Investment banking/total revenue from business line	27.26	23.99	20.33
Return on average common equity	6.17	5.78	4.61

#### Table 3

#### HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG--Capital And Earnings

	Year	ended Dec. 31	
(%)	2022	2021	2020
Tier 1 capital ratio	20.52	19.35	17.92
S&P Global Ratings' RAC ratio before diversification	N/A	16.34	16.13
S&P Global Ratings' RAC ratio after diversification	N/A	13.77	7.28
Adjusted common equity/total adjusted capital	100.00	100.00	100.00
Net interest income/operating revenue	84.64	84.37	77.66
Fee income/operating revenue	8.97	11.35	10.45
Market-sensitive income/operating revenue	5.20	(0.81)	2.35
Cost to income ratio	61.13	61.03	63.07
Preprovision operating income/average assets	0.41	0.39	0.40
Core earnings/average managed assets	0.30	0.25	0.20

N/A--Not applicable. RAC--Risk adjusted capital.

#### Table 4

### HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG--Risk-Adjusted Capital Framework Data

(€000s)	EAD(1)	Basel III RWA (2)	Average Basel III RW (%)	S&P Global Ratings RWA	Average S&P Global Ratings RW (%)
Government and central banks	6,461,049,608	76,856,230	1	219,488,432	3
Of which regional governments and local authorities	4,292,185,015	71,866,714	2	170,743,449	4
Institutions and CCPs	914,948,124	94,938,524	10	146,846,970	16
Corporate	5,490,117,574	2,023,054,063	37	2,236,408,825	41
Retail	3,567,946,201	985,322,500	28	855,701,033	24
Of which mortgage	2,209,141,307	740,933,543	34	511,796,720	23
Securitization (3)	4,939,562	0	0	148,187	3
Other assets(4)	394,719,383	250,574,315	63	385,395,097	98
Of which deferred tax assets	0			0	0
Of which amount of over (-) or under (+) capitalization of insurance subsidiaries	0			0	0

#### Table 4

HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Nie	ederosterreich un	d Wien AGRisk-	Adjusted Cap	ital Framework D	ata (cont.)
Total credit risk	16,833,720,451	3,430,745,632	20	3,843,988,543	23
Total credit valuation adjustment		33,670,253		85,185,741	
Equity in the banking book	28,115,000	0	0	246,006,250	875
Trading book market risk		0		0	
Total market risk		0		246,006,250	
Total operational risk		305,700,617		291,422,670	
RWA before diversification		3,770,116,502		4,466,603,204	100
Single name (On corporate portfolio) (5)				419,205	0
Sector (on corporate portfolio)				1,102,869	0
Geographic				381,250,201	9
Business and risk type				451,866,413	9
Total diversification/ concentration adjustments				834,638,687	19
RWA after diversification		3,770,116,502		5,301,241,891	119

	Tier 1 capital	Tier 1 ratio (%)	Total adjusted capital	S&P Global Ratings' RAC ratio (%)
Capital ratio before adjustments	729,622,000	19.4	729,766,000	16.3
Capital ratio after adjustments (6)	729,622,000	19.4	729,766,000	13.8

Footnotes: (1) EAD: Exposure at default. (2) RWA: Risk-weighted assets. (3) Securitisation exposure includes the securitization tranches deducted from capital in the regulatory framework. (4) Other assets includes deferred tax assets not deducted from ACE. (5) For public-sector funding agencies, the single name adjustment is calculated on the regional government and local authorities portfolio. (6) For Tier 1 ratio, adjustments are additional regulatory requirements (e.g. transitional floor or Pillar 2 add-ons).

#### Table 5

#### HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG--Risk Position

	Year	ended Dec. 31	
(%)	2022	2021	2020
Growth in customer loans	(0.87)	7.80	4.99
Total diversification adjustment/S&P Global Ratings' RWA before diversification	N/A	18.69	121.55
Total managed assets/adjusted common equity (x)	19.52	22.97	23.71
New loan loss provisions/average customer loans	0.03	0.09	0.18
Net charge-offs/average customer loans	0.11	0.11	0.31
Gross nonperforming assets/customer loans + other real estate owned	1.09	0.91	0.84
Loan loss reserves/gross nonperforming assets	60.27	70.14	71.65

N.A.--Not available. RWA--Risk-weighted assets.

#### Table 6

(%)	Year ended Dec. 31		
	2022	2021	2020
Core deposits/funding base	24.95	25.39	29.57
Customer loans (net)/customer deposits	362.32	321.69	267.92
Long-term funding ratio	89.40	94.13	94.40
Stable funding ratio	97.76	108.93	112.47
Short-term wholesale funding/funding base	11.22	6.17	5.87
Regulatory net stable funding ratio	112.54	N/A	N/A
Broad liquid assets/short-term wholesale funding (x)	1.11	2.83	3.55
Broad liquid assets/total assets	10.99	15.56	18.13
Broad liquid assets/customer deposits	49.84	68.83	70.49
Net broad liquid assets/short-term customer deposits	6.06	49.23	55.95
Regulatory liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) (x)	162.89	N/A	N/A
Short-term wholesale funding/total wholesale funding	14.95	8.26	8.34
Narrow liquid assets/3-month wholesale funding (x)	N/A	14.02	18.18

N/A--Not applicable.

# Hypo Noe Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG--Rating Component Scores

Issuer credit rating	A/Stable/A-1+
SACP	bbb+
Anchor	a-
Economic risk	2
Industry risk	3
Business position	Constrained
Capital and earnings	Very strong
Risk position	Moderate
Funding	Adequate
Liquidity	Adequate
Comparable ratings analysis	0
Support	2
ALAC support	0
GRE support	2
Group support	0
Sovereign support	0
Additional factors	0

ALAC--Additional loss-absorbing capacity. GRE--Government-related entity. SACP--Stand-alone credit profile.

# **Related Criteria**

- General Criteria: Hybrid Capital: Methodology And Assumptions, March 2, 2022
- Criteria | Financial Institutions | Banks: Banking Industry Country Risk Assessment Methodology And

Assumptions, Dec. 9, 2021

- Criteria | Financial Institutions | General: Financial Institutions Rating Methodology, Dec. 9, 2021
- General Criteria: Environmental, Social, And Governance Principles In Credit Ratings, Oct. 10, 2021
- General Criteria: Group Rating Methodology, July 1, 2019
- Criteria | Financial Institutions | General: Risk-Adjusted Capital Framework Methodology, July 20, 2017
- General Criteria: Methodology For Linking Long-Term And Short-Term Ratings, April 7, 2017
- General Criteria: Rating Government-Related Entities: Methodology And Assumptions, March 25, 2015
- General Criteria: Principles Of Credit Ratings, Feb. 16, 2011

# **Related Research**

- Various Rating Actions Taken On Austrian Banks On Stabilization Of Operating Performance, Feb. 24, 2023
- Hypo NOE Affirmed At 'A/A-1' Following Outlook Revision On Lower Austria; Outlook Stable, Feb. 14, 2022
- State of Lower Austria Outlook Revised To Stable From Negative; 'AA/A-1+' Ratings Affirmed, Feb. 11, 2022

Ratings Detail (As Of March 23, 2023)*			
HYPO NOE Landesbank fur Niederosterreich und Wien AG			
Issuer Credit Rating	A/Stable/A-1		
Senior Unsecured	А		
Short-Term Debt	A-1		
Subordinated	BBB-		
Issuer Credit Ratings History			
29-Apr-2020	A/Stable/A-1		
30-May-2018	A/Positive/A-1		
13-Aug-2014	A/Stable/A-1		
Sovereign Rating			
Austria	AA+/Stable/A-1+		
Related Entities			
Lower Austria (State of)			
Issuer Credit Rating	AA/Stable/A-1+		

\*Unless otherwise noted, all ratings in this report are global scale ratings. S&P Global Ratings' credit ratings on the global scale are comparable across countries. S&P Global Ratings' credit ratings on a national scale are relative to obligors or obligations within that specific country. Issue and debt ratings could include debt guaranteed by another entity, and rated debt that an entity guarantees.

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