

PRESS RELEASE

S&P affirms Cattolica's rating at BBB The outlook is also confirmed

Verona, 26 July 2019. Today Standard & Poor's has affirmed Cattolica's rating at BBB with a negative outlook.

Cattolica's Assessment before sovereign risk is affirmed, on the basis of the newly adopted criteria, at bbb+, one notch higher than its financial strength rating at BBB, which is still constrained by that of Italy, as set out under S&P's criteria.

The outlook is affirmed negative and it reflects the outlook of the Italian sovereign debt.

The Agency also confirmed at BB+ the rating of both listed bonds issued by the Cattolica Group.

SOCIETÀ CATTOLICA DI ASSICURAZIONE

Cattolica Assicurazioni is one of the major players in the Italian insurance market and the only cooperative company in the sector listed on the Milan Stock Exchange, where it has been present since November 2000. With almost 3.6 million customers relying on insurance solutions and distributed products, the Group records premium income of almost €6 billion (2018). At Group level, Cattolica has over 1,439 agencies spread throughout Italy, both in large and small centres and a network of 1,924 agents. For more information: <https://www.cattolica.it/en/profile>

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Research Update:

Italian Insurer Cattolica Ratings Affirmed At 'BBB'; Outlook Negative

July 26, 2019

Overview

- Italian insurer Cattolica benefits from its leading position in the Italian market, well-diversified insurance portfolio, and widespread and diversified distribution network.
- The agreements signed with Banco Popolare in 2018 have strengthened Cattolica's position in the Italian life market, although this has weakened our view of its capital adequacy based on our risk-based model.
- Our ratings on Cattolica are capped by the sovereign credit rating on Italy. We are therefore affirming our 'BBB' ratings on the insurer. The negative outlook reflects that on Italy.
- Our assessment of Cattolica before sovereign risk remains unchanged at 'bbb+'.

Rating Action

On July 26, 2019, S&P Global Ratings affirmed its 'BBB' long-term insurer financial strength and issuer credit ratings on Italian insurer Societa Cattolica di Assicurazione (Cattolica) (see the ratings list below for further details). The outlook is negative.

We also affirmed our 'BB+' issue rating on Cattolica's subordinated debt.

Outlook

The negative outlook mirrors that on Italy.

Downside scenario

We could lower the ratings on Cattolica if we lower our ratings on Italy.

Upside scenario

We could revise our outlook to stable if we revise the outlook on Italy to stable.

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Rationale

Our ratings on Cattolica reflect the group's leading positions in both life, and in particular, non-life insurance markets. Cattolica is a long-established insurance group in Italy, and recent joint ventures with Banco BPM (BBPM) have strengthened its position in the Italian life market, further enhancing its well-diversified insurance portfolio and multi-distribution strategy. Cattolica has access to a widespread insurance network, including agencies and bank branches.

Cattolica has demonstrated strong technical results in property/casualty over the past six years. Sound underwriting and the wider stabilizing claims environment in Italy have driven a five-year average combined ratio of 95%. The overall return on equity over the same period has been limited, however, at below 5%. This has been due to the limited contribution to overall operating results from its life and non-motor insurance portfolios, as well as a series of asset impairments. Profitability trends have been improving, however, and we estimate that Cattolica's year-end net profits before minorities and impairments will increase gradually to €180 million in 2020 from €137 million reported at year-end 2018 owing to the increasing benefits from the improving profitability of its life portfolio and its partnership with BBPM.

Together with a high dividend payout and the recent acquisition and consolidation of joint ventures with BBPM, Cattolica's capital adequacy has weakened, as measured by S&P Global Ratings' capital model, showing a small deficiency at the 'BBB' confidence level. Despite some volatility owing to fluctuating yields on Italian government bonds, regulatory solvency levels remain solid (160% at the end of March 2019 versus 199% a year before).

Our ratings on Cattolica are limited by those on Italy, according to our methodology, given the insurer's exposure to Italian assets, which account for an estimated 67% of the total at year-end 2018, which we regard as material, although reducing in line with the issuer's strategic priorities.

Ratings Score Snapshot

Business Risk Profile	Strong
Competitive position	Strong
IICRA	Intermediate
Financial Risk Profile	Fair
Capital and earnings	Fair
Risk exposure	Moderately Low
Funding structure	Neutral
Anchor*	bbb+
Modifiers	
Governance	Neutral
Liquidity	Exceptional
Comparable ratings analysis	0
Financial Strength Rating**	BBB

*Based on the group's leading position Italy and diversified business portfolio. **Capped at the level of our sovereign credit rating on Italy.

Related Criteria

- Criteria | Insurance | General: Insurers Rating Methodology, July 1, 2019
- General Criteria: Hybrid Capital: Methodology And Assumptions, July 1, 2019
- General Criteria: Group Rating Methodology, July 1, 2019
- General Criteria: Principles For Rating Debt Issues Based On Imputed Promises, Dec. 19, 2014
- General Criteria: Ratings Above The Sovereign--Corporate And Government Ratings: Methodology And Assumptions, Nov. 19, 2013
- Criteria | Insurance | General: Refined Methodology And Assumptions For Analyzing Insurer Capital Adequacy Using The Risk-Based Insurance Capital Model, June 7, 2010
- General Criteria: Use Of CreditWatch And Outlooks, Sept. 14, 2009

Ratings List

Ratings Affirmed

Societa Cattolica di Assicurazione

Issuer Credit Rating	
Local Currency	BBB/Negative/--
Financial Strength Rating	
Local Currency	BBB/Negative/--

Societa Cattolica di Assicurazione

Subordinated	BB+
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Certain terms used in this report, particularly certain adjectives used to express our view on rating relevant factors, have specific meanings ascribed to them in our criteria, and should therefore be read in conjunction with such criteria. Please see Ratings Criteria at www.standardandpoors.com for further information. Complete ratings information is available to subscribers of RatingsDirect at www.capitaliq.com. All ratings affected by this rating action can be found on S&P Global Ratings' public website at www.standardandpoors.com. Use the Ratings search box located in the left column. Alternatively, call one of the following S&P Global Ratings numbers: Client Support Europe (44) 20-7176-7176; London Press Office (44) 20-7176-3605; Paris (33) 1-4420-6708; Frankfurt (49) 69-33-999-225; Stockholm (46) 8-440-5914; or Moscow 7 (495) 783-4009.

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