7 June 2022

In Response to the Public Consultation: ESG Ratings and Sustainability Risks in Credit Ratings (Ref. Ares [2022] 2507921)

This letter is a joint response from the Climate Finance Fund, Croatan Institute, and the Credit Rating Research Initiative, to the call for evidence to inform possible future regulation to strengthen the reliability and comparability of environmental, social and governance ("ESG") ratings and to ensure that ESG risks are captured in credit ratings.

Sustainable investing is becoming increasingly important to retail and institutional investors alike, and asset managers that take ESG ratings into account are experiencing sizable inflows.[1] For example, there was a recent commitment of more than 3,000 investors representing more than $100 trillion in combined assets to integrate ESG information into their investment decisions.[2]

As a result of these trends, investors are becoming increasingly reliant on ESG ratings to obtain third-party assessments of companies' ESG performance, while academic studies are increasingly relying on ESG ratings for their empirical analyses.[3] [4] [5] [6] [7] Consequently, ESG ratings, and by extension, their providers, are becoming embedded in the financial infrastructure and thus more influential than ever, with potentially far-reaching implications for asset prices, corporate policies, and economic activity.

Yet the ESG rating ecosystem is still nascent and is vulnerable to a range of issues and failures of governance that have affected, for example, the much older credit rating agency ("CRA") system. These failures are well documented[8] [9] and acknowledged within the Call for Evidence itself.

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[1] S. M. Hartzmark and A. B. Sussman, *Do Investors Value Sustainability? A Natural Experiment Examining Ranking and Fund Flows* (2019)

[2] UNPRI. https://www.unpri.org/annual-report-2020/how-we-work/building-our-effectiveness/enhance-our-global-footprint

[3] H. Servaes and A. Tamayo, *The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Firm Value: The Role of Customer Awareness* (2013)

[4] C. Flammer, *Does Corporate Social Responsibility Lead to Superior Financial Performance? A Regression Discontinuity Approach* (2015)

[5] H. Liang and L. Renneboog, *On the Foundations of Corporate Social Responsibility* (2017)

[6] K. V. Lins, H. Servaes, A. Tamayo, *Social Capital, Trust, and Firm Performance: The Value of Corporate Social Responsibility during the Financial Crisis* (2017)

[7] R. Albuquerque, Y. Koskinen, C. D. Zhang, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Firm Risk: Theory and Empirical Evidence* (2018)

[8] Croatan Institute. https://croataninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/William-J.-Harrington-Croatan-Institute-Comments-on-Climate-Change-Disclosures.pdf

[9] Croatan Institute. https://croataninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Public-Comment-on-ESG-Ratings-and-Data-Products-Providers-William-J-Harrington-Croatan-Institute-to-IOSCO.pdf

There are challenges that the European Commission should consider when regulating ESG ratings and rating agencies. We present workable solutions to these challenges, with an aim to ensure this market continues to grow and develop without compromising on methodological rigour or falling victim to the multiple crises that have plagued that of CRAs.

<u>Divergence of ESG ratings</u>

This first identified issue relates to the current divergence in ESG ratings that has been observed by academics and practitioners.[10] [11] The MIT Sloan School of Sustainability's Aggregate Confusion Research Project, for example, is carrying out research to analyse and improve the quality of ESG measurement and decision making in the financial sector. Their research has identified three distinct sources of divergence: scope, measurement and weight:

"*Scope divergence refers to the situation where ratings are based on different sets of attributes. One rating agency may include lobbying activities, while another might not, causing the two ratings to diverge.*

Measurement divergence refers to a situation where rating agencies measure the same attribute using different indicators. For example, a firm's labor practices could be evaluated on the basis of workforce turnover or by the number of labor-related court cases taken against the firm.

Finally, weight divergence emerges when rating agencies take different views on the relative importance of attributes. For example, the labor practices indicator may enter the final rating with greater weight than the lobbying indicator. The contributions of scope, measurement, and weight divergence are intertwined, making it difficult to interpret the difference between two ESG ratings."[12]

In the view of the Aggregate Confusion project authors, this situation gives rise to several issues including lack of comparability, reduced inclination of companies to increase ESG performance due to mixed market signals, dispersion of the effect of ESG performance on asset prices, and the difficulty of linking CEO compensation to ESG performance. In addition, from an accountability perspective, the disagreement of ratings causes challenges for empirical research for third-party evaluators, including academics, as the choice of ESG rating provider may alter a study's results and conclusions.

This is not to say that a plurality of views is wrong and needs to be eradicated. Indeed, the presence of a wide array of perspectives can be beneficial to investors, especially retail investors, as it enables them to formulate a multi-faceted understanding of how a company treats its environmental, social and governance-related risks, opportunities and impacts. Indeed, the retail investor segment is becoming increasingly significant in Europe: recently published data from Better Finance indicates how market turmoil arising from the Covid-19 pandemic has led "previously inactive EU savers to start

[10] A. K. Chatterji, R. Durand, D. I. Levine, S. Touboul, *Do ratings of firms converge? Implications for managers, investors and strategy researchers* (2016)
[11] F. Berg, J. Kolbel, R. Rigobon, *Aggregate Confusion: The Divergence of ESG Ratings* (2022)
[12] F. Berg, J. Kolbel, R. Rigobon, *Aggregate Confusion: The Divergence of ESG Ratings* (2022) 3.

investing in the real economy and trading in financial instruments, causing a fresh wave of individual, non-professional investors to arrive to capital markets."[13]

While this recently expanded pool of European retail investors, who are generally less familiar with the institutional rating process, would be justified in expressing frustration with the range of ESG ratings, methodologies and providers, corraling ESG ratings into the CRA model issued by a handful of inter-changeable providers is not a helpful solution. The range of ESG ratings reflects a range of legitimate assessments of ESG factors, which means that all investors, including retail investors, must themselves navigate ESG viewpoint diversity for the foreseeable future. Currently, retail investors can choose from several ESG rankings and ratings, from non-profit and for-profit providers alike, and can gravitate towards those providers that they trust. Moreover, ordaining a few ESG ratings or providers will decrease competition in the marketplace and likely make ESG ratings unsuitable for retail investors, as is already the case with credit ratings.[14]

ESG ratings should instead inform a series of minimum safeguards that ***ensure this emerging industry can develop in a way that encourages competition and a proliferation of useful perspectives on ESG, while protecting against issues arising from a lack of comparability, methodological rigour, and conflicts of interest*** as observed in the case of CRAs and their governing bodies.

These minimum safeguards should take various forms. ***First, to ensure maximum transparency, the regulator should require that ESG rating providers accompany all published ratings with the following set of data:***

1. Whether the entity being rated is purchasing other services from the ESG rating provider ("ancillary services", see page 4);
2. Whether the rating is "inward," "outward," or "circular" looking;
3. Whether the rating has been solicited or not;
4. Whether the entity being rated has paid for the rating or not.

Second, any future EU regulation should ensure the transparency of methodologies and consequently their replicability by a third party or outsider, and that these methodologies should involve separate, quantifiable scores for E, S and G. Building on the classification systems being developed under EU Regulation 2020/852[15] and the forthcoming sustainability reporting standards under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, the regulator could consider enhancing the degree of granularity required within "E, S, and G" by breaking it down into, for example, six or nine parts, and requiring ESG rating providers to transparently disclose information on each as applicable. This enhanced transparency would, in effect, prevent rating providers from manipulating the system by focusing their efforts on one or two ESG factors while neglecting others.

Third, these methodologies should be made publicly and easily accessible, meaning they are hosted on an independent and open-access forum, ideally moderated and hosted by the regulator, and that they do not require the user to provide identifying information (no registration wall). Each

[13] https://betterfinance.eu/publication/the-new-investing-environment-for-retail-investors-expectations-and-challenges-ahead/, 3.

[14] For examples of CRAs themselves explicitly stating that retail investors should not use credit ratings, see here [second para] and here [00:43:00-00:44:00]

[15] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32020R0852

methodology is essentially a public good, not an entrée for sales prospecting or denying access to users, as is the practice among some CRAs. Finally, if such a methodological repository is established, we would advise that the relevant hyperlinks be provided as clearly and as early as possible on all rating actions.

Fourth, it is imperative that any questionnaires being used to collect ESG data be also made publicly available and transparent, as this often forms the basis of divergence. The way that certain questions are asked can be skewed to provide certain responses, privileging certain companies over others. To prevent this manipulation and subsequent confusion, we suggest that the questionnaire used, if any, be at least made transparent. This is already the case with data collected by the CDP initiative.[16]

Fifth, we suggest inserting a requirement to use absolute impact metrics, as opposed to intensity metrics, for ESG ratings. This is because the practice of making impact metrics relative to size of operations, revenue and other factors serves to "relativize" the impacts on people and planet, when in reality, a ton of lead pollution will have the same impact on community health regardless of whether it came from a company of EUR 5 billion in annual turnover, or one with EUR 1 million.

Sixth, we would suggest inserting some form of accountability mechanism in cases where an ESG rating is based on "promised results" or future goals. For example, if a company indicates that it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5% each year, an ESG rating provider ranks said company higher than its peers for having that goal, but then a year later the company only achieves 0.5% in reduction, then this shortfall needs to be made transparent and a correction issued. The EU can better align incentives and protect retail investors from being duped.

Seventh, we ask the EU regulator to explore any available means to prevent the issuer pays model, whereby ESG rating providers take revenue from the companies they rate. It is well-documented that this dangerous practice, endemic within the CRA industry, gives rise to serious conflicts of interest[17] [18] [19] [20] and can reduce economic efficiency.[21] Moreover, there is new evidence that the CRA issuer pays model also induces CRA affiliates to inflate ESG ratings.[22] Although we appreciate it is difficult to eradicate issuer pays entirely, we would be remiss if we were not to highlight the point in this context. At a minimum, we recommend forbidding ESG rating providers from providing ancillary services to those they also charge for rating services.

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[16] CDP Questionnaires 2022. https://www.cdp.net/en/guidance/guidance-for-companies

[17] https://www.esma.europa.eu/press-news/esma-news/esma-fines-moody%E2%80%99s-%E2%82%AC37-million-conflicts-interest-failures

[18] https://www.esma.europa.eu/press-news/esma-news/esma-fines-scope-ratings-%E2%82%AC640000-failings-in-covered-bonds-ratings

[19] https://www.esma.europa.eu/press-news/esma-news/esma-fines-fitch-%E2%82%AC5132500-breaches-conflict-interest-requirements

[20] https://www.esma.europa.eu/sites/default/files/library/esma71-99-466_esma_fines_moodys_eu1.24_million_for_credit_ratings_breaches.pdf

[21] I. Goldstein & C. Huang, *Credit Rating Inflation and Firms' Investments* (The Journal of Finance 2020)

[22] X. B. Li, Y. Lou & L. D. Zhang, *Do Commercial Ties Influence ESG Ratings? Evidence from Moody's and S&P* (accessed 26 May 2022, paper to be updated July 2022) "Using Moody's and Standard & Poor (S&P)'s acquisitions of Vigeo Eiris and RobecoSAM as shocks to the commercial ties between ESG rating agencies and their rated firms . . . [w]e find that, after the acquisitions, the ESG rating agencies issued higher ESG ratings to firms that have existing credit rating business with Moody's or S&P, relative to those that do not." [Abstract]

Ancillary Service Provision

"Ancillary" services, also known as "consultancy" services, are products offered by ESG ratings providers in addition to rating services. Several problems arise from allowing ESG rating providers to offer ancillary services, including rating accuracy, timeliness, and pure conflicts of interest.

For CRAs, offering ancillary services consists of any services offered by the rating agencies other than traditional credit rating-related services. And although other gatekeepers like the audit sector have had particular crises relating to the provision of consultancy services (and subsequently saw that provision prohibited for a time),[23] CRAs currently fully enjoy the ability to provide such services. Professor Cash's research outlines that the revenue from the provision of ancillary services fundamentally protects CRAs from the only meaningful regulatory sanction – financial penalties.[24] Our fear is that the allowance of ESG rating providers to provide ancillary services would have exactly the same effect.

Using the credit rating world as test case, allowing the provision of ancillary services from ESG rating providers would simply 'increase the catalogue of conflicts.'[25] The current credit rating industry is oligopolistic, and this characteristic is being actively developed in the ESG rating space via mergers and takeovers. The oligopolistic characteristic of the industry means that 1) the leading players are known and that 2) being in their favour is advantageous. Research and empirical evidence make it abundantly clear that the longer the relationship between rater and rated, especially when ancillary service provision becomes the vehicle with which favour is purchased and sold, the more conflicted the relationship becomes.[26]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there existed a small window in which the CRA Moody's Investors Service changed (more generally) to the issuer-paid model before competitor S&P Global Ratings followed suit, with research of that period confirming that the issuer-paid model led to a dramatic increase in rating grade for those who paid.[27] In 2018, Indian Law mandated that ancillary fee payments be made public for the first time. This law allowed the researchers Baghai and Becker to examine the impact of ancillary services on the accuracy and reliability of credit ratings. Unsurprisingly, the researchers found, on average, a 3-notch upgrade for those paying for ancillary services.[28]

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[23] Y. P. Liao, K. F. Li, and S. M. Hung, *Does the conflict of interest matter for credit ratings? The impact of the client's economic importance and the CRA tenure* (2017) 24 Asia-Pacific Journal of Accounting & Economics 3-4, 302-22, 302.

[24] D. Cash, *Regulation and the Credit Rating Agencies: Restraining Ancillary Services* (Routledge 2018)

[25] A. Miglionico, *The Disclosure Regime of Credit Rating Agencies: An Obscure Veil of Compliance?* (2019) 4 Journal of Business Law 262-281, 280.

[26] K. Haggerty, *When due diligence is not so diligent: Conflicts of interest in third-party due diligence of private placements* (2016) 29 Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics 4 1063-78, and Y. P. Liao, K. F. Li, and S. M. Hung, *Does the conflict of interest matter for credit ratings? The impact of the client's economic importance and the CRA tenure* (2017) 24 Asia-Pacific Journal of Accounting & Economics 3-4, 302-22.

[27] J. X. Jiang, M. H. Stanford and Y. Xie, *Does it matter who pays for bond ratings? Historical Evidence* (2012) 105 Journal of Financial Economics, 3.

[28] R. P. Baghai and B. Becker, *Non-rating revenue and conflicts of interest* (2018) 127 Journal of Financial Economics, 94-112.

This potential for conflict becomes even greater when the rater is relatively young, in a more competitive environment, or smaller compared to peers.[29] This should be particularly concerning given the state of play within the ESG rating space, which comprises almost entirely relatively younger rating entities in a more competitive space than that witnessed in the credit rating space.

We would argue that, at this early stage of the ESG rating space, eliminating conflicts of interest is crucial. ***To avoid this conflict from contaminating the ESG rating space, the EU should ban ancillary service provision from ESG Rating providers (inclusive of parent companies).***

Signalling Perspective

In February 2022, Henry Fernandez, the CEO and Chairman of MSCI, produced a LinkedIn post that sought to 'set the record straight.'[30] Within that post he made the point clear that his rating organisation seeks to examine the impact of the environment (inclusive of E, S, and G-related issues) upon the issuer and its resilience to them, rather than the issuer's proactivity and policies regarding engaging with those same issues.

This brought to the fore the third identified issue highlighted in this letter: how an ESG rating agency actually rates, and within what parameters. Fernandez's post merely indicates MSCI's position, but this is not necessarily standard ESG industry practice.

The question is what is the best way to make clear the what and how of ESG rating approaches, especially for investors who are already confused by ESG ratings. Notes on websites or social media websites will not be enough. Therefore, ***we suggest that signals be attached to every ESG score produced by ESG rating providers on the directions with which the rating is made (i.e. inwards in terms of the impact of the outside world upon the entity being rated, outwards in terms of the impact of the entity being rated on the outside world, and a circle to indicate the co-dependent, circular, non-binary nature of the metric).*** ESG integration, SDG-aligned investing, and impact investing all have varying practices, and it is important to bring clarity to those market participants relying on ratings to make portfolio allocation decisions. Standardising and clarifying this would be massively beneficial for investors who do have either preferences or mandates on how they choose to engage with the ESG investment space.

The EU pioneered the concept of attaching signifiers to rating symbols with the development of the 'sf' signifiers for ratings concerned with structured finance ratings, and the same could easily be applied here using existing rating-related regulation. The uptake of this practice around the world by agencies who recognised it as good practice further enhances the call for something similar in this regard.

[29] K. Haggerty, *When due diligence is not so diligent: Conflicts of interest in third-party due diligence of private placements* (2016) 29 Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics 4, 1063-78, 1071.
[30] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/esg-ratings-setting-record-straight-henry-fernandez/?trackingId=s7KfhYNBVVj8i9Jj8veQhw%3D%3D

Spill-over effect of credit rating agencies' own bad governance

Last year, the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), of which the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) is a member, launched a Consultation Report, "Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Ratings and Data Products Providers".[31] The report issues "recommendations to mitigate risks associated with ESG ratings and data products and to address some of the existing challenges faced by ESG ratings and data products providers, users of ESG ratings and data products, and the companies that are the subject of these ESG ratings or data products." ***We do not suggest that the European regulators follow these recommendations.***

First, we believe IOSCO's own failures of governance[32] preclude it from presently being able to justify prescribing ESG analytics providers on how to govern themselves. This shortcoming is highlighted by the report itself,[33] which essentially recommends that ESG information providers emulate CRAs by settling for robust processes at the expense of robust content.

Second, in their current form, the IOSCO recommendations for ESG analytics providers will undermine ESG analytics and sustainability practices in at least two ways:

1. ESG analytics providers will be incentivised to dilute ESG content in ESG analytics as comprehensively as CRAs have diluted credit content in credit ratings.
2. ESG analytics will ossify, rather than evolve organically to suit as many entities around the world as possible.

IOSCO members, including the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and ESMA, follow the IOSCO credit rating blueprint. Collectively and individually, the blueprint undermines economies and financial systems by greenlighting CRAs to assign credit ratings that buttress commercial interests at the expense of analytical robustness.

Propelled by the IOSCO blueprint, CRAs intentionally inflate the credit ratings of constituent entities to minimize their financing costs and to boost CRA franchises and earnings.[34] [35] As a result, economic efficiency can suffer.[36] Credit rating inflation directly distorts the prices of rated debt such as bonds and loans and indirectly distorts prices of equities and non-rated debt to favour CRA clients and misallocate investment away from projects of maximum utility, such as ones that boost sustainability.

[31] https://www.iosco.org/library/pubdocs/pdf/IOSCOPD681.pdf
[32] https://croataninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Public-Comment-on-ESG-Ratings-and-Data-Products-Providers-William-J-Harrington-Croatan-Institute-to-IOSCO.pdf
[33] https://www.iosco.org/library/pubdocs/pdf/IOSCOPD681.pdf
[34] C. Herpfer, G. Maturana, *Credit Rating Inflation: Is It Still Relevant and Who Prices It?* (2020) "In this paper, we show evidence that conflicts of interest affect the behavior of CRAs, specifically in the context of credit rating–dependent PSD [price-sensitive debt]… Overall, our results suggest that the catering behavior of CRAs is not confined to complex markets such as the securitized products market.", 32.
[35] A. Beatty et al. *Do rating agencies benefit from providing higher ratings? Evidence from the consequences of municipal bond ratings recalibration* (2019) "… [W]e use the 2010 rating scale recalibration by Moody's and Fitch, which increased ratings absent any underlying change in issuer credit quality. Consistent with prior research, we find that the recalibration allowed the clients of Moody's and Fitch to receive better ratings and lower yields. We add to this evidence by showing that the recalibration also led to larger fees and to increases in the market shares of Moody's and Fitch. These results are consistent with critics' concerns about the effects of the issuer-pay model on the credit ratings market." [Abstract]
[36] I. Goldstein & C. Huang, *Credit Rating Inflation and Firms' Investments* (The Journal of Finance 2020)

Credit rating inflation also disproves CRA claims that ESG credit rating methodologies specify rigorous assessment of credit exposures to ESG factors.

To be clear, business enterprises, such as the “Big Three” CRAs Fitch Ratings, Moody's Investors Service, and S&P Global Ratings, are not government "agencies" or regulated utilities; these companies develop credit rating methodologies, assign new credit ratings, and monitor existing ones. The term "credit rating company" is both more accurate than "credit rating agency" and provides more clarity on the primary driver of unreliable credit ratings, namely the unrelenting push by the ultimate owner of each credit rating business to maximise franchise earnings.

The IOSCO ESG recommendation does not offer credible mitigation for the business owner conflict of interest. Instead, the recommendation posits that rogue analysts and managers are the main distorters of information, be it with credit ratings, ESG ratings, ESG credit ratings, or other ESG data products. As a result, the IOSCO ESG recommendation, like the IOSCO credit rating blueprint, tasks business owners of ESG analytics providers to clamp down on potentially rogue staff by establishing *processes and procedures* for developing the analytics. Conspicuously absent from both the IOSCO ESG and credit rating blueprints are constraints on the ultimate business owners or reviews of analytical content.

A worrying trend is emerging where CRAs’ respective parent companies are extending their oligopoly into the ESG analytical sector by acquiring formerly independent providers.[37] [38] This is a strategic choice, a means to offset expected revenue decreases in the traditional credit ratings arms of these parent corporations,[39] [40] but with harmful ramifications: what might have otherwise been a system of reliable information appears to be morphing into a system in which neither CRAs nor ESG analytical providers critique each other's products[41] and where the latter inflate ESG ratings of the former's clients.

Indeed, recently published preliminary research[42] has shown that ESG rating companies that have been taken over by the parent companies of large CRAs are starting to rate CRA clients more favourably. Scholars at Singapore Management University analysed the ESG ratings given by RobecoSAM and Vigeo Eiris before and after their acquisitions from S&P Global and Moody’s Corp respectively. Using Refinitiv data as the benchmark, the researchers found that RobecoSAM’s ratings for entities with credit ratings from S&P Global Ratings increased by 6.7% after the acquisition, whilst Vigeo Eiris’ ratings for entities with credit ratings from Moody’s Investors Service increased by 4%.

While the scholars urge caution with these findings as they are still preliminary and being tested against different criteria, this presents a clear warning sign: allowing CRAs to devour the ESG rating

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[37] D. Cash, *The Role of Credit Rating Agencies in Responsible Finance* (Palgrave Macmillan 2018)
[38] https://www.iosco.org/library/pubdocs/pdf/IOSCOPD681.pdf, p. 12, table 2
[39] D. Cash, *The Regulation of Credit Rating Agencies: An Analysis of the Transgressions of the Rating Industry and a Measured Proposal for Reform* (2016) PhD Thesis
[40] Moodys - Moody's Corporation Reports Results for First Quarter 2022
[41] D. Cash, *Sustainability Rating Agencies vs Credit Rating Agencies: The Battle to Serve the Mainstream Investor* (2021)
[42] X. B. Li, Y. Lou & L. D. Zhang, *Do Commercial Ties Influence ESG Ratings? Evidence from Moody’s and S&P* (accessed 26 May 2022, paper to be updated July 2022)

space leads to the transplanting of the culture of the CRAs into the ESG space and all that comes with it.

With respect to this emerging CRA-ESG oligopoly, there appear at present to be few legally and practically feasible courses of action short of obliging CRAs to divest themselves of their ESG subsidiaries and acquisitions. Nevertheless, we believe it essential to highlight this trend, as preventing such an oligopoly will be imperative to the health of the emerging ESG rating sector. ***We urge the Commission to consider these CRA-tied oligopoly risks when designing future regulatory instruments.***

Please accept this submission into the public consultation. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

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Additional resources

Books

D. Cash, *Sustainability Rating Agencies vs Credit Rating Agencies: The Battle to Serve the Mainstream Investor* (Palgrave Macmillan 2021)

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Articles – news and opinion

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J. Ward, A Climate Reckoning Is Coming for the World's Government Debt (Bloomberg, 23 September 2021)

B. Harrington, IOSCO should back off ESG ratings providers (Environmental Finance, 19 August 2021)

B. Harrington, Moody's ESG overhaul won't have any actual effect on credit ratings... (Responsible Investor, 19 October 2021)

B. Harrington, Croatan Institute proposal for Bond Market Activism to increase investment in resilient infrastructure and Communities (Submission to Moody's Investors Service "Re: Request for Comment: 'General Principles for Assessing Environmental, Social and Governance Risks: Proposed Methodology Update'", 19 October 2020)

J. Pimbley & B. Harrington, Federal Reserve Trashes Dodd-Frank Restrictions on Credit Ratings (Croatan View, 20 May 2020)

B. Harrington, Investors who want to fast-track sustainable fixed-income investments should inundate credit rating agencies with methodology critiques (Responsible Investor, 28 January 2020)

B. Harrington, D. Sand & T. Feltner, Debt and Democracy: Social Crisis and Systemic Risk a Decade after the Mortgage Meltdown (Croatan Forum, 3 October 2018)

B. Harrington, Can Green Bonds Flourish in a Complex-Finance Brownfield? (Croatan Institute, July 2018)

B. Harrington, US Financial Regulators Balk at Examining Complex Finance - Croatan Institute (Croatan View, 8 February 2018)

G. Morgenson, Should Free Markets Govern the Bond Rating Agencies? (The New York Times, 5 May 2017)

B. Harrington, Second Comment on SEC Proposed Rules for Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations (Second response to SEC Request for Re-proposal Relating to Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations [File Number S7-18-11], 29 May 2014)

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