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Helaba's Sustainable Investment Framework adds sustainable investments to existing frameworks

Helaba Landesbank Hessen-Thüringen has published its Sustainable Investment Framework (SIF). The new framework underscores the Group's own aspirations within its investment operations and reinforces the current regulatory regime, statutory requirements and market standards in the classification of sustainable investments.

- Our Sustainable Investment Framework is a cornerstone of the Helaba Group's sustainability strategy and another vital component of our Sustainable Finance Framework
- A focus on investing activities: the Sustainable Investment Framework provides a comprehensive set of criteria as well as standardised, group-wide methods for our proprietary investments and asset management business, with the goal of classifying sustainable investments and increasing their share of the Helaba Group's total business volume even further
- The framework provides an all-encompassing definition of sustainability based on established, national and international standards

Despite a plethora of evolving regulations and legal requirements related to ESG issues, there is still no statutory or harmonised, universally applicable definition of "sustainability". While requirements for Article 8 funds are considered the basis for classifying investments as sustainable, they are currently regarded as a minimum benchmark. Helaba's SIF reaffirms its ambitious commitment to driving the transition to a sustainable world.

In addition to more general exclusion criteria that apply to the bank's proprietary investments and asset management activities, Helaba's SIF provides a comprehensive set of criteria that defines whether an investment can be classified as sustainable. "The Sustainable Investment Framework supplements our existing Sustainable Finance Framework, which already includes the Sustainable Lending Framework and the Green Bond Framework, by also incorporating the Helaba Group's investing activities. This new framework enables us to define group-wide criteria for assessing sustainable investments, measure and manage our sustainable investment volume and raise the proportion of sustainable investments throughout the Helaba Group," explains Hans-Dieter Kemler, a member of Helaba's Executive Board with responsibility for Corporate Banking, Capital Markets, Treasury and Helaba Invest.

"By developing the Sustainable Investment Framework, we have put in place a robust and ambitious set of rules for our future investment policy. As an institutional investor, a key priority for us was that the SIF should not only meet the expectations our clients have of us as a professional asset manager, but that it also provides us with sufficient flexibility to adapt our sustainability alignment to the specific requirements of each target group as well as individual preferences," explains Olaf Tecklenburg, a member of Helaba Invest's Management Board responsible for the firm's Securities Asset Management business line.

In the Group's own investment portfolio, no investments will be made in companies that do not meet minimum requirements, or such companies will be excluded from the eligible investment universe.

Based on the exclusion criteria, the new framework defines two types of proprietary investments that are considered sustainable in line with the SIF:

1. Investments in green, social or sustainability linked bonds as defined by ICMA standards
2. Investments in government, bank or corporate bonds that are deemed sustainable in line with Helaba's own definition

To uphold the Helaba Group's high level of ambition, the SIF defines minimum standards for sustainable investments that exceed those of regulatory disclosure requirements in accordance with Article 8 of the EU Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR). These minimum requirements are more stringent than the general exclusion criteria for all of the Helaba Group's investments and relate to compliance with good corporate governance practices, consideration of environmental or social factors and a positive contribution to sustainability for a portion of the total investment portfolio. In order to integrate these minimum standards into the Group's operational activities, audit criteria have been developed with the aim of ensuring adherence to the aforementioned good corporate governance practices, consideration of environmental or social factors and positive contribution to sustainability. These criteria will be subject to regular, ongoing review.

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