

Press Release, February 1st 2021

Minerva launches pooled fund split voting service: 'VotePlus'

New solution rapidly accelerates sustainable stewardship

Minerva Analytics, Europe's leading independent proxy voting agency, has today launched a new, ground-breaking solution designed to help investors better meet their stewardship commitments.

VotePlus leverages Minerva's advanced VoteTech and custom vote policy expertise to create a robust and scalable solution to the problems associated with voting in pooled funds.

Split fund voting has featured strongly in pensions minister Guy Opperman's recent push for pension funds to play a greater role in the fight against climate change by leveraging their roles as asset owners.

For several years, pension scheme trustees have been calling for asset managers to find a way of ensuring their voting and engagement actions are aligned with the needs of their clients, regardless of whether the schemes are invested in segregated mandates or pooled funds.

Minerva's new solution allows asset managers to express the views of multiple clients invested in the same pooled fund, enhancing the stewardship capabilities of both asset owners and asset managers.

Vote Plus uses advanced holdings and ownership reconciliation algorithms to connect the underlying investors with their proportionate holdings in a pooled fund and offers a choice of good practice voting policies including the AMNT Red Lines and the PLSA. Vote Plus also provides comprehensive reporting to ensure compliance with the UK Stewardship Code, the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, and the new requirements of the Pension Schemes Act 2021.

Also announced today, The Asset Management Exchange (AMX) and asset manager DWS are to launch the Investor Stewardship Service in partnership with Minerva Analytics and which will use the Vote Plus infrastructure to provide customised split fund voting.

AMX was launched by Willis Towers Watson in 2017 to provide scalable back-office infrastructure for investment fund strategies and lower the cost of investing for asset owners.

It follows the UK government's launch in December 2020 of the Taskforce on Pension Scheme Voting Implementation to encourage industry solutions to link investor preferences to corporate voting actions.

Sarah Wilson, Minerva founder and chief executive, said: "Pooled fund index strategies are an extremely cost-effective proposition for long-term investors. For too long, however, that has meant compromising on stewardship and voting issues.

"We've always believed that the application of smart technology can offer investors the best of both worlds: cost effective asset management with active ownership. We are therefore delighted to partner with AMX and DWS on this important and timely initiative."

Commenting on the AMX and DWS fund launch, Guy Opperman, Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, said: "I strongly hope this prompts other pension scheme trustees to challenge their fund managers about plans to offer this service and drives engagement with other key issues such as how their managers are engaging and voting on pressing issues such as climate change."

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About Minerva

Minerva, through its subsidiary The Manifest Voting Agency Ltd, has over 25 years' experience of supporting asset owners and managers with innovative stewardship support solutions including proxy vote agency, custom voting policies, sustainable stock lending, SDG mapping and ESG data projects. Minerva continues to innovate and now, as part of the Solactive family, is at the forefront of ESG-centric stewardship for global investors.

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