

# ICMA

## Driving the Agenda in the International Bond Markets

**For more than 50 years, ICMA has made a significant contribution to the development of the international capital market by facilitating the interaction between all sides of the international bond markets including issuers, intermediaries, investors, and market infrastructure providers, among others.**

ICMA, representing over 620 member firms in 70 jurisdictions globally, performs a crucial central role in the market by providing industry-driven standards and recommendations for issuance, trading and settlement in international fixed income and related instruments. ICMA engages closely with regulatory and governmental authorities, both at the national and supranational level, to help ensure that financial regulation promotes the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the capital market.

ICMA members have a real voice in shaping market development, innovation, best practice, and effective regulatory advocacy across fixed income primary, secondary (both term and short end) and repo and collateral markets through ICMA's committees, forums and working groups. Sustainable finance and the digitalisation agenda are firmly embedded as key industry drivers in all of the market areas in which we operate.

Members actively contribute to the leading role played by ICMA in the international capital markets by helping to:

- Design and promote international market standards and development initiatives.
- Formulate the basis on which ICMA conducts a close strategic dialogue with regulators and responds to regulatory consultations.
- Advance technology and digitalisation initiatives across all areas of market activity.

ICMA is where solutions to industry challenges and issues are sought, advocacy is mobilised, best practices are developed, innovation is implemented and networks are formed to deliver increased efficiency to the entire market, while supporting sustainable economic development.

**Key features of ICMA's impact across all its areas of operation and focus are as follows:**

### Primary Markets

- The ICMA Primary Market Handbook includes over 400 pages of guidance and standard language for use in new issues.

- The ICMA Primary Market Practices Committee and the ICMA Legal & Documentation Committee are the representative bodies for the primary debt markets, composed of firms active in lead-managing cross-border syndicated issues. They are supported by several ICMA forums and working groups in different centres and regions.
- ICMA brings together sovereign, supranational and agency issuers globally through the Public Sector Issuer Forum; corporate issuers through the Corporate Issuer Forum; and financial institution issuers through the Financial Institution Issuer Forum.
- ICMA has played a pivotal role, working with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Bank of England, in the transition from LIBOR to risk-free rates in the international bond market.

### Secondary Markets

- ICMA's rules and recommendations for the secondary market, including the rules governing the buy-in process and recommendations to improve settlement efficiency, continue to support efficient cross-border secondary markets. They have also served as the foundation for dispute resolution.
- The ICMA Secondary Market Practices Committee, composed of sell-side and buy-side member firms, as well as relevant infrastructures, is firmly established as the key representative body for the international, cross-border secondary bond markets.
- ICMA launched a Bond Market Liquidity Taskforce in early 2023, using its various initiatives related to fixed income market structure and liquidity to take a more holistic market view and address market participants' concerns around bond market quality and liquidity. The Taskforce is looking at the interdependencies of different markets to help identify potential risks and vulnerabilities, as well as making [recommendations](#) to improve market liquidity and resilience.

- ICMA has led the industry in the successful campaign to oppose mandatory buy-ins under the EU Central Securities Depositories Regulation (CSDR). Currently we are focusing on several ESMA consultations within the CSDR refit, such as penalties for settlement fails, CSDR scope and others.
- ICMA, through its buy-side and sell-side members and market infrastructure providers, is leading the industry to reach a consensus and advocating for a balanced and appropriate post-trade transparency regime framework for bond markets, both in the EU and UK.
- ICMA was an early advocate of, and continues to play a key role in, ongoing advocacy for a single EU consolidated tape for bond markets.
- ICMA's Electronic Trading Working Group has provided the Electronic Trading FinTech Directory, as well as market definitions and best practice for electronic bond pricing distribution. It currently focuses on new trading protocols and innovation in bond trading.
- Working closely with members, ICMA has published numerous [reports](#) on bond market developments, trends, and structures, covering both Europe and Asia.

## Repo and Collateral

- Since the early 1990s, ICMA's *Global Master Repurchase Agreement (GMRA)* has been the principal master agreement for cross-border repos globally, as well as for many domestic repo markets. ICMA commissions and makes available to its members, on an annual basis, legal opinions for over 70 jurisdictions globally on the enforceability of the GMRA and its netting provisions. ICMA has created for its members the GMRA Clause Library and Taxonomy, a catalogue of GMRA clauses and their negotiated business outcomes, along with a library of model wordings that could be used to draft for such outcomes in a standardised manner across market participants.
- In August 2024, ICMA published the GMRA Digital Assets Annex, a standardised framework and set of terms which can be used to document repo transactions involving digital cash, digital securities (including tokenised traditional securities), or asset-backed digital assets.
- The ICMA European Repo and Collateral Council (ERCC) is the main industry representative body for cross-border repo and collateral markets in Europe.
- ICMA launched a Global Repo and Collateral Forum (GRCF) in September 2022, bringing together repo market practitioners to discuss repo and collateral developments from a global perspective.
- ICMA maintains the *ERCC Guide to Best Practice in the European Repo Market*, which sets out detailed standards for the orderly trading and settlement of repos.
- The ERCC's biannual *European Repo Market Survey* remains the most authoritative source for the size, structure, and dominant trends in the European repo market.
- ICMA has engaged with regulators on various regulations to avoid detrimental impacts on the efficient functioning and liquidity of the repo market, both globally and at EU/UK level, covering both prudential requirements as well as various market regulations (e.g., CSDR, MiFID/R etc).
- ICMA has coordinated the industry's effort to implement detailed reporting requirements under the Securities Financing Transactions Regulation (SFTR). Since the go-live in July 2020, ICMA has collected and aggregated the SFTR public data points on a weekly basis.
- ICMA is working closely with other stakeholders to develop and support repo markets globally, including by providing guidance related to the GMRA but also by providing other related resources, such as the recent *ICMA Guides to Asian Repo Markets* series (covering ten Asian markets).

## Sustainable Finance

### ICMA provides the de-facto global market standards for sustainable bonds

- Since 2014 ICMA has served as the Secretariat to the Green Bond Principles (GBP), the Social Bond Principles (SBP), the Sustainability Bond Guidelines (SBG) and the Sustainability-Linked Bond Principles (SLBP) - collectively known as "the Principles", providing support while advising on governance and other issues. The *Principles* are the de facto voluntary global market standard for sustainable bonds. In 2023, 97% of the total sustainable bond issuance globally was aligned with the Principles.
- The Principles are complemented by other guidance, including the Climate Transition Finance Handbook (CTFH), a guidance document on Green Enabling Projects.
- [Working Groups](#) under the [Executive Committee](#) of the Principles, supported by ICMA, bring together various stakeholders in the sustainable bonds market.
- ICMA also engages with other organisations to provide thematic guidance. Examples are collaborations with multi-development banks and UN institutions on practitioner guides related to bonds to finance gender equality (*Bonds to Bridge the Gender Gap: A Practitioner's Guide to Using Sustainable Debt for Gender Equality* in Nov 2021); bonds to finance economic activities that rely or impact on the use of coastal and marine resources ([Practical Guide to Finance the Sustainable Blue Economy](#) in Sept 2023); the [issuance of sustainable sukuk](#) (Guidance on Green, Social and Sustainability Sukuk). ICMA has also worked with the European Leveraged Finance Association to publish [practical recommendations](#) for high-yield sustainability-linked bonds, and the Loan Market Association for the Sustainability-Linked Loans financing Bond Guidelines (SLLBG).

- ICMA, in partnership with the Luxembourg Stock Exchange provides users with high level market analytics on sustainable bond issuance and a database of issuers of bonds that are published in the LGX DataHub.

### ICMA is involved in market and policy initiatives as well as regulatory dialogues

- ICMA responds to consultations on behalf of its members and keeps a regular dialogue going with regulators mainly in the EU, the UK and Asia, but also in other global jurisdictions. In the EU, ICMA was the only trade association to be a member of the high-level expert group (HLEG) and the technical expert group (TEG) as well as the EU Platform on Sustainable Finance. This is reflected in the EU Green Bond Standard being based on the GBP.
- ICMA, jointly with the IRSG, took on another Secretariat role for the drafting of a voluntary Code of Conduct for ESG Ratings and Data Product Providers. The [Code](#) was published in December 2023.
- ICMA also fulfills the secretariat role for the Hong Kong (draft) Code of Conduct for ESG ratings and data products providers, developed by the Voluntary Code of Conduct Working Group, an industry working group sponsored by the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission, and the Singapore Code of Conduct for ESG Rating and Data Product Providers, co-created by the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

### Asset Management

- Buy-side members of ICMA have a distinctive voice through the Committee of the ICMA Asset Management and Investors Council (AMIC), both on market-related issues and regulation.
- ICMA brings together its buy-side and sell-side members wherever possible to represent the views of the market as a whole on an international basis.

### Fintech and Digitalisation

Fintech and digitalisation are deeply integrated across all the Association's work in primary, secondary, repo and collateral fixed income markets. The ICMA Fintech Advisory Committee, which draws on experts from ICMA's diverse membership, provides guidance on the Association's engagements on Fintech, including regulatory and legislative developments.

- Common standards are critical to avoid market fragmentation, enable end-to-end automation in traditional bond markets, and facilitate the emergence of a digital or Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT)-based ecosystem.
- ICMA's Bond Data Taxonomy (BDT) provides a common language for key bond information. It is available in machine-readable format and can be used to automate the bond issuance process and also represent digital i.e. DLT-based debt instruments.

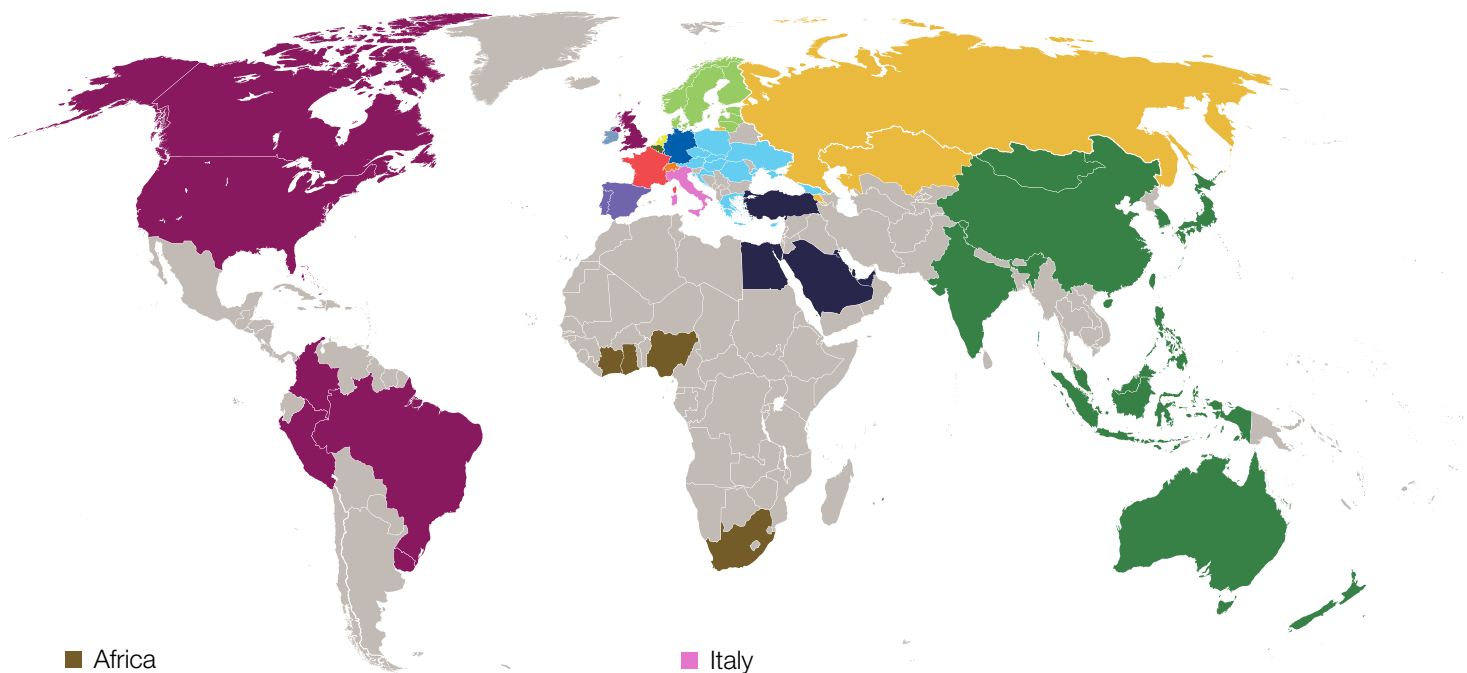
- The Common Domain Model (CDM), a joint initiative between ICMA, ISDA and ISLA, enables end-to-end automation of bond, repo, securities lending and derivatives trading as well as reporting. The CDM is available in Java and other programming languages.
- The Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) working group aims to foster the development of scalable, liquid and efficient DLT-based bond markets, and is currently focused on a compendium of considerations for DLT-based debt securities, to compliment previous work on risk factors and disclosure. This analysis, in conjunction with our CDM and BDT, will form the basis for a framework covering important aspects of the DLT-based bond lifecycle.
- ICMA works closely with regulators to foster innovation, engaging recently with Monetary Authority of Singapore's Project Guardian to explore tokenisation and responding to the Bank of England and FCA's consultation on a UK Digital Securities Sandbox. Our newest addition to our fintech and digitalisation working groups, the Artificial Intelligence in Capital Markets (AICM) working group, also responded to the European Commission's consultation on artificial intelligence in financial services. The AICM working group aims to address the rising role of AI in the industry and focuses on education, use-cases and best practices.
- ICMA is also a member of the Industry Data Standards Committee and takes part in the Eurosystem's New Technologies for Wholesale settlement Contact Group, aimed at supporting the emergence of digital securities as well as the ECB's Securities Group (SEG), which is focused on post-trade harmonisation and innovation across the EU emergence of digital securities as well as the ECB's SEG, which is focused on post-trade harmonisation.
- ICMA's FinTech directories are unique resources available to members and regulators, covering; primary markets, electronic trading, repo trading, operations, distributed ledger technology (DLT) and CSDR settlement discipline.

### Education and Training

- For close to 50 years, ICMA's educational offering has played a major part in its mission to raise standards in the international capital market, training staff from the regulatory and central banking community as well as a wide variety of other market participants globally.

ICMA supports and engages with members through dedicated helpdesks for legal, regulatory, and sustainable finance enquiries. ICMA also organises an extensive calendar of meetings and events, globally and virtually. ICMA provides insight into the capital markets through its reports, research papers and newsletters as well as podcasts with leading market practitioners.

## ICMA's global reach – Around 620 members in almost 70 jurisdictions



- Africa
- Asia Pacific
- Austria, Eastern and South Eastern Europe
  - Greece, Cyprus and Balkan States chapter
- Belgium
- France and Monaco
- Germany
- Iberia
- Ireland
- Italy
- Luxembourg
- Middle East, North Africa and Republic of Türkiye (MENAT)
- Netherlands
- Nordic
- Russia and other CIS countries (currently suspended)
- Switzerland and Liechtenstein
- United Kingdom and the Americas

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To learn more about the work of ICMA and how membership of ICMA could benefit your organisation please get in touch:

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