

INTERNATIONAL

SRI PROXY VOTING GUIDELINES

2021 Policy Recommendations

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INTRODUCTION

ISS' Social Advisory Services division recognizes that socially responsible investors have dual objectives: financial and social. Socially responsible investors invest for economic gain, as do all investors, but they also require that the companies in which they invest conduct their business in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

These dual objectives carry through to socially responsible investors' proxy voting activity once the security selection process is completed. In voting their shares, socially responsible institutional shareholders are concerned not only with sustainable economic returns to shareholders and good corporate governance but also with the ethical behavior of corporations and the social and environmental impact of their actions.

Social Advisory Services has, therefore, developed proxy voting guidelines that are consistent with the dual objectives of socially responsible shareholders. On matters of social and environmental import, the guidelines seek to reflect a broad consensus of the socially responsible investing community. Generally, we take as our frame of reference policies that have been developed by groups such as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church, Domini Social Investments, and other leading church shareholders and socially responsible mutual fund companies. Additionally, we incorporate the active ownership and investment philosophies of leading globally recognized initiatives such as the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI), the United Nations Global Compact, and environmental and social European Union Directives.

On matters of corporate governance, executive compensation, and corporate structure, Social Advisory Services guidelines are based on a commitment to create and preserve economic value and to advance principles of good corporate governance consistent with responsibilities to society as a whole.

The guidelines provide an overview of how Social Advisory Services recommends that its clients vote. We note that there may be cases in which the final vote recommendation on a particular company varies from the vote guideline due to the fact that we closely examine the merits of each proposal and consider relevant information and company-specific circumstances in arriving at our decisions. Where Social Advisory Services acts as voting agent for its clients, it follows each client's voting policy, which may differ in some cases from the policies outlined in this document. Social Advisory Services updates its guidelines on an annual basis to take into account emerging issues and trends on environmental, social, and corporate governance topics, in addition to evolving market standards, regulatory changes, and client feedback.

1. Operational Items

Financial Results/Director and Auditor Reports

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for approval of financial statements and director and auditor reports, unless:
- There are concerns about the accounts presented or audit procedures used; or
 - The company is not responsive to shareholder questions about specific items that should be publicly disclosed.

Approval of Non-Financial Information Statement/Report

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for the approval of mandatory non-financial information statement/report, unless the independent assurance services provider has raised material concerns about the information presented.

Appointment of Auditors and Auditor Fees

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for the reelection of auditors and proposals authorizing the board to fix auditor fees, unless:
- The name of the proposed auditors has not been published;
 - There are serious concerns about the effectiveness of the auditors;
 - The lead audit partner(s) has been linked with a significant auditing controversy;
 - There is a reason to believe that the auditor has rendered an opinion which is neither accurate nor indicative of the company's financial position;
 - The lead audit partner(s) has previously served the company in an executive capacity or can otherwise be considered affiliated with the company;
 - The auditors are being changed without explanation;
 - Fees for non-audit services exceed either 100 percent of standard audit-related fees or any stricter limit set in local best practice recommendations or law.

In circumstances where fees for non-audit services include fees related to significant one-time capital structure events, such as initial public offerings, bankruptcy emergence, and spinoffs, and the company makes public disclosure of the amount and nature of those fees which are an exception to the standard "non-audit fee" category, then such fees may be excluded from the non-audit fees considered in determining the ratio of non-audit to audit fees.

For concerns relating to the audit procedures, independence of auditors, and/or name of auditors, Social Advisory Services will focus on the auditor election and/or the audit committee members. For concerns relating to fees paid to the auditors, Social Advisory Services will focus on remuneration of auditors if this is a separate voting item, otherwise Social Advisory Services would focus on the auditor election.

Appointment of Internal Statutory Auditors

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for the appointment or reelection of statutory auditors, unless:
- There are serious concerns about the statutory reports presented or the audit procedures used;
 - Questions exist concerning any of the statutory auditors being appointed; or
 - The auditors have previously served the company in an executive capacity or can otherwise be considered affiliated with the company.

Allocation of Income

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for approval of the allocation of income, unless:
- The dividend payout ratio has been consistently below 30 percent without adequate explanation; or

- The payout is excessive given the company's financial position.

Stock (Scrip) Dividend Alternative

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on stock (scrip) dividend proposals, considering factors such as:

- Whether the proposal allows for a cash option; and
- If the proposal is in line with market standards.

Amendments to Articles of Association (Bylaws)

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote amendments to the articles of association on a case-by-case basis.

Virtual Meetings (UK/Ireland and Europe)

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals allowing for the convening of hybrid¹ shareholder meetings if it is clear that it is not the intention to hold virtual-only AGMs.

Generally vote against proposals allowing for the convening of virtual-only¹ shareholder meetings.

Change in Company Fiscal Term

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for resolutions to change a company's fiscal term unless a company's motivation for the change is to postpone its AGM.

Lower Disclosure Threshold for Stock Ownership

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against resolutions to lower the stock ownership disclosure threshold below 5 percent unless specific reasons exist to implement a lower threshold.

Amend Quorum Requirements

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote proposals to amend quorum requirements for shareholder meetings on a case-by-case basis.

Transact Other Business

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against other business when it appears as a voting item.

¹The phrase "virtual-only shareholder meeting" refers to a meeting of shareholders that is held exclusively through the use of online technology without a corresponding in-person meeting. The term "hybrid shareholder meeting" refers to an in-person, or physical, meeting in which shareholders are permitted to participate online.

2. Board of Directors

Director Elections

- ▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for management nominees in the election of directors, unless:
- Adequate disclosure has not been provided in a timely manner;
 - There are clear concerns over questionable finances or restatements;
 - There have been questionable transactions with conflicts of interest;
 - There are any records of abuses against minority shareholder interests;
 - The board fails to meet minimum corporate governance standards, including board independence standards;
 - There are specific concerns about the individual, such as criminal wrongdoing or breach of fiduciary responsibilities; or
 - Absences at board and key committee meetings have not been explained (in countries where this information is disclosed).

Vote for employee and/or labor representatives if they sit on either the audit or compensation committee *and* are required by law to be on those committees. Vote against employee and/or labor representatives if they sit on either the audit or compensation committee, if they are not required to be on those committees.

Diversity

Social Advisory Services will evaluate gender diversity on boards in international markets when reviewing director elections, to the extent that disclosures and market practices permit.

- ▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote against or withhold from incumbent members of the nominating committee if the board lacks at least one woman.
- For **Japan**, if the company has an audit-committee-board structure or a traditional two-tier board structure as opposed to three committees, vote against incumbent representative directors if the board lacks at least one woman.
 - For **Canada, UK, and Australia**, vote against or withhold from incumbent members of the nominating committee if:
 - the board lacks at least one woman and one racially diverse director; and
 - the board is not at least 30 percent diverse.
 - For **UK** constituents of the **FTSE 350** (excluding investment trusts), generally vote against incumbent members of the nominating committee if:
 - the board does not comprise at least 33 percent representation of women, in line with the recommendation of the Hampton-Alexander Review, and at least one racially diverse director.
 - If the company does not have a formal nominating committee, vote against or withhold from all incumbent members of the board.
 - Vote against or withhold from other directors on a case-by-case-basis.

Material ESG Failures


- ▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against or withhold from directors individually, on a committee, or potentially the entire board due to:

- Material failures of governance, stewardship, risk oversight², including demonstrably poor risk oversight of environmental and social issues, including climate change, or fiduciary responsibilities at the company, including failure to adequately manage or mitigate environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks;
- A lack of sustainability reporting in the company's public documents and/or website in conjunction with a failure to adequately manage or mitigate ESG risks;
- Failure to replace management as appropriate; or
- Egregious actions related to the director(s)' service on the boards that raise substantial doubt about his or her ability to effectively oversee management and serve the best interests of shareholders at any company.

For director elections, Social Advisory Services will also take into consideration market-specific provisions which are listed below:


Canadian Guidelines

Board Structure and Independence (TSX)

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote withhold for any Executive Director or Non-Independent, Non-Executive Director where:


- The board is less than majority independent; or
- The board lacks a separate compensation or nominating committee.

Non-Independent Directors on Key Committees (TSX)

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote withhold for members of the audit, compensation, or nominating committee who:


- Are Executive Directors;
- Are Controlling Shareholders; or
- Is a Non-employee officer of the company or its affiliates if he/she is among the five most highly compensated.

Non-Independent Directors on Key Committees (TSX-V)

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote withhold for Executive Directors, Controlling Shareholders or a Non-employee officer of the company or its affiliates if he/she is among the five most highly compensated who:

- Are members of the audit committee;
- Are members of the compensation committee or the nominating committee and the committee is not majority independent; or
- Are board members and the entire board fulfills the role of a compensation committee or a nominating committee and the board is not majority independent.

Overboarding-TSX

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote withhold for individual director nominees who:


- Are non-CEO directors and serve on more than five public company boards; or

² Examples of failure of risk oversight include, but are not limited to: bribery; large or serial fines or sanctions from regulatory bodies; demonstrably poor risk oversight of environmental and social issues, including climate change; significant environmental incidents including spills and pollution; large scale or repeat workplace fatalities or injuries; significant adverse legal judgments or settlements; or hedging of company stock.

- Are CEOs of public companies who serve on the boards of more than two public companies besides their own – withhold only at their outside boards³.


Transitioning directors: It is preferable for a director to step down from a board at the annual meeting to ensure orderly transitions, which may result in a director being temporarily overboarded (e.g. joining a new board in March but stepping off another board in June). Social Advisory Services will generally not count a board for policy application purposes when it is publicly-disclosed that the director will be stepping off that board at its next annual meeting. This disclosure must be included within the company's proxy circular to be taken into consideration. Conversely, Social Advisory Services will include the new boards that the director is joining even if the shareholder meeting with his or her election has not yet taken place.

Externally-Managed Issuers (EMIs) –TSX and TSXV

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on say-on-pay resolutions where provided, or on individual directors, committee members, or the entire board as appropriate, when an issuer is externally-managed and has provided minimal or no disclosure about their management services agreements and how senior management is compensated. Factors taken into consideration may include but are not limited to:

- The size and scope of the management services agreement;
- Executive compensation in comparison to issuer peers and/or similarly structured issuers;
- Overall performance;
- Related party transactions;
- Board and committee independence;
- Conflicts of interest and process for managing conflicts effectively;
- Disclosure and independence of the decision-making process involved in the selection of the management services provider;
- Risk mitigating factors included within the management services agreement such as fee recoupment mechanisms;
- Historical compensation concerns;
- Executives' responsibilities; and
- Other factors that may reasonably be deemed appropriate to assess an externally-managed issuer's governance framework.

Unilateral Adoption of an Advance Notice Provision

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally withhold from individual directors, committee members, or the entire board as appropriate in situations where an advance notice policy has been adopted by the board but has not been included on the voting agenda at the next shareholders' meeting.


Continued lack of shareholder approval of the advanced notice policy in subsequent years may result in further withhold recommendations.

European Guidelines

In *European markets*, Social Advisory Services looks at different factors to make determinations regarding director elections. The following factors are taken into account:

³ Although a CEO's subsidiary boards will be counted as separate boards, Social Advisory Services will not recommend a withhold vote for the CEO of a parent company board or any of the controlled (>50 percent ownership) subsidiaries of that parent but may do so at subsidiaries that are less than 50 percent controlled and boards outside the parent/subsidiary relationship.

Director Terms

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote against the election or re-election of any director when his/her term is not disclosed or when it exceeds four years and adequate explanation for non-compliance has not been provided.

Under best practice recommendations, companies should shorten the terms for directors when the terms exceed the limits suggested by best practices. The policy will be applied to all companies, for bundled as well as unbundled items.

Beyond that, as directors should be accountable to shareholders on a more regular basis, Social Advisory Services may consider moving to maximum board terms of less than four years in the future.

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against article amendment proposals to extend board terms.

In cases where a company's articles provide for a shorter limit and where the company wishes to extend director terms from three or fewer years to four years, for example, Social Advisory Services will recommend a vote against, based on the general principle that director accountability is maximized by elections with a short period of renewal.

Bundling of Proposals to Elect Directors

Bundling together proposals that could be presented as separate voting items is not considered good market practice, because bundled resolutions leave shareholders with an all-or-nothing choice, skewing power disproportionately towards the board and away from shareholders. As director elections are one of the most important voting decisions that shareholders make, directors should be elected individually.

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** For the markets of **Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia** vote against the election or reelection of any directors if the company proposes a single slate of directors.

Bundled director elections in Poland may be supported for companies that go beyond market practice by disclosing the names of nominees on a timely basis

Board Independence

Widely-held companies

A. Non-controlled companies

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote against the election or reelection of any non-independent directors (excluding the CEO) if:
- Fewer than 50 percent of the board members elected by shareholders, excluding, where relevant, employee shareholder representatives, would be independent, or
 - Fewer than one-third of all board members would be independent.

Greece and Portugal are excluded from Provision (1.) in the above-mentioned voting policy.

B. Controlled companies

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote against the election or reelection of any non-independent directors (excluding the CEO) if less than one-third of the board members are independent.

Board Leadership

Given the importance of board leadership, Social Advisory Services may consider that the chair of the board should be an independent non-executive director according to the Social Advisory Services' Classification of Directors.

Non-widely held companies

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote against the election or reelection of any non-independent directors (excluding the CEO) if less than one-third of the board members are independent.

Definition of terms

'Widely-held companies' are determined based on their membership in a major index and/or the number of Social Advisory Services clients holding the securities. For Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland, this is based on membership on a local blue-chip market index and/or MSCI EAFE companies. For Portugal, it is based on membership in the PSI-20 and/or MSCI EAFE index.

A company is considered to be controlled for the purposes of the above-mentioned voting policies if a shareholder, or multiple shareholders acting in concert, control a majority of the company's equity capital (i.e. 50 percent + one share). If a company is majority-controlled by virtue of a shareholder structure in which shareholders' voting rights do not accrue in accordance with their equity capital commitment (e.g. unequal or multi-class share structures), the company will not be classified as controlled unless the majority shareholder/majority shareholding group also holds a majority of the company's equity capital.

Disclosure of Nominee Names

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against the election or reelection of any and all director nominees when the names of the nominees are not available at the time the proxy analysis is being written.

This policy will be applied to all companies in these markets, for bundled and unbundled items.

Combined Chair/CEO

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally, vote against the (re)election of combined chair/CEOs at widely held European companies.

When the company provides assurance that the chair/CEO would only serve in the combined role on an interim basis (no more than two years), the vote recommendation would be made on a case-by-case basis.

In the above-mentioned situation, Social Advisory Services will consider the rationale provided by the company and whether it has set up adequate control mechanisms on the board (such as a lead independent director, a high overall level of board independence, and a high level of independence on the board's key committees).

Election of Former CEO as Chair of the Board

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote against the election or reelection of a former CEO as chair to the supervisory board or board of directors in **Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands**. In markets such as **Germany**, where the general meeting only elects the nominees and, subsequently, the new board's chair, Social Advisory Services will generally recommend a vote against the election or election of a former CEO, unless the company has publicly confirmed prior to the general meeting that he will not proceed to become chair of the board.

Considerations should be given to any of the following exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis if:

- There are compelling reasons that justify the election or reelection of a former CEO as chair;
- The former CEO is proposed to become the board's chair only on an interim or temporary basis;
- The former CEO is proposed to be elected as the board's chair for the first time after a reasonable cooling-off period; or
- The board chair will not receive a level of compensation comparable to the company's executives nor assume executive functions in markets where this is applicable.

Overboarded Directors

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** In **Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland**, Social Advisory Services will generally recommend a vote against a candidate when he/she holds an excessive number of board appointments, as defined by the following guidelines:

- Any person who holds more than five mandates at listed companies will be classified as overboarded. For the purposes of calculating this limit, a non-executive directorship counts as one mandate, a non-executive chair position counts as two mandates, and a position as executive director (or a comparable role) is counted as three mandates.
- Also, any person who holds the position of executive director (or a comparable role) at one company and a non-executive chair at a different company will be classified as overboarded.

An adverse vote recommendation will not be applied to a director within a company where he/she serves as CEO; instead, any adverse vote recommendations will be applied to his/her additional seats on other company boards. For chairs, negative recommendations would first be applied towards non-executive positions held, but the chair position itself would be targeted where they are being elected as chair for the first time or, when in aggregate their chair positions are three or more in number, or if the chair holds an outside executive position.

One Board Seat per Director

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** In cases where a director holds more than one board seat on a single board and the corresponding votes, manifested as one seat as a physical person plus an additional seat(s) as a representative of a legal entity, vote against the election/re-election of such legal entities and in favor of the physical person.

However, an exception is made if the representative of the legal entity holds the position of CEO. In such circumstances, Social Advisory Services will typically recommend a vote in favor of the legal entity and against the election/re-election of the physical person.

While such occurrences are rare, there have been cases where a board member may have multiple board seats and corresponding votes. Holding several board seats concurrently within one board increases this person's direct influence on board decisions and creates an inequality among board members.

This situation has manifested in **Belgium, Luxembourg, and France**. This is not a good corporate governance practice, as it places disproportionate influence and control in one person.

Composition of Committees

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

For *widely-held companies*, generally vote against the (re)election of any non-independent members of the audit committee if:

- Fewer than 50 percent of the audit committee members, who are elected by shareholders in such capacity or another – excluding, where relevant, employee shareholder representatives – would be independent; or
- Fewer than one-third of all audit committee members would be independent.

For companies whose boards are legally required to have 50 percent of directors not elected by shareholders, the second criterion is not applicable.

Generally vote against the election or re-election of the non-independent member of the audit committee designated as chair of that committee.

For widely-held companies, generally vote against the (re)election of any non-independent members of the remuneration committee if:

- Fewer than 50 percent of the remuneration committee members, who are elected by shareholders in such capacity or another – excluding, where relevant, employee shareholder representatives – would be independent; or
- Fewer than one-third of all remuneration committee members would be independent.

For companies whose boards are legally required to have 50 percent of directors not elected by shareholders, the second criterion is not applicable.

For all companies:

Generally vote against the (re)election of executives who serve on the company's audit or remuneration committee.

- Social Advisory Services may recommend against if the disclosure is too poor to determine whether an executive serves or will serve on a committee.
- If a company does not have an audit or a remuneration committee, Social Advisory Services may consider that the entire board fulfills the role of a committee. In such case, Social Advisory Services may recommend against the executives, including the CEO, up for election to the board.

Voto di Lista (Italy)

In Italy, director elections generally take place through the *voto di lista* mechanism (similar to slate elections). Since the Italian implementation of the European Shareholder Rights Directive (effective since Nov. 1, 2010), issuers must publish the various lists 21 days in advance of the meeting.

Since shareholders only have the option to support one such list, where lists are published in sufficient time, Social Advisory Services will recommend a vote on a case-by-case basis, determining which list of nominees it considers is best suited to add value for shareholders.

Those companies that are excluded from the provisions of the European Shareholder Rights Directive publish lists of nominees 10 days before the meeting. In the case where nominees are not published in sufficient time, Social Advisory Services will recommend a vote against the director elections before the lists of director nominees are disclosed. Once the various lists of nominees are disclosed, Social Advisory Services will issue an alert to its clients and, if appropriate, change its vote recommendation to support one particular list.

Composition of the Nominating Committee

Vote for proposals in **Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden** to elect or appoint a nominating committee consisting mainly of non-board members.

Vote for shareholder proposals calling for disclosure of the names of the proposed candidates at the meeting, as well as the inclusion of a representative of minority shareholders in the committee.

Vote against proposals where the names of the candidates (in the case of an election) or the principles for the establishment of the committee have not been disclosed in a timely manner.

Vote against proposals in **Sweden** to elect or appoint such a committee if the company is on the MSCI-EAFE or local main index and the following conditions exist:

- A member of the executive management would be a member of the committee;
- More than one board member who is dependent on a major shareholder would be on the committee; or
- The chair of the board would also be the chair of the committee.

In cases where the principles for the establishment of the nominating committee, rather than the election of the committee itself, are being voted on, vote against the adoption of the principles if any of the above conditions are met for the current committee, and there is no publicly available information indicating that this would no longer be the case for the new nominating committee.

Election of Censors (France)


Social Advisory Services will generally recommend a vote against proposals seeking shareholder approval to elect a censor, to amend bylaws to authorize the appointment of censors, or to extend the maximum number of censors to the board.

However, Social Advisory Services will recommend a vote on a case-by-case basis when the company provides assurance that the censor would serve on a short-term basis (maximum one year) with the intent to retain the nominee before his/her election as director. In this case, consideration shall also be given to the nominee's situation (notably overboarding or other factors of concern).

In consideration of the principle that censors should be appointed on a short-term basis, vote against any proposal to renew the term of a censor or to extend the statutory term of censors.

International Markets

Overboarding – Brazil and Americas Regional

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally, vote against management nominees who:


- Sit on more than five public company boards; or
- Are CEOs of public companies who sit on the boards of more than two public companies besides their own— recommend against only at their outside boards³Error! Bookmark not defined.

Generally, vote against the bundled election of directors if one or more nominees, if elected, would be overboarded.

Cumulative Voting – Middle East and Africa (MEA)

Under a cumulative voting system, each share represents a number of votes equal to the size of the board that will be elected. These votes may be apportioned equally among the candidates or, if a shareholder wishes to exclude some nominees, among the desired candidates.

For MEA markets, when directors are elected through a cumulative voting system, or when the number of nominees exceeds the number of board vacancies, vote case-by-case on directors, taking into consideration additional factors to identify the nominees best suited to add value for shareholders.

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote to abstain from all candidates if the disclosure provided by the company is not sufficient to allow the assessment of independence and the support of all proposed candidates on equal terms.

If the disclosure is sufficient to allow an assessment of the independence of proposed candidates, generally vote in favor of the following types of candidates:

- Candidates who can be identified as representatives of minority shareholders of the company, or independent candidates:
- Candidates whose professional background may have the following benefits:
 - Increasing the diversity of incumbent directors' professional profiles and skills (thanks to their financial expertise, international experience, executive positions/directorships at other listed companies, or other relevant factors.
 - Bringing to the current board of directors relevant experience in areas linked to the company's business, evidenced by current or past board memberships or management functions at other companies.
- Incumbent board members and candidates explicitly supported by the company's management.

Please see the International Classification of Directors on the following page.

Classification of Directors – International Policy

Executive Director

- Employee or executive of the company or a wholly-owned subsidiary of the company;
- Any director who is classified as a non-executive, but receives salary, fees, bonus, and/or other benefits that are in line with the highest-paid executives of the company.

Non-Independent Non-Executive Director (NED)

- Any director who is attested by the board to be a non-independent NED;
- Any director specifically designated as a representative of a shareholder of the company;
- Any director who is also an employee or executive of a significant shareholder of the company;
- Any director who is also an employee or executive of a subsidiary, associate, joint venture, or company that is affiliated with a significant^[1] shareholder of the company;
- Any director who is nominated by a dissenting significant shareholder unless there is a clear lack of material^[2] connection with the dissident, either currently or historically;
- Beneficial owner (direct or indirect) of at least 10 percent of the company's stock, either in economic terms or in voting rights (this may be aggregated if voting power is distributed among more than one member of a defined group, e.g., members of a family that beneficially own less than 10 percent individually, but collectively own more than 10 percent), unless market best practice dictates a lower ownership and/or disclosure threshold (and in other special market-specific circumstances);
- Government representative;
- Currently provides or has provided (or a relative^[3] provides) professional services^[4] to the company, to an affiliate of the company, or to an individual officer of the company or of one of its affiliates in the last fiscal year in excess of USD 10,000 per year;
- Represents customer, supplier, creditor, banker, or other entity with which the company maintains a transactional/commercial relationship (unless the company discloses information to apply a materiality test^[5]);
- Any director who has a conflicting relationship with the company, including but not limited to cross-directorships with executive directors or the chair of the company;
- Relative^[3] of a current or former executive of the company or its affiliates;
- A new appointee elected other than by a formal process through the general meeting (such as a contractual appointment by a substantial shareholder);
- Founder/co-founder/member of founding family but not currently an employee or executive;
- Former executive or employee (five-year cooling off period);
- Years of service^[6] is generally not a determining factor unless it is recommended best practice in a market and/or in extreme circumstances, in which case it may be considered.
- Any additional relationship or principle considered to compromise independence under local corporate governance best practice guidance.^[7]

Independent NED

- No material^[2] connection, either direct or indirect, to the company (other than a board seat) or to a significant shareholder.

Employee Representative

- Represents employees or employee shareholders of the company (classified as "employee representative" and considered a non-independent NED).

Footnotes

[1] At least 10 percent of the company's stock, unless market best practice dictates a lower ownership and/or disclosure threshold.

[2] For purposes of Social Advisory Services' director independence classification, "material" will be defined as a standard of relationship financial, personal, or otherwise that a reasonable person might conclude could potentially influence one's objectivity in the boardroom in a manner that would have a meaningful impact on an individual's ability to satisfy requisite fiduciary standards on behalf of shareholders.

[3] "Relative" follows the definition of "immediate family members" which covers spouses, parents, children, stepparents, step-children, siblings, in-laws, and any person (other than a tenant or employee) sharing the household of any director, nominee for director, executive officer, or significant shareholder of the company.

[4] Professional services can be characterized as advisory in nature and generally include the following: investment banking/financial advisory services; commercial banking (beyond deposit services); investment services; insurance services; accounting/audit services; consulting services; marketing services; and legal services. The case of participation in a banking syndicate by a non-lead bank should be considered a transaction (and hence subject to the associated materiality test) rather than a professional relationship.

[5] A business relationship may be material if the transaction value (of all outstanding transactions) entered into between the company and the company or organization with which the director is associated is equivalent to either 1 percent of the company's turnover or 1 percent of the turnover of the company or organization with which the director is associated. OR, a business relationship may be material if the transaction value (of all outstanding financing operations) entered into between the company and the company or organization with which the director is associated is more than 10 percent of the company's shareholder equity or the transaction value, (of all outstanding financing operations), compared to the company's total assets, is more than 5 percent.

[6] For example, in continental Europe and Latin America, directors with a tenure exceeding 12 years will be considered non-independent. In Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, directors with a tenure exceeding nine years will be considered non-independent, unless the company provides sufficient and clear justification that the director is independent despite his long tenure. For purposes of independence classification of directors incorporated in the Middle East and Africa region, this criterion will be taken into account in accordance with market best practice and disclosure standards and availability.

[7] For MEA markets, directors' past services as statutory auditor/partner of the statutory audit firm will be taken into account, with cooling-off periods in accordance with local market best practice.

Contested Director Elections



Social Advisory Services Recommendation: For contested elections of directors, e.g. the election of shareholder nominees or the dismissal of incumbent directors, Social Advisory Services will make its recommendation on a case-by-case basis, determining which directors are considered best suited to add value for shareholders.

The analysis will generally be based on, but not limited to, the following major decision factors:

- Company performance relative to its peers;
- Strategy of the incumbents versus the dissidents;
- Independence of directors/nominees;
- Experience and skills of board candidates;
- Governance profile of the company;
- Evidence of management entrenchment;
- Responsiveness to shareholders;
- Whether a takeover offer has been rebuffed; and
- Whether minority or majority representation is being sought.

When analyzing a contested election of directors, Social Advisory Services will generally focus on two central questions: (1) Have the proponents proved that board change is warranted? And if so, (2) Are the proponent board nominees likely to effect positive change (i.e., maximize long-term shareholder value).

Discharge of Board and Management

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for discharge of directors, including members of the management board and/or supervisory board, unless there is reliable information about significant and compelling controversies that the board is not fulfilling its fiduciary duties such as:

- A lack of oversight or actions by board members which invoke shareholder distrust related to malfeasance or poor supervision, such as operating in private or company interest rather than in shareholder interest;
- Any legal issues (e.g. civil/criminal) aiming to hold the board responsible for breach of trust in the past or related to currently alleged actions yet to be confirmed (and not only the fiscal year in question), such as price fixing, insider trading, bribery, fraud, and other illegal actions;
- Other material failures of governance, or fiduciary responsibilities at the company, including failure to adequately manage or mitigate environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks; or
- A lack of sustainability reporting in the company's public documents and/or website in conjunction with a failure to adequately manage or mitigate environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks.

For markets which do not routinely request discharge resolutions (e.g. common law countries or markets where discharge is not mandatory), analysts may voice concern in other appropriate agenda items, such as approval of the annual accounts or other relevant resolutions, to enable shareholders to express discontent with the board.

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against proposals to remove approval of discharge of board and management from the agenda.

Director, Officer, and Auditor Indemnification and Liability Provisions

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

- Vote proposals seeking indemnification and liability protection for directors and officers on a case-by-case basis.
- Vote against proposals to indemnify auditors.

Board Structure

▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

- Vote for proposals to fix board size.
- Vote against the introduction of classified boards and mandatory retirement ages for directors.
- Vote against proposals to alter board structure or size in the context of a fight for control of the company or the board.

3. Capital Structure

Share Issuance Requests

General Issuances

▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Evaluate share issuance requests on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration market-specific guidelines as applicable.

For *European markets*, vote for issuance authorities with pre-emptive rights to a maximum of 50 percent over currently issued capital and as long as the share issuance authorities' periods are clearly disclosed (or implied by the application of a legal maximum duration) and in line with market-specific practices and/or recommended guidelines (e.g. issuance periods limited to 18 months for the **Netherlands**).

Vote for issuance authorities without pre-emptive rights to a maximum of 10 percent (or a lower limit if local market best practice recommendations provide) of currently issued capital as long as the share issuance authorities' periods are clearly disclosed (or implied by the application of a legal maximum duration) and in line with market-specific practices and/or recommended guidelines (e.g. issuance periods limited to 18 months for the **Netherlands**).

For **UK** and **Irish** companies, generally vote for a resolution to authorize the issuance of equity, unless:

- The general issuance authority exceeds one-third (33 percent) of the issued share capital. Assuming it is no more than one-third, a further one-third of the issued share capital may also be applied to a fully pre-emptive rights issue taking the acceptable aggregate authority to two-thirds (66 percent);
- The routine authority to disapply preemption rights exceeds 10 percent of the issued share capital, provided that any amount above 5 percent is to be used for the purposes of an acquisition or a specified capital investment.

For **French** companies:

- Vote for general issuance requests with preemptive rights, or without preemptive rights but with a binding "priority right," for a maximum of 50 percent over currently issued capital.
- Generally vote for general authorities to issue shares without preemptive rights up to a maximum of 10 percent of share capital. When companies are listed on a regulated market, the maximum discount on share issuance price proposed in the resolution must, in addition, comply with the legal discount for a vote for to be warranted.

For **Hong Kong** companies, generally vote for the general issuance mandate for companies that:

- Limit the issuance request to 10 percent or less of the relevant class of issued share capital;
- Limit the discount to 10 percent of the market price of shares; and
- Have no history of renewing the General Issuance Mandate several times within a period of one year which may result in the share issuance limit exceeding 10 percent of the relevant class of issued share capital within the 12-month period.

Generally vote for a general issuance of equity or equity-linked securities without preemptive rights when the share issuance limit is not more than 10 percent of the company's issued share capital and 50 percent with preemptive rights for all **Singapore** companies, with the exception of Catalist-listed companies and Real Estate Investment Trusts.

For **Singapore** companies listed on the Catalist market of the SGX, generally vote for a general issuance of equity or equity-linked securities without preemptive rights when the share issuance limit is not more than 20 percent of the company's issued share capital and 100 percent with preemptive rights. For Real Estate Investment Trusts, generally vote for a general issuance of equity or equity-linked securities without preemptive rights when the unit issuance limit is not more than 20 percent of its issued unit capital and 50 percent with preemptive rights.


- For companies listed on the Main Market and ACE Market of the Bursa Malaysia Securities Bhd (Exchange), vote for issuance requests without preemptive rights to a maximum of 10 percent of currently issued capital. For real estate investment trusts (REITs), vote for issuance requests without preemptive rights to a maximum of 20 percent of currently issued capital.

For **Latin American** companies, generally vote for issuance requests with preemptive rights to a maximum of 100 percent over currently issued capital. Vote for issuance requests without preemptive rights to a maximum of 20 percent of currently issued capital. Specific Issuances requested will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

For shelf registration programs at Latin American companies (**Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Peru**), vote on a case-by-case basis on all requests, with or without preemptive rights. Approval of a multi-year authority for the issuance of securities under Shelf Registration Programs will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration, but not limited to, the following:

- Whether the company has provided adequate and timely disclosure including detailed information regarding the rationale for the proposed program;
- Whether the proposed amount to be approved under such authority, the use of the resources, the length of the authorization, the nature of the securities to be issued under such authority, including any potential risk of dilution to shareholders is disclosed; and
- Whether there are concerns regarding questionable finances, the use of the proceeds, or other governance concerns

Increases in Authorized Capital

-  **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for non-specific proposals to increase authorized capital up to 100 percent over the current authorization unless the increase would leave the company with less than 30 percent of its new authorization outstanding.

Vote for specific proposals to increase authorized capital to any amount, unless:

- The specific purpose of the increase (such as a share-based acquisition or merger) does not meet Social Advisory Services guidelines for the purpose being proposed; or
- The increase would leave the company with less than 30 percent of its new authorization outstanding after adjusting for all proposed issuances.

Vote against proposals to adopt unlimited capital authorizations.

Reduction of Capital

-  **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

- Vote for proposals to reduce capital for routine accounting purposes unless the terms are unfavorable to shareholders.
- Vote proposals to reduce capital in connection with corporate restructuring on a case-by-case basis.

Capital Structures

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

- Vote for resolutions that seek to maintain or convert to a one-share, one-vote capital structure.
- Vote against requests for the creation or continuation of dual-class capital structures or the creation of new or additional supervoting shares.

Preferred Stock

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**


- Vote for the creation of a new class of preferred stock or for issuances of preferred stock up to 50 percent of issued capital unless the terms of the preferred stock would adversely affect the rights of existing shareholders.
- Vote for the creation/issuance of convertible preferred stock as long as the maximum number of common shares that could be issued upon conversion meets Social Advisory Services' guidelines on equity issuance requests.
- Vote against the creation of a new class of preference shares that would carry superior voting rights to the common shares.
- Vote against the creation of blank check preferred stock unless the board clearly states that the authorization will not be used to thwart a takeover bid.
- Vote proposals to increase blank check preferred authorizations on a case-by-case basis.

Debt Issuance Requests


 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

- Vote non-convertible debt issuance requests on a case-by-case basis, with or without pre-emptive rights.
- Vote for the creation/issuance of convertible debt instruments as long as the maximum number of common shares that could be issued upon conversion meets Social Advisory Services' guidelines on equity issuance requests.
- Vote for proposals to restructure existing debt arrangements unless the terms of the restructuring would adversely affect the rights of shareholders.


Pledging of Assets for Debt

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote proposals to approve the pledging of assets for debt on a case-by-case basis.

Increase in Borrowing Powers

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote proposals to approve increases in a company's borrowing powers on a case-by-case basis.

Share Repurchase Plans

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for market repurchase authorities (share repurchase programs) if the terms comply with the following criteria:

- A repurchase limit of up to 10 percent of outstanding issued share capital;
- A holding limit of up to 10 percent of a company's issued share capital in treasury ("on the shelf"); and
- Duration of no more than 5 years, or such lower threshold as may be set by applicable law, regulation, or code of governance best practice.

Authorities to repurchase shares in excess of the 10 percent repurchase limit will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Social Advisory Services may support such share repurchase authorities under special circumstances, which

are required to be publicly disclosed by the company, provided that, on balance, the proposal is in shareholders' interests. In such cases, the authority must comply with the following criteria:

- A holding limit of up to 10 percent of a company's issued share capital in treasury ("on the shelf"); and
- Duration of no more than 18 months.

In markets where it is normal practice not to provide a repurchase limit, Social Advisory Services will evaluate the proposal based on the company's historical practice. However, Social Advisory Services expects companies to disclose such limits and, in the future, may recommend a vote against companies that fail to do so. In such cases, the authority must comply with the following criteria:

- A holding limit of up to 10 percent of a company's issued share capital in treasury ("on the shelf"); and
- Duration of no more than 18 months.

In addition, Social Advisory Services will recommend against any proposal where:

- The repurchase can be used for takeover defenses;
- There is clear evidence of abuse;
- There is no safeguard against selective buybacks;
- Pricing provisions and safeguards are deemed to be unreasonable in light of market practice.

Market-Specific Exceptions

For **Singapore**, generally vote for resolutions authorizing the company to repurchase its own shares, unless the premium over the average trading price of the shares as implied by the maximum price paid exceeds 5 percent for on-market repurchases and 20 percent for off-market repurchases.

Reissuance of Shares Repurchased

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for requests to reissue any repurchased shares unless there is clear evidence of abuse of this authority in the past.

Capitalization of Reserves for Bonus Issues/Increase in Par Value

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for requests to capitalize reserves for bonus issues of shares or to increase par value.

Private Placement

- ▷ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** For Canadian companies, vote case-by-case on private placement issuances taking into account:

- Whether other resolutions are bundled with the issuance;
- Whether the rationale for the private placement issuance is disclosed;
- Dilution to existing shareholders' position:
- issuance that represents no more than 30 percent of the company's outstanding shares on a non-diluted basis is considered generally acceptable;
- Discount/premium in issuance price to the unaffected share price before the announcement of the private placement;
- Market reaction: The market's response to the proposed private placement since announcement; and
- Other applicable factors, including conflict of interest, change in control/management, evaluation of other alternatives.

Generally vote for the private placement issuance if it is expected that the company will file for bankruptcy if the transaction is not approved or the company's auditor/management has indicated that the company has going concern issues.

4. Compensation

Preamble

The assessment of compensation follows the Social Advisory Services Global Principles on Executive and Director Compensation which are detailed below. These principles take into account global corporate governance best practice.

The Global Principles on Compensation underlie market-specific policies in all markets:

- Provide shareholders with clear, comprehensive compensation disclosures;
- Maintain appropriate pay structure with emphasis on long-term shareholder value;
- Avoid arrangements that risk “pay for failure;”
- Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee;
- Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors.

European Guidelines

In line with European Commission Recommendation 2004/913/EC, Social Advisory Services believes that seeking annual shareholder approval for a company's compensation policy is a positive corporate governance provision.

In applying the Five Global Principles, Social Advisory Services has formulated European Compensation Guidelines which take into account local codes of governance, market best practice, and the Recommendations published by the European Commission. Social Advisory Services analyzes compensation-related proposals based on the role of the beneficiaries and has therefore divided its executive and director compensation policy into two domains:

- Executive compensation-related proposals; and
- Non-executive director compensation-related proposals.


Executive Compensation-Related Proposals

Social Advisory Services will evaluate management proposals seeking ratification of a company's executive compensation-related items on a case-by-case basis, and, where relevant, will take into account the European Pay for Performance (EP4P) model⁴ outcomes within a qualitative review of a company's remuneration practices.

⁴ Definition of Pay-for-Performance Evaluation:

Social Advisory Services annually conducts a pay-for-performance analysis to measure the alignment between pay and performance over a sustained period. With respect to companies in the European Main Indices, this analysis considers the following:

- Peer Group Alignment:
 - ✓ The degree of alignment between the company's annualized TSR rank and the CEO's annualized total pay rank within a peer group, each measured over a three-year period.
 - ✓ The multiple of the CEO's total pay relative to the peer group median.
- Absolute Alignment – the absolute alignment between the trend in CEO pay and company TSR over the prior five fiscal years – i.e., the difference between the trend in annual pay changes and the trend in annualized TSR during the period.

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Social Advisory Services will generally recommend a vote against a company's compensation-related proposal if such proposal fails to comply with one or a combination of several of the global principles and their corresponding rules:

- Provide shareholders with clear and comprehensive compensation disclosures:
 - Information on compensation-related proposals shall be made available to shareholders in a timely manner;
 - The level of disclosure of the proposed compensation policy and remuneration report shall be sufficient for shareholders to make an informed decision and shall be in line with what local market best practice standards dictate;
 - Remuneration report disclosure is expected to include amongst others: amounts paid to executives, alignment between company performance and payout to executives, disclosure of variable incentive targets and according levels of achievement and performance awards made, after the relevant performance period (ex-post), and disclosure and explanation of use of any discretionary authority or derogation clause by the board or remuneration committee to adjust pay outcomes.
 - Companies shall adequately disclose all elements of the compensation, including:
 - Any short- or long-term compensation component must include a maximum award limit.
 - Long-term incentive plans must provide sufficient disclosure of (i) the exercise price/strike price (options); (ii) discount on grant; (iii) grant date/period; (iv) exercise/vesting period; and, if applicable, (v) performance criteria.
 - Discretionary payments, if applicable.
- Maintain appropriate pay structure with emphasis on long-term shareholder value:
 - The structure of the company's short-term incentive plan shall be appropriate.
 - The compensation policy must notably avoid guaranteed or discretionary compensation.
 - The structure of the company's long-term incentives shall be appropriate, including, but not limited to, dilution, vesting period, and, if applicable, performance conditions.
 - Equity-based plans or awards that are linked to long-term company performance will be evaluated using Social Advisory Services' general policy for equity-based plans; and
 - For awards granted to executives, Social Advisory Services will generally require a clear link between shareholder value and awards, and stringent performance-based elements.
 - The balance between short- and long-term variable compensation shall be appropriate
 - The company's executive compensation policy must notably avoid disproportionate focus on short-term variable element(s)
- Avoid arrangements that risk “pay for failure”:
 - The board shall demonstrate good stewardship of investor's interests regarding executive compensation practices (principle being supported by Pay for Performance Evaluation).
 - There shall be a clear link between the company's performance and variable awards.
 - There shall not be significant discrepancies between the company's performance and real executive payouts.
 - The level of pay for the CEO and members of executive management should not be excessive relative to peers, company performance, and market practices.
 - Significant pay increases shall be explained by a detailed and compelling disclosure.
 - Termination payments⁵ must not be in excess of (i) 24 months' pay or of (ii) any more restrictive provision pursuant to local legal requirements and/or market best practices.
 - Arrangements with a company executive regarding pensions and post-mandate exercise of equity-based awards must not result in an adverse impact on shareholders' interests or be misaligned with good market practices.


⁵ Termination payments' means any payment linked to early termination of contracts for executive or managing directors, including payments related to the duration of a notice period or a non-competition clause included in the contract.

- Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee:
 - No executives may serve on the compensation committee.
 - In certain markets the compensation committee shall be composed of a majority of independent members, as per Social Advisory Services policies on director election and board or committee composition.
 - Compensation committees should use the discretion afforded them by shareholders to ensure that rewards properly reflect business performance⁶.

In addition to the above, Social Advisory Services will generally recommend a vote against a compensation-related proposal if such proposal is in breach of any other supplemental market-specific voting policies.

Non-Executive Director Compensation

- Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors.

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for proposals to award cash fees to non-executive directors.


Vote against where:

- Documents (including general meeting documents, annual report) provided prior to the general meeting do not mention fees paid to non-executive directors.
- Proposed amounts are excessive relative to other companies in the country or industry.
- The company intends to increase the fees excessively in comparison with market/sector practices, without stating compelling reasons that justify the increase.
- Proposals provide for the granting of stock options, performance-based equity compensation (including stock appreciation rights and performance-vesting restricted stock), and performance-based cash to non-executive directors.
- Proposals introduce retirement benefits for non-executive directors.

Vote on a case-by-case basis where:

- Proposals include both cash and share-based components to non-executive directors.
- Proposals bundle compensation for both non-executive and executive directors into a single resolution.

Equity-Based Compensation Guidelines

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for equity based compensation proposals for employees if the plan(s) are in line with long-term shareholder interests and align the award with shareholder value. This assessment includes, but is not limited to, the following factors:

⁶ In cases where a remuneration committee uses its discretion to determine payments, it should provide a clear explanation of its reasons, which are expected to be clearly justified by the financial results and the underlying performance of the company. The remuneration committee should disclose how it has taken into account any relevant environmental, social, and governance (ESG) matters when determining remuneration outcomes. Such factors may include (but are not limited to): workplace fatalities and injuries, significant environmental incidents, large or serial fines or sanctions from regulatory bodies and/or significant adverse legal judgments or settlements.

It is relatively rare that a remuneration committee chooses to amend the targets used for either the annual bonus or the LTIP following the start of the performance period, but where this has occurred, it is good practice for the company to demonstrate how the revised targets are in practice no less challenging than the targets which were originally set.

The volume of awards transferred to participants must not be excessive: the potential volume of fully diluted issued share capital from equity-based compensation plans must not exceed the following Social Advisory Services guidelines:

- The shares reserved for all share plans may not exceed 5 percent of a company's issued share capital, except in the case of high-growth companies or particularly well-designed plans, in which case we allow dilution of between 5 and 10 percent: in this case, we will need to have performance conditions attached to the plans which should be acceptable under Social Advisory Services criteria (challenging criteria). In addition, for companies in Hong Kong and Singapore, Social Advisory Services will support a plan's dilution limit that exceeds these thresholds if the annual grant limit under the plan is 0.5 percent or less for a mature company (1 percent or less for a mature company with clearly disclosed performance criteria) and 1 percent or less for a growth company;
- The plan(s) must be sufficiently long-term in nature/structure: the minimum vesting period must be no less than three years from date of grant;
- The awards must be granted at market price. Discounts, if any, must be mitigated by performance criteria or other features that justify such discount.
- If applicable, performance standards must be fully disclosed, quantified, and long-term, with relative performance measures preferred.

Market-specific provisions for France:

- The potential volume from equity-based compensation plans must not exceed 10 percent of fully diluted issued share capital.
- In addition, for companies that refer to the AFEP-MEDEF Code, all awards (including stock options and warrants) to executives shall be conditional upon challenging performance criteria or premium pricing. For companies referring to the Middlenext Code (or not referring to any code) at least part of the awards to executives shall be conditional upon performance criteria or premium pricing. In both cases, free shares shall remain subject to performance criteria for all beneficiaries.

Finally, for large- and mid-cap companies, the company's average three-year unadjusted burn rate (or, if lower, on the maximum volume per year implied by the proposal made at the general meeting) must not exceed the mean plus one standard deviation of its sector but no more than one percentage point from the prior year sector cap.

Employee Share Purchase Plans



Social Advisory Services Recommendation: Generally vote for employee stock purchase plans if the number of shares allocated to the plan is 10 percent or less of the company's issued share capital.

Compensation-Related Voting Sanctions

Should a company be deemed:

- To have egregious remuneration practices;
- To have failed to follow market practice by not submitting expected resolutions on executive compensation; or
- To have failed to respond to significant shareholder dissent on remuneration-related proposals;

An adverse vote recommendation could be applied to any of the following on a case-by case basis:

- The reelection of the chair of the remuneration committee or, where relevant, any other members of the remuneration committee;
- The reelection of the board chair;

- The discharge of directors; or
- The annual report and accounts.

This recommendation could be made in addition to other adverse recommendations under existing remuneration proposals (if any).

Stock Option Plans – Adjustment for Dividend (Nordic Region)

➤ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against stock option plans in **Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden** if evidence is found that they contain provisions that may result in a disconnect between shareholder value and employee/executive reward.

This includes one or a combination of the following:

- Adjusting the strike price for future ordinary dividends AND including expected dividend yield above 0 percent when determining the number of options awarded under the plan;
- Having significantly higher expected dividends than actual historical dividends;
- Favorably adjusting the terms of existing options plans without valid reason; and/or
- Any other provisions or performance measures that result in undue award.

This policy applies to both new plans and amendments to introduce the provisions into already existing stock option plans. Social Advisory Services will make an exception if a company proposes to reduce the strike price by the amount of future special (extraordinary) dividends only.

Generally vote against if the potential increase of share capital amounts to more than 5 percent for mature companies or 10 percent for growth companies or if options may be exercised below the market price of the share at the date of grant, or that employee options do not lapse if employment is terminated.

Share Matching Plans (Sweden and Norway)

➤ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:**

Social Advisory Services considers the following factors when evaluating share matching plans:

- For every share matching plan, Social Advisory Services requires a holding period.
- For plans without performance criteria, the shares must be purchased at market price.
- “For broad-based share matching plans directed at all employees, Social Advisory Services accepts an arrangement up to a 1:1 ratio, i.e. no more than one free share is awarded for every share purchased at market value.

In addition, for plans directed at executives, we require that sufficiently challenging performance criteria be attached to the plan. Higher discounts demand proportionally higher performance criteria.

The dilution of the plan when combined with the dilution from any other proposed or outstanding employee stock purchase/stock matching plans, must comply with Social Advisory Services’ guidelines.

Canadian Guidelines

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Evaluate executive pay and practices, as well as certain aspects of outside director compensation on a case-by-case basis.

Vote against management say on pay (MSOP) proposals, withhold from compensation committee members (or in rare cases where the full board is deemed responsible, all directors including the CEO), and/or against an equity-based incentive plan proposal if:

- There is a misalignment between CEO pay and company performance (pay for performance)
- The company maintains problematic pay practices; or
- The board exhibits poor communication and responsiveness to shareholders.

Pay for Performance:

- Rationale for determining compensation (e.g., why certain elements and pay targets are used, how they are used in relation to the company's business strategy, and specific incentive plan goals, especially retrospective goals) and linkage of compensation to long-term performance;
- Evaluation of peer group benchmarking used to set target pay or award opportunities;
- Analysis of company performance and executive pay trends over time, taking into account our Pay-for-Performance policy;
- Mix of fixed versus variable and performance versus non-performance-based pay.

Pay Practices:

- Assessment of compensation components included in the Problematic Pay Practices policy such as: perks, severance packages, employee loans, supplemental executive pension plans, internal pay disparity and equity plan practices (including option backdating, repricing, option exchanges, or cancellations/surrenders and re-grants, etc.);
- Existence of measures that discourage excessive risk taking which include but are not limited to: clawbacks, holdbacks, stock ownership requirements, deferred compensation practices etc.

Board Communications and Responsiveness:

- Clarity of disclosure (e.g. whether the company's Form 51-102F6 disclosure provides timely, accurate, clear information about compensation practices in both tabular format and narrative discussion);
- Assessment of board's responsiveness to investor concerns on compensation issues (e.g., whether the company engaged with shareholders and / or responded to majority-supported shareholder proposals relating to executive pay).

Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation (Say-on-Pay) Management Proposals

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on management proposals for an advisory shareholder vote on executive compensation. Vote against these resolutions in cases where boards have failed to demonstrate good stewardship of investors' interests regarding executive compensation practices.

In general, the management say on pay (MSOP) ballot item is the primary focus of voting on executive pay practices-- dissatisfaction with compensation practices can be expressed by voting against MSOP rather than withholding or voting against the compensation committee. However, if there is no MSOP on the ballot, then the negative vote will apply to members of the compensation committee. In addition, in egregious cases, or if the board fails to respond to concerns raised by a prior MSOP proposal, then vote against or withhold from compensation committee members (or, if the full board is deemed accountable, all directors). If the negative factors involve equity-based compensation, then vote against an equity-based plan proposal presented for shareholder approval.

Equity Compensation Plans

▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on equity-based compensation plans using an "equity plan scorecard" (EPSC) approach. Under this approach, certain features and practices related to the plan⁷ are assessed in combination, with positively-assessed factors potentially counterbalancing negatively-assessed factors and vice-versa. Factors are grouped into three pillars:

- **Plan Cost:** The total estimated cost of the company's equity plans relative to industry/market cap peers, measured by the company's estimated Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) in relation to peers and considering both:
 - SVT based on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants, plus outstanding unvested/unexercised grants; and
 - SVT based only on new shares requested plus shares remaining for future grants.
- **Plan Features:**
 - Absence of problematic change-in-control (CIC) provisions, including:
 - Single-trigger acceleration of award vesting in connection with a CIC; and
 - Settlement of performance-based equity at target or above in the event of a CIC-related acceleration of vesting regardless of performance.
 - No financial assistance to plan participants for the exercise or settlement of awards;
 - Public disclosure of the full text of the plan document; and
 - Reasonable share dilution from equity plans relative to market best practices.
- **Grant Practices:**
 - Reasonable three-year average burn rate relative to market best practices;
 - Meaningful time vesting requirements for the CEO's most recent equity grants (three-year lookback);
 - The issuance of performance-based equity to the CEO;
 - A clawback provision applicable to equity awards; and
 - Post-exercise or post-settlement share-holding requirements (S&P/TSX Composite Index only).

Generally vote against the plan proposal if the combination of above factors, as determined by an overall score, indicates that the plan is not in shareholders' interests. In addition, vote against the plan if any of the following unacceptable factors have been identified:

- Discretionary or insufficiently limited non-employee director participation;
- An amendment provision which fails to adequately restrict the company's ability to amend the plan without shareholder approval;
- A history of repricing stock options without shareholder approval (three-year look-back);
- The plan is a vehicle for problematic pay practices or a significant pay-for-performance disconnect under certain circumstances; or
- Any other plan features that are determined to have a significant negative impact on shareholder interests.

Director Compensation - TSX


▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** On a case-by-case basis, generally withhold from members of the committee responsible for director compensation (or, where no such committee has been identified, the board chair or full board) where director compensation practices which pose a risk of compromising a non-employee director's independence or which otherwise appear problematic from the perspective of shareholders have been identified, including:

⁷ In cases where certain historic grant data are unavailable (e.g. following an IPO or emergence from bankruptcy), Special Cases models will be applied which omit factors requiring these data.

- Excessive (relative to standard market practice) inducement grants issued upon the appointment or election of a new director to the board (consideration will be given to the form in which the compensation has been issued and the board's rationale for the inducement grant);
- Performance-based equity grants to non-employee directors which could pose a risk of aligning directors' interests away from those of shareholders and toward those of management; and
- Other significant problematic practices relating to director compensation.

Other Compensation Plans

Employee Stock Purchase Plans (ESPPs, ESOPs)

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for broadly based (preferably all employees of the company with the exclusion of individuals with 5 percent or more beneficial ownership of the company) employee stock purchase plans where the following apply:


- Reasonable limit on employee contribution (may be expressed as a fixed dollar amount or as a percentage of base salary excluding bonus, commissions and special compensation);
- Employer contribution of up to 25 percent of employee contribution and no purchase price discount or employer contribution of more than 25 percent of employee contribution and SVT cost of the company's equity plans is within the allowable cap for the company;
- Purchase price is at least 80 percent of fair market value with no employer contribution;
- Potential dilution together with all other equity-based plans is 10 percent of outstanding common shares or less; and
- The Plan Amendment Provision requires shareholder approval for amendments to:
 - The number of shares reserved for the plan;
 - The allowable purchase price discount;
 - The employer matching contribution amount.

Treasury funded ESPPs, as well as market purchase funded ESPPs requesting shareholder approval, will be considered to be incentive based compensation if the employer match is greater than 25 percent of the employee contribution. In this case, the plan will be run through the Social Advisory Services compensation model to assess the Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) cost of the plan together with the company's other equity-based compensation plans.

Eligibility and administration are also key factors in determining the acceptability of an ESPP/ESOP plan.

Social Advisory Services will also take into account other compensation and benefit programs, in particular pensions.

Deferred Share Unit Plans

 **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote for Deferred Compensation Plans if:

- Potential dilution, together with all other equity-based compensation, is ten percent of the outstanding common shares or less.

Other elements of director compensation to evaluate in conjunction with deferred share units include:

- Director stock ownership guidelines of a minimum of three times annual cash retainer;
- Vesting schedule or mandatory deferral period which requires that shares in payment of deferred units may not be paid out until the end of three years;
- The mix of remuneration between cash and equity; and
- Other forms of equity-based compensation, i.e. stock options, restricted stock.

International Guidelines

- ▶ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Evaluate executive and director compensation proposals on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the Global Principles as applicable.

5. Other Items

Reorganizations/Restructurings

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote reorganizations and restructurings on a case-by-case basis.

Mergers and Acquisitions

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on mergers and acquisitions taking into account the following:

For every M&A analysis, Social Advisory Services reviews publicly available information as of the date of the report and evaluates the merits and drawbacks of the proposed transaction, balancing various and sometimes countervailing factors including:

- *Valuation:* Is the value to be received by the target shareholders (or paid by the acquirer) reasonable? While the fairness opinion may provide an initial starting point for assessing valuation reasonableness, Social Advisory Services places emphasis on the offer premium, market reaction, and strategic rationale;
- *Market reaction:* How has the market responded to the proposed deal? A negative market reaction will cause Social Advisory Services to scrutinize a deal more closely;
- *Strategic rationale:* Does the deal make sense strategically? From where is the value derived? Cost and revenue synergies should not be overly aggressive or optimistic, but reasonably achievable. Management should also have a favorable track record of successful integration of historical acquisitions;
- *Conflicts of interest:* Are insiders benefiting from the transaction disproportionately and inappropriately as compared to non-insider shareholders? Social Advisory Services will consider whether any special interests may have influenced these directors and officers to support or recommend the merger;
- *Governance:* Will the combined company have a better or worse governance profile than the current governance profiles of the respective parties to the transaction? If the governance profile is to change for the worse, the burden is on the company to prove that other issues (such as valuation) outweigh any deterioration in governance.
- *Stakeholder impact:* Impact on community stakeholders including impact on workforce, environment, etc.

Vote against if the companies do not provide sufficient information upon request to make an informed voting decision.

Mandatory Takeover Bid Waivers

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote proposals to waive mandatory takeover bid requirements on a case-by-case basis.

Reincorporation Proposals

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote reincorporation proposals on a case-by-case basis.

Expansion of Business Activities

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote for resolutions to expand business activities unless the new business takes the company into risky areas.

Exclusive Forum Proposals (TSX-Listed Companies and Venture Companies)

- **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote case-by-case on proposals to adopt an exclusive forum by-law or to amend by-laws to add an exclusive forum provision, taking the following into consideration:
- Jurisdiction of incorporation;
 - Board rationale for adopting exclusive forum;

- Legal actions subject to the exclusive forum provision;
- Evidence of past harm as a result of shareholder legal action against the company originating outside of the jurisdiction of incorporation;
- Company corporate governance provisions and shareholder rights;
- Any other problematic provisions that raise concerns regarding shareholder rights.

Related-Party Transactions

➤ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote related-party transactions on a case-by-case basis considering factors including, but not limited to, the following:

- The parties on either side of the transaction;
- The nature of the asset to be transferred/service to be provided;
- The pricing of the transaction (and any associated professional valuation);
- The views of independent directors (where provided);
- The views of an independent financial adviser (where appointed);
- Whether any entities party to the transaction (including advisers) is conflicted; and
- The stated rationale for the transaction, including discussions of timing.

If there is a transaction that is deemed problematic and that was not put to a shareholder vote, Social Advisory Services may recommend against the election of the director(s) involved in the related-party transaction or against the full board.

In the case of Nigerian companies, vote for proposals relating to renewal of the general mandate for the company to enter into recurrent transactions with related parties necessary for its day-to-day operations in the absence of any concerns with the related party transactions concluded pursuant to this general mandate.

Antitakeover Mechanisms

➤ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Vote against all antitakeover proposals unless they are structured in such a way that they give shareholders the ultimate decision on any proposal or offer.

Following the Florange act of 2016, for **French** companies listed on a regulated market, generally vote against any general authorities impacting the share capital (i.e. authorities for share repurchase plans and any general share issuances with or without preemptive rights) if they can be used for antitakeover purposes without shareholders' prior explicit approval.

Social and Environmental Proposals

➤ **Social Advisory Services Recommendation:** Generally vote in favor of social and environmental proposals that seek to promote good corporate citizenship while enhancing long-term shareholder and stakeholder value. In determining votes on shareholder social and environmental proposals, the following factors are considered:

- Whether the proposal itself is well framed and reasonable;
- Whether adoption of the proposal would have either a positive or negative impact on the company's short-term or long-term share value;
- Whether the company's analysis and voting recommendation to shareholders is persuasive;
- The degree to which the company's stated position on the issues could affect its reputation or sales, or leave it vulnerable to boycott or selective purchasing;
- Whether the subject of the proposal is best left to the discretion of the board;
- Whether the issues presented in the proposal are best dealt with through legislation, government regulation, or company-specific action;
- The company's approach compared with its peers or any industry standard practices for addressing the issue(s) raised by the proposal;
- Whether the company has already responded in an appropriate or sufficient manner to the issue(s) raised in the proposal;

- Whether there are significant controversies, fines, penalties, or litigation associated with the company's environmental or social practices;
- If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether or not sufficient information is publicly available to shareholders and whether it would be unduly burdensome for the company to compile and avail the requested information to shareholders in a more comprehensive or amalgamated fashion; and
- Whether implementation of the proposal would achieve the objectives sought in the proposal.

Generally vote for social and environmental shareholder proposals that seek greater disclosure on topics such as human/labor rights, workplace safety, environmental practices and climate change risk, sustainable business practices etc.

Vote all other social and environmental proposals on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the considerations outlined above.

6. Foreign Private Issuers

Foreign private issuers ("FPIs") are defined as companies whose business is administered principally outside the U.S., with more than 50 percent of assets located outside the U.S.; a majority of whose directors/officers are not U.S. citizens or residents; and a majority of whose outstanding voting shares are held by non-residents of the U.S. Companies that are incorporated outside of the U.S. and listed solely on U.S. exchanges, where they qualify as FPIs, will be subject to the following policy:

Vote against or withhold from non-independent director nominees at companies which fail to meet the following criteria: a majority-independent board, and the presence of an audit, compensation, and a nomination committee, each of which is entirely composed of independent directors. Where the design and disclosure levels of equity compensation plans are comparable to those seen at U.S. companies, U.S. compensation policy will be used to evaluate the compensation plan proposals. All other voting items will be evaluated using the relevant regional or market proxy voting guidelines.

While a firm's country of incorporation will remain the primary basis for evaluating companies, Social Advisory Services will generally apply its U.S. policies to the extent possible with respect to issuers that file DEF 14As, 10-K annual reports, and 10-Q quarterly reports, and are thus considered domestic issuers by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). U.S. policies will also apply to companies listed on U.S. exchanges as Foreign Private Issuers (FPIs) and that may be exempt from the disclosure and corporate governance requirements that apply to most companies traded on U.S. exchanges, including a number of SEC rules and stock market listing requirements. Corporations that have reincorporated outside the U.S. have found themselves subject to a combination of governance regulations and best practice standards that may not be entirely compatible with an evaluation framework based solely on the country of incorporation.

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