

Proxy Voting Report

Period: January 01, 2022 - March 31, 2022

Votes Cast	196	Number of meetings	13
For	178	With management	178
Withhold	0	Against management	18
Abstain	0		
Against	18		
Other	0		
Total	196	Total	196

In 53% of meetings we have cast one or more votes against management recommendation.

General Highlights

ESG focus this Proxy Season

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a key moment for investors to exercise their stewardship duties by using voting rights. Even though most agenda items are related to governance topics, environmental and social topics get increasing attention at AGMs. Rubber stamping proposals is a thing of the past, and management can no longer expect high support rates for all their proposals.

Climate expectations have steadily developed beyond setting public long-term carbon reductions targets, to now include concrete plans on how to make progress in the short and medium-term. Additionally, 2022 will be the second year in which several companies will propose a so-called Say on Climate, a management proposal requesting shareholders' approval on the company's climate transition plan. Last year shareholders still had to get used to these proposals, which resulted in high degrees of shareholder support. We expect that this year shareholders will have further developed their voting approaches on Say on Climate and might take a stricter stance on these plans.

The Social (S) in ESG is also increasingly receiving the spotlight during AGMs. Investors become more aware of the relevance of human resource management, providing a fair workplace, and having diversity in oversight. As evidenced by the rise in shareholder proposals focusing on these issues and improvements in investors' stewardship policies e.g. by pushing for broader diversity on boards.

While investors' push for incorporation of ESG under variable pay is partially successful, often the chosen metrics are not that material, and it is unclear how performance is measured. The ESG metrics should be treated the same way as financial metrics in remuneration; they should be measurable, require management effort to achieve, and should be underpinned by a strategy. Like the rest of incentive pay, ESG in remuneration should also be pay for performance.

As well as the increased number of environmental and social topics making it on to agendas, governance remains a key topic. We are content to see that, after years of lagging other developed peers, Japan is raising its expectations for the percentage of independent directors. Similarly, initial positive steps are being taken by the Brazilian stock exchange and exchange commission in improving its proxy voting mechanisms for foreign investors.

All in all, this proxy season is prone to be an exciting one with a varied range of ESG issues likely to receive improved attention during this AGM season.

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