3 May 2023



FISMA - Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union European Commission 1049 Brussels Belgium

Submitted via file upload

Sir/Madam,

EU Consultation on Draft Delegated Regulations Setting Criteria on Environmentally Sustainable Activities Under the EU Taxonomy ("Delegated Act")

MSCI¹ thanks the European Commission ("Commission") for providing an opportunity to respond to the Delegated Act. As a leading provider of climate and environmental data, research tools and analytics to the global investment community, MSCI has collected climate and environmental, social and governance (ESG) related disclosures from thousands of companies globally for over three decades and developed tools to assist investors in their analysis of climate and ESG risks and opportunities to their portfolios.

We welcome the publication of the Delegated Act which provides technical guidance on environmentally sustainable economic activities for the remaining four environmental objectives under the EU Taxonomy. The list of activities in the Delegated Act provides clarity to the market participants seeking to direct capital towards activities aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal.² We welcome the approach proposed by the Commission to identify and prioritise those sectors that will be most critical in helping to achieve a fair green transition, and also supporting greater adoption of the EU taxonomy. While we support the overall approach proposed in the Delegated Act, there are certain criteria that may create implementation challenges and could inadvertently limit financing for sustainable activities. In the attached Annex, we provide specific detailed feedback on the new economic activities and their related Technical Screening Criteria.

MSCI strongly supports amendments to the templates³ for disclosures for financial undertakings given the divergence in disclosures we have observed, with only 54% of in-scope financial companies reporting eligibility as a percentage of assets covered by the reporting requirements for the 2021 reporting year. The amendments to the templates introduce an easy-to-understand format which will better help investors calculate their taxonomy alignment, meet their own reporting requirements, and make informed decisions about their investee companies.

¹ MSCI ESG Ratings, research and data are produced by MSCI ESG Research LLC.

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions-The European Green Deal COM (2019) 640 final.

³ (Annexes I, II, IV, V, VI, VIII and X to Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2178).

We also support the clarification by the Commission on the reporting timelines that brings clarity and provides sufficient time to prepare reports.

MSCI would like to thank the Commission for its consideration of our submission. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through <u>ryan.mensing@msci.com</u>.

Yours sincerely,

/s Ryan Mensing Executive Director Government and Regulatory Affairs MSCI ESG Research LLC

Annex I: Template for providing your feedback on the EU Taxonomy Delegated Acts

TRANSPARENCY REGISTER NUMBER: NA
SECTOR OF ACTIVITY: Other
ORGANISATION SIZE: Large (> 250 employees)
LAST NAME: Mensing
ryan.mensing@msci.com

COMMENT

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Climate Delegated Act (CCM)

ACTIVITY: CCM 3.18 Manufacture of automotive and mobility components

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Some components can be used for both zero emission vehicles and internal combustion vehicles (e.g. seat belt, brakes, etc.) and do not constitute strategic components to reduce GHG emissions and achieve net zero target. Defining such components as sustainable activities may raise questions.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Climate Delegated Act (CCM)

ACTIVITY: CCM 3.19 Manufacture of rail constituents

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA:

1) This does exclude any companies operating in areas where no overhead lines are available (large sections of the US and Canada).

2) A large majority of passenger rail will be run on electric overhead lines, so there will be high eligibility for most service providers that enable the activity.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: Some of these criteria are qualitative with no thresholds provided, leaving room for different interpretations as to what meets these DNSH criteria.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Climate Delegated Act (CCM)

ACTIVITY : CCM 3.21 Manufacturing of aircraft

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Some components are the same regardless of the fuel used by the aircraft and do not play a strategic role in supporting aircrafts to reduce their emissions/achieve net zero. Defining such components as sustainable activities may raise questions.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: ICAO's metric value only takes into account crusing altitude fuel use and does not include fuel used in landing and takeoff, taxi, climb and descent. This may pose an issue for short haul regional flights, for example, where 20 to 25 percent of fuel is used during the landing, take off, taxi, climb and descent portion of the flight (source: International Council on Clean Transportation).

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Climate Delegated Act (CCM)

ACTIVITY : CCM 6.19 Passenger and freight air transport

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: Some of these criteria do not appear stringent enough; e.g. 3.21 a) b) ("CO2 emissions vs. New Type limit of

the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standard etc.). According to our view, only zero emissions air transport and aircrafts operated on 100% sustainable aviation fuel should be considered as substantially contributing to climate change mitigation even if this will take several years/decades for the industry and is currently not technically and commercially viable.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: We note some lack of detailed criteria on "Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems" despite the relevance of the sector's impact on nature. E.g. production of sustainable aviation fuel e.g. on deforested land, noise impact on wildlife etc.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II Climate Delegated Act (CCA)

ACTIVITY: CCA 5.13 Desalination

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA:

"1) Climate change mitigation" - we are supportive to have here specific energy intensity thresholds. However, it would be useful to clarify the rationale and literature/scientific sources for determining the 4kwh/m3 and 270gCO2e/kWh thresholds.
"2) Pollution prevention and control - The level of detail required in the assessment is

appropriate to the size, process and recovery rates of the desalination plant" - we find this criteria too vague, leaving room for different interpretations.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 1.1 Manufacture of plastic packaging goods

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA:

Target of 50-65% recycled content in plastic packaging seem hardly feasible (e.g., 2030 regulatory targets in recent proposed revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive are much less ambitious, as well as industry leading practices, e.g., Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the recent average PCR rate was ~ 10% in 2021 and they are targeting 26% by 2025). There may also be concerns with product quality and availability of recycled plastic feedstock.

Substances meeting the criteria described here could be very broad and may pose a challenge to companies in phasing out all of those substances. Those substances could go beyond substances of very high concern (SVHCs), substances listed in candidate list for authorization, and there are few chemical companies that have clear target to phase out even SVHCs.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.1 Phosphorus recovery from waste water

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA:

Several listed companies would already meet these criteria given that the UK regulation (Water Industry National Environment Programme under Asset Management Plan (AMP7) for 2020-2025) requires wastewater treatment plants to keep phosphorus discharge limits between 0.25 and 1 mg/L.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA:

Since chemical treatment is the most common method for the removal of phosphorus from wastewater, these DNSH criteria could include the safe disposal/storage of those chemicals, such as aluminium salts which can increase the acidity of lakes making them toxic for the aquatic life.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.2 Production of alternative water resources for purposes other than human consumption

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: It would be useful to clarify why the supply of water for the purpose of human consumption is not considered.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA:

It would be useful to clarify if technical criteria #1 & #3 include activities where reclaimed water and/or greywater is used for cooling of power plants that run on fossil fuels (e.g. coal & gas).

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.3 Collection and transport of non-hazardous and hazardous waste

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: It would be relevant to add plastic waste and metal waste in the criteria #1.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.4 Treatment of hazardous waste

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: It would be useful to clarify why the following activities are not including here; recovery of materials from batteries, Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV), inorganic materials from

incineration processes, such as ashes, slags or dust, treatment and recovery of nuclear waste.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.5 Recovery of bio-waste by anaerobic digestion or composting

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: Regarding criteria #2, it would be useful to clarify the rationale and literature/scientific sources for determining the 70% threshold on sourced segregated bio-waste from separate collection and 30% on codigestion ratio in input feedstock.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: #1 "...to minimise methane leakage at the facility" sounds too vague and leaves room for different interpretations.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.6 Depollution and dismantling of end-of-life products

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: It would be useful to clarify why the eligible activities here do not include the treatment of batteries stemming from separate collection or removed during dismantling and depollution activities.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: #1 is N/A, we could evaluate here that the level of GHG emissions/total carbon footprint (life cycle analysis) does not increase as compared to the production of virgin raw materials.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 2.7 Sorting and material recovery of non-hazardous waste

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: It would be useful to clarify why the eligible activities here do not include the sorting and recovery of combustible fractions from mixed residual waste for the production of refuse derived fuel, such as in mechanical and biological treatment plants.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: #1 is N/A, we could evaluate here that the level of GHG emissions/total carbon footprint (life cycle analysis) does not increase as compared to the production of virgin raw materials.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 3.1 Construction of new buildings

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: In section 3 (Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources), the maximum flow rate criteria for water fixtures is somewhat outdated and could be made more stringent.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 3.2 Renovation of existing buildings

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: In section 3 (Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources), the maximum flow rate criteria for water fixtures is somewhat outdated and could be made more stringent.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 3.4 Maintenance of roads and motorways

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Current disclosures for highway companies generally do not differentiate new construction from maintenance, nor repair of bridges/tunnels from roads.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: Requirement that specifies proximity of facility for sourcing recycled/reused materials to build roads makes sense, but may place a high demand on companies to monitor whether new facilities emerge, and to structure contracts carefully to allow their sourcing to be more adaptable to these changes. Overall thresholds for recycling/reuse of demolished materials is ambitious. Limited disclosure on this makes it hard to assess the commercial feasibility of these. And that links closely to the thresholds for incorporating recycled/reused material - one process will feed the other, and both will be influenced by commercial feasibility.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: Maintaining road surfaces may offer relatively limited scope to influence congestion planning. There may also be some trade-offs in selecting materials that both suppress noise and meet recycling or reuse thresholds.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex II to Environmental Delegated Act (CE)

ACTIVITY : CE 4.1 Provision of IT/OT data-driven solutions and software

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: It would be useful to clarify the rationale and literature/scientific sources for determining the threshold 100 gC02e/kWh.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex III to Environmental Delegated Act (PPC)

ACTIVITY : PPC 2.2 Treatment of hazardous waste

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate **Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act**): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: It would be useful to clarify why the eligible activities do not include (b) incineration of recyclable hazardous waste and incineration of non-hazardous waste; (c) treatment and disposal of toxic live or dead animals and other contaminated waste; (d) treatment and disposal of radioactive nuclear waste.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: Regarding criteria #2 (a), it would be useful to clarify the rationale and literature/scientific sources for determining the following threshold: 6% the Total Organic Carbon (TOC) maximum concentration in each single input waste to the landfill.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Environmental Delegated Act (WTR)

ACTIVITY : WTR 1.1 Manufacture, installation and associated services for leakage control technologies enabling leakage reduction and prevention in water supply systems

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: The description of DNSH criteria #4 leaves room for different interpretations. It would be useful to further define what 'feasible' actually means here. Also, the requirement that leakage reduction technologies use equipment should be made from recycled materials sounds too stringent and hardly feasible.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Environmental Delegated Act (WTR)

ACTIVITY : WTR 2.2 Urban Waste Water Treatment

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: It would be useful to add a maximum threshold for –

1) methane leakage for the anaerobic digestion of sewage sludge, as well as,

2) water overflows (based on frequency, duration or volume) from the waste water collection system.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex I to Environmental Delegated Act (WTR)

ACTIVITY : WTR 2.3 Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: It would be useful to specify the threshold for a 'quantified percentage', given that the current description seems to indicate that anything above 0% could qualify.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: The description of DNSH criteria #5 leaves room for different interpretations. It would be useful to add some minimum thresholds for the discharge of pollutants or the relevant legislation.

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex IV to Environmental Delegated Act (BIO)

ACTIVITY : BIO 1.1 Conservation, including restoration, of habitats, ecosystems and species.

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Limited revenue generation from such activity among listed companies, potentially limiting the usability of that activity category.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: Some elements may leave room for interpretation e.g., "maintaining good condition of ecosystems". The use of specific metrics (mean species abundance, potentially disappeared fraction of species) could be referenced to measure the status of the affected habitat before and after.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: None

Delegated Act: Taxonomy Environmental Delegated Act

Annex: Annex IV to Environmental Delegated Act (BIO)

ACTIVITY : BIO 2.1 Hotels, holiday, camping grounds and similar accommodation

GENERAL COMMENT (incl. comments on corrections of technical mistakes in Climate Delegated Act and Article 8 Delegated Act): None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: None

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA: We consider that the integration of strict biodiversity criteria during the planning (or pre-construction) stage and construction phase is the most significant and impactful aspect for this sector with regards to measuring substantial contribution to the protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems (which is covered in 4. "minimum requirements"). With regards to "2. Action plan for nature conservation", we foresee challenges to quantify and measure these elements.

COMMENT ON THE ACTIVITY DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM CRITERIA: With regards to "(5) pollution prevention: noise, plastic, light and chemical pollution are minimised", current criteria description leaves room for different interpretations. Wastewater treatment practices should be taken into account here.