EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Review of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive

Consultation Response from LGPS Central Limited

Mander House
Mander Centre
Wolverhampton
WV1 3NB

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Response to the European Commission Non-Financial Reporting Directive Consultation
Submission by LGPS Central Limited
June 2020

LGPS Central Limited is a company established to manage assets for a group of Local Government Pension Scheme funds worth collectively £45 billion. Our aim is to use the combined buying power of our partner funds to reduce costs, improve investment returns, widen the range of available asset classes for investment, and ensure good governance, all for the benefit of local government pensioners, employees and employers.

LGPS Central is committed to Responsible Investment (RI). We believe that RI, including the integration of environmental, social and governance issues, is not only the right thing to do but that it supports long-term returns. LGPS Central has made RI a core part of its investment process in every asset class, in every investment mandate it holds and in its dialogue with investee companies and other stakeholders.

As a long-term, global investor we would like to more consistent, complete, and reliable disclosure of material environmental, social, and corporate governance information. We welcome the proposed broadening of the scope and requirements for the reporting of “non-financial” information.

For any queries relating to this consultation response, we can be reached at
enquiries@lgpscentral.co.uk

Consultation questions

1. Quality and scope of non-financial information to be disclosed

Question 1.: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about possible problems with regard to non-financial reporting?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
The lack of comparability of non-financial information reported by companies pursuant to the NFRD is a significant problem.				Y		
The limited reliability of non-financial information reported by companies pursuant to the NFRD is a significant problem.				Y		
Companies reporting pursuant to the NFRD do not disclose all relevant non-financial information needed by different user groups.					Y	

(1= mostly disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

Article 19a of the Accounting Directive (which was introduced into the Accounting Directive by the NFRD) currently requires companies to disclose information about four non-financial matters, if deemed material by the particular company: (i) environment, (ii) social and employee issues, (iii) human rights, (iv) bribery and corruption. These correspond to the "sustainability factors" defined in Article 2(24) of Regulation (UE) 2019/2088 on sustainability-related disclosures in the financial services sector.

Question 2.: Do you consider that companies reporting pursuant to the NFRD should be required to disclose information about other non-financial matters in addition to those currently set-out in Article 19a?

YES

Please specify (no more than three matters).

1 Given the immense risks posed by climate change and the increasing focus on disclosures by investors, regulators and civil society on this issue, it would be worthy of a specific mention.

2 Fair and transparent tax behavior equally merits specific mention because it is intrinsically tied in with managing/reducing market-wide risks and crisis, including but not limited to the climate change crisis and the current COVID 19 health pandemic. Including an expectation of responsible tax behavior by companies will help reinforce the fact that a holistic outlook is needed when companies report on sustainability issues.

3.

For each of the four non-financial matters identified in Article 19a of the Accounting Directive, and subject to the company's own materiality assessment, companies are required to disclose information about their business model, policies (including implemented due diligence processes), outcomes, risks and risk management (including risks linked to their business relationships), and key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to the business.

Question 3.: Are there additional categories of non-financial information related to a company's governance and management procedures, including related metrics where relevant, (for example, scenario analyses, targets, more forward-looking information, or how the company aims to contribute to society through its business activities) that companies should disclose in order to enable users of their reports to understand the development, performance, position and impacts of the company?

YES

Please specify (no more than three).

1. As well as disclosures providing a 'snapshot' of current specific environmental and social impacts, we would also value more dynamic forward-looking information. This could be in relation to climate change metrics and indicators, but it would also be of value to look at a series of broader environmental and social factors.

2. We are supportive of the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, including the recommendations relating to scenario analyses, disclosure of scopes 1, 2 and material GHG emissions, climate governance, and performance against targets. Further to this we would welcome disclosure of whether GHG targets are aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change, whether and how remuneration is linked to attainment of climate strategy goals, and transparency of climate-related lobbying activities.

3. Companies should be able to explain how management of the four issues (and the additional issue, as suggested under Q 2 above) ties in with the company's stated purpose and its overall strategy. In our view, more forward-leaning companies are already doing this and expressing for instance a view where responsible tax behavior is seen as directly linked to and supportive of their ethos, purpose and to achieving long-term strategic goals.

Investment in intangible assets currently represents the majority of investment carried out by the private sector in advanced economies.[1] There is a long-standing debate about the need for better reporting of intangible investments in company reports, including

[1] https://voxeu.org/article/productivity-and-secular-stagnation-intangible-economy

in relation to sustainability[2]. Irrespective of the potential future changes to accounting standards, it is likely to remain the case that a significant proportion of intangible assets will fail to meet the definition of an asset or the criteria for recognition as an intangible asset in the financial statements. The Accounting Directive currently makes no explicit reference to intangible assets in the Articles concerning the management report, other than the requirement to report about activities in the field of research and development in Article 19(2)(b).

Question 4.: In light of the importance of intangibles in the economy, do you consider that companies should be required to disclose additional non-financial information regarding intangible assets or related factors (e.g. intellectual property, software, customer retention, human capital, etc.)

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

In addition to the provisions of the NFRD, several other EU legislative acts require disclosures of sustainability-related information for financial sector entities:

- The Regulation on prudential requirements for credit institutions requires certain banks to disclose ESG risks as of 28 June 2022.
- The Regulation on sustainability- related disclosures in the financial services sector requires financial market participants to disclose their policies on the integration of sustainability risks in their investment decision- making process and the adverse impacts of investment decisions on sustainability factors, as of 10 March 2021.
- The Regulation establishing a framework to facilitate sustainable investment (the Sustainable Finance Taxonomy) creates new reporting obligations including for companies' subject to the NFRD, starting in December 2021.

Question 5.: To what extent do you think that the current disclosure requirements of the NFRD ensure that investee companies report the information that financial sector companies will need to meet their new disclosure requirements?

Not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable Extent	To a very great extent	Don't know
	X			

[2] The European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) is currently carrying out a research project on this topic. See http://www.efrag.org/Activities/1809040410591417/EFRAG-research-project-on-better-information-on-intangibles. The United Kingdom's Financial Reporting Council issued a consultation document about business reporting of intangibles in 2019. See https://www.frc.org.uk/news/february-2019/consultation-into-improvements-to-the-reporting-of.

In order to ensure that the financial sector entities comply with the new disclosure requirements, laid down in the different pieces of legislation, in the most effective and efficient manner, there might be scope for better coherence between the different disclosure requirements.

Question 6.: How do you find the interaction between different pieces of legislation (You can provide as many answers as you want)

It works well	There is an Overlap	There are gaps	There is a need to streamline	It does not work at all	Don't know
	X	X	X		

Question 7.: In order to ensure better alignment of reporting obligations of investees and investors, should the legal provisions related to non-financial reporting define environmental matters on the basis of the six objectives set-out in the taxonomy regulation: (1) climate change mitigation; (2) climate change adaptation; (3) sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources; (4) transition to a circular economy (5) pollution prevention and control; (6) protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 1 to 7

Responsible investors require disclosures that are

- Comparable – though recognizing that businesses that might appear similar can be importantly distinct in respect of material ESG information
- Material – where the basis upon "materiality" is defined is clear
- Not duplicated across different reporting regimes or disclosure standards
- Include climate-related disclosures that are relevant for the business in question
- Reliable e.g. by inclusion of assurance requirements (see below)

2. STANDARDISATION

Note: in this section, the word "standard" is used for simplicity. This should not be read as a suggestion that all relevant reporting requirements must be specified in a single normative document. Rather, "standard" is merely used as a shorthand that could encompass a consistent and comprehensive set of standards. Reporting standards define what information companies should report and how such information should be prepared and presented.

A requirement that all companies falling within the scope of the NFRD report in accordance with a common non-financial reporting standard may help to address some of the problems identified in section 1 (comparability, reliability and relevance).

Question 8.: In your opinion, to what extent would a requirement on companies to apply a common standard for non-financial information resolve the problems identified?

Not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable Extent	To a very great Extent	Don't know
			X	

Question 9.: In your opinion, is it necessary that a standard applied by a company under the scope of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive should include sector-specific elements?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

A number of non-financial reporting frameworks and standards already exist. Some, including the standards of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the framework of the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC), and the standards of the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), aim to cover most or all relevant non-financial issues.

Question 10.: To what extent would the application of one of the following standards or frameworks, applied on its own, resolve the problems identified while also enabling companies to comprehensively meet the current disclosure requirements of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive, taking into account the double-materiality perspective See section 4)?

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
Global Reporting Initiative			X		
Sustainability Accounting Standards Board			X		
International Integrated Reporting Framework				X	

Another framework or standard *					

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

*Please specify other framework or standard (no more than three.)

	1	2	3	4
1. TCFD				

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

On 5 December 2019, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council adopted conclusions on deepening the Capital Markets Union, in which it invited the Commission to "consider the development of a European non-financial reporting standard **taking into account international initiatives**".

Most existing frameworks and standards focus on individual or a limited set of nonfinancial issues. Examples include the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), the UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework (human rights), the questionnaires of the CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project), and the standards of the Carbon Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB). Several approaches have also been developed at EU level in the environmental area, including the Organisation Environmental Footprint and reporting under the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

Question 11.: If there were to be a common European non-financial reporting standard applied by companies under the scope of the NFRD, to what extent do you think it would be important that such a standard should incorporate the principles and content of the following existing standards and frameworks:

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
Global Reporting Initiative			X		
Sustainability Accounting Standards Board				X	
International Integrated Reporting Framework				X	
Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)				X	
UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework (human rights)				X	
CDP		X			
Carbon Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB)					X
Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF)					X
Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)					X

Another framework or standard *

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

*Please specify other framework or standard (no more than three).

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
1 Workforce Disclosure Initiative				X	
2					
3					

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

Question 12.: If your organisation *fully* applies any non-financial reporting standard or framework when reporting under the provisions of the NFRD, please indicate the recurring annual cost of applying that standard or framework (including costs of retrieving, analysing and reporting the information).

Name of standard or framework (max 3)	Estimated cost of application per year, excluding any one-off start-up costs.
N/A	

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) often do not have the technical expertise nor resources necessary to prepare reports in accordance with state-of-the-art, sophisticated standards. This may imply that requiring SMEs to apply the same standards as large companies may be a disproportionate burden for SMEs.

At the same time, many SMEs are under increasing pressure to provide certain nonfinancial information to other businesses, in particular if they are suppliers of large companies. In addition, financial institutions are increasingly likely to request certain non-financial information from companies to whom they provide capital, including SMEs. In this respect, SMEs that do not provide non-financial information may experience a negative impact on their commercial opportunities as suppliers of larger companies or on their access to capital, and may not be able to benefit from new sustainable investment opportunities.

Question 13.: In your opinion, would it be useful for there to be a simplified standard and/or reporting format for SMEs?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

Question 14.: To what extent do you think that a simplified standard for SMEs would be an effective means of limiting the burden on SMEs arising from information demands they may receive from other companies, including financial institutions?

Not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable Extent	To a very great Extent	Don't know
			X	

Question 15.: If the EU were to develop a simplified standard for SMEs, do you think that the use of such a simplified standard by SMEs should be mandatory or voluntary?

Mandatory	Voluntary	Don't know
X		

In the responses to the Commission's public consultation on public corporate reporting carried out in 2018, just over half of the respondents believed that integrated reporting could contribute to a more efficient allocation of capital and agreed that the EU should encourage integrated reporting.

Question 16.: In light of these responses, to what extent do you agree that the body responsible for developing a European non-financial reporting standard should also have expertise in the field of financial reporting in order to ensure "connectivity" or integration between financial and non-financial information?

Not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable extent	To a very great Extent	Don't know
			X	

Question 17.: The key stakeholder groups with an interest in and contributing to the elaboration of financial reporting standards have historically been investors, preparers of financial reports (companies) and auditors/accountants. To what extent to do you think that these groups should also be involved in the process of developing a European nonfinancial reporting standard?

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
Investors				X	
Preparers				X	
Auditors/accountants			X		

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

Question 18.: In addition to the stakeholders referred to in the previous question, to what extent to do you consider that the following stakeholders should be involved in the process of developing a European non-financial reporting standard?

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
Civil society representatives/NGOs			X		
Academics			X		
Other*					

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

*Please specify other categories (no more than three).

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
Third party service providers			X		
Professional bodies (Institutes of accountants, accountants, lawyers etc)				X	
Representatives of corporate issuers			X		

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

Question 19.: To what extent should the following European public bodies or authorities be involved in the process of developing a European non-financial reporting standard?

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
European Securities Markets Authority (ESMA)			X		
European Banking Authority (EBA)			X		
European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA)			X		
European Central Bank (ECB)			X		
European Environment Agency (EEA)			X		
Platform on Sustainable Finance[3]			X		
Other*					

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

*Please specify other European public bodies or authorities that you consider should be involved in the process of developing a European non-financial reporting standard (no more than three).

	1	2	3	4	Don't know

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

National accounting standards-setters of several EU Member States are represented in the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG), which acts as the EU's voice and technical advisor in relation to financial reporting.

Question 20.: To what extent to do you consider that the following national authorities or bodies should be involved in the process of developing European non-financial reporting standards?

	1	2	3	4	Don't know
National accounting standard-setters				X	
Environmental authorities				X	
Other*					

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

*Please specify other type of European public bodies or authorities that you consider should be involved in the process of developing a European non-financial reporting standard (no more than three).

	1	2	3	4	Don't know

1= not at all, 2= to some extent but not much, 3= to a reasonable extent, 4= to a very great extent

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 8 to 20.

- Comparability must be contextualized – some companies appear very similar but in fact should not be compared in respect of material ESG risks.
- Small companies should measure and disclosure material ESG risks, but allowance should be taken of the size of company, the costs to the company of preparing the data, the extent to which the reported data are used, and the impact on the perception of business friendliness in Europe.
- There should be significant consolidation of the existing standards and frameworks. Those in charge of such organisations should be willing to merge, and should focus on how similar they are, rather than how distinct they are.
- Whilst we support the Commission's ambition to be world-leading in terms of non-financial information, the Commission should be conscious of introducing standards that are significantly different to those outside the EU. Mappings and translation documents from EU to non-EU markets could assist users and preparers of non-financial information.
- Much focus has been on quantitative non-financial information, but investors should be provided with qualitative information too.

- Disclosure requirements and oversight should discourage a box ticking approach.
- The reporting requirements should be binding on all listed securities traded within capital markets. This means they should apply not just to publicly listed companies but also private companies listing bonds.

3. APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF MATERIALITY

The NFRD requires companies to disclose information "to the extent necessary for an understanding of the development, performance, position and impact of [the company's] activities." This materiality principle implies that companies reporting pursuant to the NFRD must disclose (i) how sustainability issues may affect the development, performance and position of the company; and (ii) how the company impacts society and the environment. This is the double-materiality perspective.[4] The two "directions" of materiality are distinct although there can be feedbacks from one to the other. For example, a company that with severe impacts on the environment or society may incur reputational or legal risks that undermine its financial performance.

'Material' information is defined in Article 2(16) of the Accounting Directive as "the status of information where its omission or misstatement could reasonably be expected to influence decisions that users make on the basis of the financial statements of the undertaking. The materiality of individual items shall be assessed in the context of other similar items." This definition is geared towards financial reporting, which is principally intended to serve the needs of investors and other creditors. By contrast, non-financial information serves the needs of a broader set of stakeholders, as it relates not only to the increasing impact of non-financial matters on the financial performance of the company, but also to its impacts on society and the environment. This may imply the need to provide an alternative definition of materiality for application in the context of nonfinancial reporting, or at least additional guidance on this issue.

<u>Question 21:</u> Do you think that the definition of materiality set-out in Article 2(16) of the Accounting Directive is relevant for the purposes of determining which information is necessary to understand *a company's development, performance and position*?

No, not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable Extent	Yes, to a very great extent	Don't know
			X	

<u>Question 22.:</u> Do you think that the definition of materiality set-out in Article 2(16) of the Accounting Directive is relevant for the purposes of determining which information is necessary to understand *a company's impacts on society and the environment*?

No, not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable Extent	Yes, to a very great extent	Don't know
X				

Question 23.: If you think there is a need to clarify the concept of 'material' non-financial information, how would you suggest to do so?

The definitions we use in-house to delineate these concepts are: "materiality" – which is consistent with the definition of materiality set-out in Article 2(16) of the Accounting Directive, and "impact" – which relates the impact of the company on the environment/ society. Material information for a company might or might not be the same as information on the company's impact. At a minimum companies should be reporting material non-financial information to investors. A move towards double materiality could be beneficial to users of non-financial information, but companies (reporters/ preparers/ disclosers) should make it clear which data they view material and which they view as relating to impact.

Question 24.: Should companies reporting under the NFRD be required to disclose their materiality assessment process?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 21 to 24.

Material information – as defined above – should be included in the Annual Report. Information relating to impact could be disclosed in a separate report. For investors what makes such information decision-useful is when companies lay out how they have considered such issues, including information on assumptions, inputs and context/scenarios used (in the case of forward-looking disclosures). This goes beyond a box-ticking approach and, in the end, will provide more useful insights into how companies are considering and addressing material issues.

4. ASSURANCE

The NFRD requires that the statutory auditor or audit firm checks whether the nonfinancial statement has been provided if a firm falls within the scope of the Directive.

Article 34 of the Accounting Directive requires that the financial statements are audited, and that the statutory auditor or audit firm express an opinion whether the management report (i) is consistent with the financial statements for the same financial year; and (ii) has been prepared in accordance with the applicable legal requirements. Article 34 of the Accounting Directive also requires the statutory auditor or audit firm to state whether it has identified material misstatements in the management report and to give an indication of the nature of such material misstatements. However, the non-financial statement published pursuant to the NFRD – whether contained in the management report or a separate report – is explicitly excluded from the scope of Article 34 of the Accounting Directive. Consequently, the NFRD does not require any assurance of the content of the non-financial statement.

<u>Question 25.:</u> Given that non-financial information is increasingly important to investors and other users, are the current differences in the assurance requirements between financial and non-financial information justifiable and appropriate?

No, not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable extent	Yes, to a very great extent	Don't know
	X			

<u>Question 26.:</u> Should EU law impose stronger assurance requirements for non-financial information reported by companies falling within the scope of the NFRD?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

There are two types of assurance engagement a practitioner can perform:

- Reasonable assurance reduces the risk of the engagement to an acceptably low level in the given circumstances. The conclusion is usually provided in a positive form of expression and states an opinion on the measurement of the subject matter against previously defined criteria.

- Limited assurance engagements provide a lower level of assurance than the reasonable assurance engagements. The conclusion is usually provided in a negative form of expression by stating that no matter has been identified by the practitioner to conclude that the subject matter is materially misstated.

Question 27.: If EU law were to require assurance of non-financial information published pursuant to the NFRD, do you think that it should require a *reasonable* or *limited* assurance engagement on the non-financial information published?

Reasonable	Limited	Don't know
X		

Question 28.: If EU law were to require assurance of non-financial information published pursuant to the NFRD, should the assurance provider assess the reporting company's materiality assessment process?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

Question 29.: If assurance of non-financial information was required by EU law, should the assurance provider be required to identify and publish the key engagement risks, their response to these risks and any related key observations (if applicable)?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

Question 30.: If assurance of non-financial information was required by EU law, do you think that assurance engagements should be performed based on a common assurance standard?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

If you answered yes in reply to the previous question, please explain whether there is an existing assurance standard that could be used for this purpose or whether a new standard would need to be developed.

We are not aware of an assurance standard that would fit this requirement.

Question 31.: Do you think that an assurance requirement for non-financial information is dependent on companies reporting against a specific non-financial reporting standard?

Yes	No	Don't know
	X	

Question 32.: If you publish non-financial information and that information is assured, please indicate the annual costs of such assurance.

N/A

If you provided an answer to the previous question, please describe the scope of the assurance services provided (issues covered, reasonable/limited, etc.).

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 25 to 32.

- Universally agreed standards to assure against will need to be established. The development of such standards should be market-led.
- Assurance requirements for smaller companies should be dependent on cost and the use case.

5. DIGITISATION

The EU has introduced a structured data standard, the European Single Electronic Format (ESEF) under the Transparency Directive. With effect from 1 January 2020 listed companies in the EU shall report their annual financial reports in XHTML (audited financial statements, management report and issuer's responsibility statements). Additionally, if the consolidated financial statements are prepared in IFRS, the XHTML document should also be tagged using iXBRL elements specified in the ESEF taxonomy. This allows the information to be machine-readable. This is expected to produce a number of benefits, including cost saving for users of annual financial reports, greater speed, reliability and accuracy of data handling, improved analysis, and better quality of information and decision-making.

Additionally, the Commission is exploring opportunities to establish a single access point for public corporate information. In this respect, the Commission expects the High-level Forum on CMU to examine this topic and formulate recommendations from the Capital Markets angle in the coming months.

Question 33.: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding digitalisation of non-financial information?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
It would be useful to require the tagging of reports containing non-financial information to make them machine-readable.					X	
The tagging of non-financial information would only be possible if reporting is done against standards.			X			
All reports containing non-financial information should be available through a single access point.					X	

(1= totally disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

Question 34.: Do you think that the costs of introducing tagging of non-financial information would be proportionate to the benefits this would produce?

No, not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable extent	Yes, to a very great extent	Don't know
				X

Question 35.: Please provide any other comments you may have regarding the digitalisation of sustainability information:

Having non-financial information available at a single point of access should reduce information asymmetry and cost of searching for 'hidden' data for those that don't use third party providers, although most likely most financial services firms do use such third-party data.

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 33 to 35.

6. STRUCTURE AND LOCATION OF NON-FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The default requirement of the NFRD is that companies under scope shall include their non-financial statement in their annual management report. However, the NFRD also allows Member States to allow companies to disclose the required non-financial information in a separate report under certain conditions, and most Member States took up that option when transposing the Directive. Companies can be allowed by national legislation to publish such a report up to six months after the balance sheet date.

The publication of non-financial information in a separate report has a number of consequences, including:

- Separate reports that include non-financial information are out of the legal mandate of the national competent authorities, whose mandate over periodic reports is limited to the annual and semi-annual financial reports (which include the management report).
- Separate reports that include non-financial information are not required to be filed in the Officially Appointed Mechanisms (OAMs) designated by Member States pursuant to Article 21(2) of the Transparency Directive.

Question 36.: Other consequences may arise from the publication of the non-financial statement as part of a separate report. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
The option to publish the non-financial statement as part of a separate report creates a significant problem because the non-financial information reported by companies is hard to find (e.g: it may increase search costs for investors, analysts, ratings agencies and data aggregators).					X	
The publication of financial and non-financial information in different reports creates the perception that the information reported in the separate report is of secondary importance and does not necessarily have implications in the performance of the company.					X	

1= not at all, 5= to a very great extent]

Question 37.: Do you believe that companies should be required to disclose all necessary non-financial information in the management report?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

Question 38.: If companies are allowed to publish the required non-financial information in a report that is separate from the management report, to what extent do you agree with the following approaches?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
Legislation should be amended to ensure proper supervision of information published in separate reports.					X	
Legislation should be amended to require companies to file the separate report with Officially Appointed Mechanisms (OAMs).			X			
Legislation should be amended to ensure the same publication date for management report and the separate report.					X	

(1= totally disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

Please provide any comments regarding the location of reported non-financial information.

As noted earlier, we think financially material issues (and the company's strategic response to them) should be included in the main report. We suggest this should be achieved by requiring companies disclose how they have come to conclusions about what is financially material and what is not in relation to a core set of issues/metrics – with any other information captured under the double materiality banner published in a supplementary report.

The management report, including the non-financial statement, aims to provide a company's stakeholders with the information necessary to understand the company's development, performance, position and impact. Some non-financial information is also reported in the corporate governance statement, which is also part of the management report.

Question 39.: Do you consider that the current segregation of non-financial information in separate non-financial and corporate governance statements within the management report provides for effective communication with users of company reports?

No, not at all	To some extent but not much	To a reasonable Extent	Yes, to a very great extent	Don't know
	X			

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 36 to 39.

Our responses above, in particular to q36, pertain to "material" information, not necessary to information about a company's "impact".

7. PERSONAL SCOPE (WHICH COMPANIES SHOULD DISCLOSE)

The NFRD currently applies to large Public-Interest Entities (PIEs) with more than 500 employees. In practice this means large companies with securities listed in EU regulated markets, large banks (whether listed or not) and large insurance companies (whether listed or not) – all provided that they have more than 500 employees.

The Accounting Directive defines large undertakings as those that exceed at least two of the three following criteria:

(a) balance sheet total: EUR 20 000 000;
(b) net turnover: EUR 40 000 000;
(c) average number of employees during the financial year: 250.

Some Member States have extended the personal scope of the NFRD by lowering the threshold to 250 employees, in effect capturing all large PIEs.

Companies that are a subsidiary of another company are exempt from the reporting requirements of the NFRD if their parent company publishes the necessary non-financial information at consolidated level in accordance with the NFRD.

There are a number of potential arguments to support the extension of the personal scope of the NFRD:

- Changes in the legislative framework: following the adoption of the Regulation on sustainability-related disclosure in the financial services sector and of the Taxonomy Regulation, investors may require non-financial information from a broader range of investees in order to comply with their own sustainability-related reporting requirements.

- Large unlisted companies can have significant impacts on society and the environment. There may therefore be no *a priori* reason to differentiate between listed and non-listed companies in this respect. In addition, the difference in treatment between listed and non-listed companies in this regard may serve as a disincentive for companies to become listed, and therefore undermine the attractiveness of capital markets.

- Exempting PIEs that are subsidiaries limits the information about impacts on society and the environment, thus undermining the ability of stakeholders of such exempted subsidiaries to hold them accountable for their impacts on society and the environment, especially at local and national level.

Question 40.: If the scope of the NFRD were to be broadened to other categories of PIEs, to what extent would you agree with the following approaches?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
Expand scope to include all EU companies with securities listed in regulated markets, regardless of their size.				X		

Expand scope to include all *large* public interest entities (aligning the size criteria with the definition of *large undertakings* set out in the Accounting Directive: 250 instead of 500 employee threshold).				X		
Expand scope to include *all* public interest entities, regardless of their size.				X		

(1= totally disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

<u>Question 41.:</u> If the scope of the NFRD were to be broadened to non-PIEs, to what extent would you agree with the following approaches?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
Expand the scope to include *large non-listed* companies.					X	
Remove the exemption for companies that are subsidiaries of a parent company that reports non-financial information at group level in accordance with the NFRD.				X		
Expand the scope to include large companies established in the EU but listed outside the EU.					X	
Expand the scope to include large companies not established in the EU that are listed in EU regulated markets.					X	
Expand scope to include *all* limited liability companies regardless of their size.			X			

(1= totally disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

<u>Question 42.:</u> If *non-listed* companies were required to disclose non-financial information, do you consider that there should be a specific competent authority in charge of supervising their compliance with that obligation?

Yes	No	Don't know
X		

If yes, please specify who in your opinion should carry out this task (National Competent Authorities, European Supervisory Authorities, other...) and how.

National Competent Authorities would be most appropriate.

Due to the nature of their activities, credit institutions and insurance undertakings have larger balance sheets than non-financial corporations. Hence, the vast majority of such institutions will exceed the balance sheet threshold in the definition of large undertakings set-out in the Accounting Directive. Moreover, the application of some public disclosure requirement of EU prudential regulation for credit institutions and insurance undertakings is defined based on various size thresholds.

For example:

- the Regulation on prudential requirements for credit institutions and investment firms includes in its definition of large credit institutions those with a total value of assets equal to or greater than EUR 30 billion;

- the same Regulation defines small and non-complex institutions as those that have EUR 5 billion or less total assets;

- the consultation paper published by EIOPA in October 2019 proposes to revise article 4 thresholds of Solvency II (below which entities are excluded from the scope of Solvency II), doubling the thresholds related to the technical provisions (from EUR 25M provisions to EUR 50M) and allowing Member States to set the threshold referring to premium income between the current EUR 5M and until a maximum of EUR 25M.

Question 43.: To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to possible changes of the personal scope of the NFRD for financial institutions?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
The threshold criteria for determining which banks have to comply with the NFRD provisions should be different from those used by Non-Financial Corporates.		X				
The threshold criteria for determining which insurance undertakings have to comply with the NFRD provisions should be different from those used by Non-Financial Corporates.		X				

(1= totally disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 40 to 43.

8. SIMPLIFICATION AND REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS FOR COMPANIES

Question 44.: If your company publishes non-financial information pursuant to the NFRD, please state how much time the employees of your company spend per year carrying out this task, including time of retrieving, analysing and reporting the information? Please provide your answer in terms of full-time-equivalents (FTEs, 1 FTE= 1 employee working 40h a week during 250 working days per year). Please provide your answer for reports published in 2019, covering financial year 2018.

N/A

Please state the total cost per year of any external services, *excluding the cost of any assurance or audit services*, that you contracted to assist your company to comply with the requirements of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive. Please provide your answer for reports published in 2019, covering financial year 2018.

N/A

The majority of Member States have transposed the NFRD requirements into national legislation making very few changes to the wording of the legal provisions. Therefore, in the majority of the national legal frameworks, companies are required to comply with national legislation that is quite high level, not very prescriptive and do not require the use of any particular reporting standard.

Question 45.: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
Companies reporting pursuant to the NFRD face uncertainty and complexity when deciding what non-financial information to report, and how and where to report such information.				X		
Companies are under pressure to respond to individual demands for non-financial information from sustainability rating agencies, data providers and civil society, irrespective of the information that they publish as a result of the NFRD.					X	
Companies reporting pursuant to the NFRD have difficulty in getting the information they need from business partners, including suppliers, in order to meet their disclosure requirements.				X		

(1= totally disagree, 2= mostly disagree, 3= partially disagree and partially agree, 4= mostly agree, 5= totally agree)

Please provide any comments or explanations to justify your answers to questions 44 to 45.