
INSIGHT INTO AT1 COCOs ASSET CLASS

Income oriented solutions to consider: Additional Tier 1 Contingent Convertible Bonds (AT1 COCOs)

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Investors continue to seek income. Meanwhile central bank policy rates are likely to remain low for some time. WisdomTree AT1 CoCos UCITS ETF provides investors exposure to an asset class that has historically provided a yield pick-up relative to many traditional bond asset classes.

AT1 CoCos were created to help European banks raise capital to meet Basel III capital requirements following the financial crisis. The Basel III framework placed greater requirements on both the quality of banks' capital and the required level of it with the intent to reduce systemic risk. European banks generally have improved their capital adequacy ratios since the 2008 Great Financial Crisis by issuing AT1 CoCos and have shown resilience, amid the health pandemic. AT1 CoCo bonds typically offer greater yields than investing in the more senior bank debt of the issuing bank and can offer some mitigation against the impact of rising rates.

WHAT ARE AT1 COCOs?

The structure of AT1 CoCos is based on their main purpose as readily available source of bank capital in periods of crisis. Within the bank's capital structure, they fall below subordinated debt and are considered hybrid instruments which, if triggered, can be converted to equity or written down. The AT1 CoCo's trigger is associated with the issuing banks' CET1 ratio¹. Importantly, this conversion or write-down would tend to occur at a time when it is more advantageous to the issuer than to the investor, hence the "yield premium" that is required to create an attractive risk/reward proposition for investors. Banks typically pay a significant yield premium over more senior debt to compensate AT1 CoCo investors for the additional risks that they bear.

¹ The CET1 ratio is the Common Equity Tier 1 Capital ratio.

FIGURE 1: BANK CAPITAL STRUCTURE



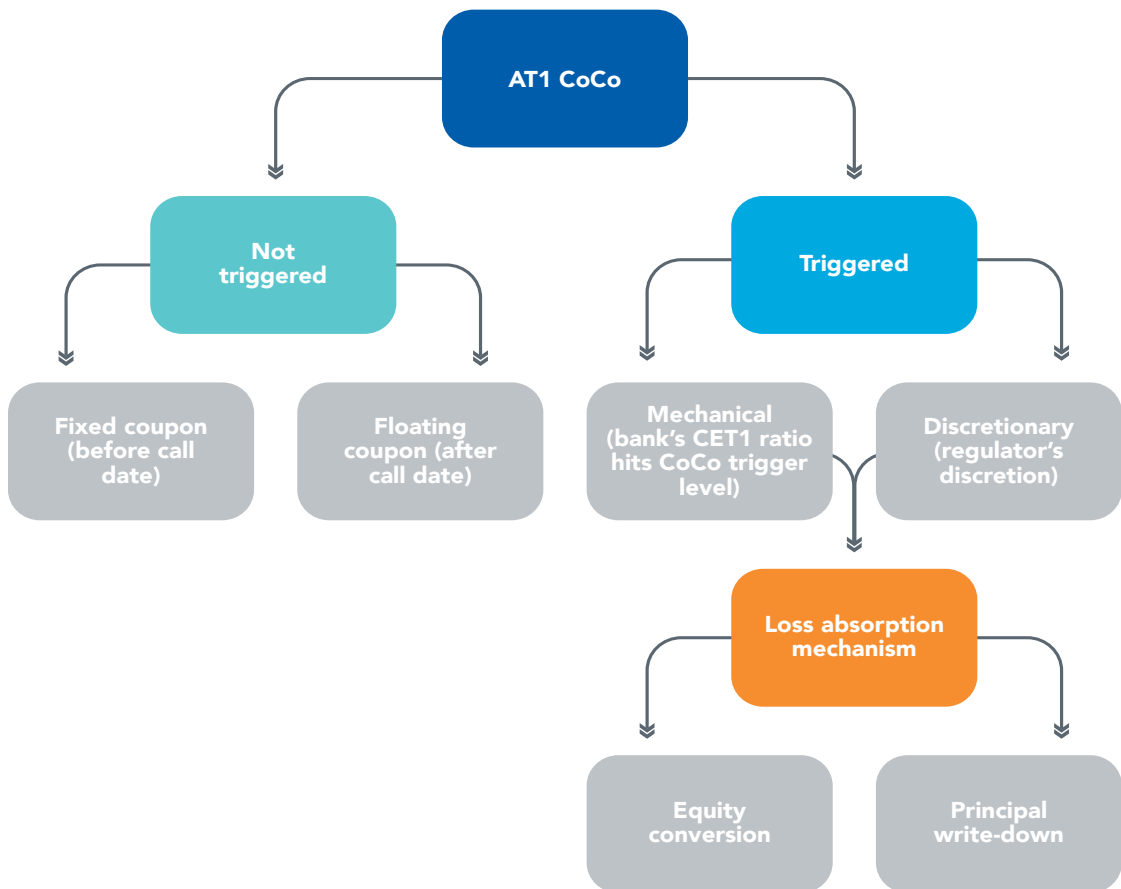
Source: WisdomTree. For illustrative purposes only.

These bonds have been designed to automatically absorb losses before, or at the point of, bank insolvency and the trigger for the loss absorption mechanism must be a function of the capitalisation levels of the issuing bank. Global Systemically Important Banks and Domestic Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBS and D-SIBs) have issued CoCos to meet the new capital requirements and, in many cases, have exceeded these capital requirements. While capital ratios remain strong for the European banking sector, investors should understand that the trigger mechanisms, embedded within AT1 CoCos, are meant to protect the bank’s capital adequacy in the event of bank losses.

AT1 COCO TRIGGER: EXPLAINED

When a CoCo bond’s trigger is breached, the bond’s loss absorption mechanism is activated. There are two types of triggers: mechanical or discretionary.

FIGURE 2: BANK CAPITAL STRUCTURE



Source: Hypothetical Illustration from WisdomTree.

Mechanical triggers cause CoCos to “trigger” the loss absorption mechanism. This occurs when a bank’s CET1 capital ratio falls below the trigger level (generally 7% for high-trigger CoCos and 5.125% for low-trigger CoCos).

Discretionary triggers are activated when a regulator decides that a bank is not adequately capitalised. Similarly, there are two types of AT1 CoCo loss absorption mechanisms. When triggered, an AT1 CoCo is either converted to equity or the principal is written down. Each AT1 has a single loss absorption mechanism.

These events will be done at times most advantageous to the issuer, NOT the investor, which explains the higher yield received during times when European banks are not under stress. When a trigger is breached, you may receive less than the amount invested. An AT1 CoCo bond has several features which are bond-like and several which are equity-like. Similar to bonds, AT1 CoCos pay a coupon. Similar to an equity dividend, a coupon on an AT1 CoCo is made on a discretionary basis. An AT1 CoCo is convertible to equity or may be written down when a bank’s capital adequacy is deteriorating and, therefore, AT1 CoCos may trade more in-line with equities on the downside, particularly when conditions within the European banking sector are under stress.

WHY ARE SOME INVESTORS INVESTING IN AT1 COCOs GIVEN THESE POTENTIAL RISKS?

- + **Distribution income and yield enhancement relative to other risk assets.**
- + **AT1 CoCos have traditionally shown resilience in rising rate periods²:** relative to global high yield, global credit and global treasuries.
- + **Diversification relative to other asset classes:** AT1 CoCos³ historically have shown to have a low correlation to Government bond indices.
- + **Pure exposure to the European banking sector:** The AT1 index⁴ provides exposure to AT1 CoCos issued by banks from European countries classified as developed markets⁵.

WISDOMTREE AT1 COCO BOND UCITS ETF (CCBO)

CCBO tracks the iBoxx Contingent Convertible Liquid Developed Europe AT1 index which is designed to reflect the performance of financial institutions AT1 contingent convertible debt denominated in EUR, USD, and GBP and aims to offer a good coverage of the AT1 CoCo bond universe, whilst upholding minimum standards of investability and liquidity. CCBO is offered to investors in USD as well as several hedged currencies with full listing details provided below.

² WisdomTree, Bloomberg considering the iBoxx Contingent Convertible Liquid Developed Europe AT1 Index (USD Hedged) started its live calculation on 09 March 2018, global high yield using the Bloomberg Barclays **Global High yield** index, **global credit** using the Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Credit index and **global treasuries** using the Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Treasuries Index. Calculations include backtested data. **Historical performance is not an indication of future performance and any investments may go down in value.**

³ AT1 CoCos considering the iBoxx Contingent Convertible Liquid Developed Europe AT1 Index. Period from 31 December 2013 to 29 January 2021. Based on monthly returns and includes backtested data. Government bond indices considered are the FTSE Actuaries UK Conventional Gilts All Stocks Total Return Index and the iBoxx Euro Sovereign Overall Index. **Historical performance is not an indication of future performance and any investments may go down in value.**

⁴ AT1 Index is represented by the iBoxx Contingent Convertible Liquid Developed Europe AT1 Index.

⁵ The classification criteria is outlined by Markit within the iBoxx Contingent Convertible Liquid Developed Europe AT1 Index methodology.

CCBO invests in Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bank debt issued in the developed European market.

- + AT1s are denominated in USD, EUR or GBP
- + Issues meet strict liquidity requirements (min. 700mn in USD/EUR/GBP)
- + Issues must have a minimum credit rating of 'B' from one of the three major rating agencies (Standard & Poor's, Moody's, Fitch)
- + Issuers capping: Top 5 issuers are capped at 7.5% and the remaining issuers are capped at 4.5%
- + Issuers meet strict liquidity requirements (min. 1B outstanding in USD/EUR/GBP)
- + The Fund has a total net expense ratio of 0.39%

Share Class Name	Ticker	ISIN	Distribution policy	Exchange	Base Currency	Trading currency	TER*
WisdomTree AT1 CoCo Bond UCITS ETF - USD	CCBO	IE00BZ0XVF52	Distributing	LSE	USD	USD	0.39%
	CCBO			Borsa Italiana		EUR	
	WTDI			Xetra		EUR	
	CCBO			SIX		USD	
WisdomTree AT1 CoCo Bond UCITS ETF - USD Acc	COCB	IE00BZ0XVG69	Accumulating	LSE SIX	USD	USD	0.39%
WisdomTree AT1 CoCo Bond UCITS ETF - USD Hedged	CODO	IE00BFNNN012	Distributing	LSE SIX	USD	USD	0.39%
WisdomTree AT1 CoCo Bond UCITS ETF - EUR Hedged	COBO	IE00BFNNN236	Distributing	Borsa Italiana	EUR	EUR	0.39%
	WTEB			Xetra			
	COBO			SIX			
WisdomTree AT1 CoCo Bond UCITS ETF - GBP Hedged	COGO	IE00BFNNN459	Distributing	LSE SIX	GBP	GBx GPB	0.39%

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