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Sustainable Investment Market Report 2015 – Switzerland

26 per cent growth: sustainable investments in Switzerland once again achieve significant gains

Focus on engagement and voting reveals that both these investment strategies are becoming increasingly important.

The sustainable investment market in Switzerland is now valued at CHF 71.3 billion – the market share of institutional investors is increasing – all sustainable investment strategies are growing – exclusion criteria and best-in-class remain the most popular approaches – voting moves into third place

Zurich, 13 May 2015 – The upward trend in the sustainable investment market in Switzerland continues unabated. This is shown by the annual statistics presented to the public by Forum Nachhaltige Geldanlagen (FNG) on 13 May in Zurich. According to the report, the volume of sustainable investments reached a record level of CHF 71.3 billion at the end of 2014, representing an increase of 26 per cent on the previous year. Sustainable investments take not only financial indicators but also environmental, social and governance-related criteria into account.

“The sustainable investment market has thus recorded double-digit percentage growth for the third year in succession,” says Patrick Wirth, FNG Vice-Chair and head of FNG Switzerland, summing up the latest market figures. “Institutional investors have made a particular contribution to this growth, and we anticipate that this group will continue to stimulate further growth in sustainable investment in future,” says the financial expert.

According to the FNG market report, institutional investors’ share of the sustainable investment market has now risen to 63 per cent, while private investors have lost ground in relative terms. Their share has fallen from 41 per cent in the previous year to a current level of 37 per cent – although this figure is still high compared with the level in other European countries. Among institutional investors in Switzerland, in 2014 investment foundations and occupational pension funds were once again the largest group, followed by religious institutions and charities.

Dr. Ingeborg Schumacher-Hummel, a member of the FNG Board, points out the different trends in the investment strategies applied to sustainable funds and mandates. “In 2014, the approach whereby investments are screened for compliance with particular standards, such as the UN Global Compact, showed particularly strong growth,” explains the sustainable investment expert. “However, the exclusion of particular companies, industries or countries from an investment universe remains the most popular approach. This is followed by the best-in-class strategy, where the best companies in an industry, category or class are selected on the basis of sustainability criteria,” adds Dr. Schumacher-Hummel.

The new FNG figures show that in 2014, voting moved up to third place. This approach involves using shareholder voting rights at annual general meetings to influence companies’ sustainability performance. Engagement – dialogue with companies that is geared to the long term – shares the same aim. The FNG market report 2015 has focussed on these two investment strategies, and also includes a special evaluation.

FNG Vice-Chair Patrick Wirth sees the FNG data as confirming his assessment of the market: “For years, we have been observing these two investment strategies gaining in relevance”, says Wirth and highlights the fact that increasing numbers of asset managers are formalising their approaches and disclosing their respective guidelines. “In this market report, FNG has also for the first time recorded data on voting and engagement independently of individual products. This has shown that Switzerland continues to occupy a leading position in this area, including in the European context.”

FNG has been publishing comprehensive data on the sustainable investment markets in Germany, Austria and Switzerland in its Sustainable Investment Market Report since 2005. The data for the annual statistics is
collected by FNG and the methodology used is in line with that of the European umbrella organisation Eurosif (European Sustainable Investment Forum). Publication of the Sustainable Investment Market Report 2015 would not have been possible without help from the following sponsors and supporters: Notenstein Financial Services, Union Investment, Absolut Research, oekom research AG, Raiffeisen Schweiz, Metzler Asset Management GmbH and 21ökofinanz-21 e.V.

Further information can be found at www.forum-ng.org.

Contacts:
Patrick Wirth, Vice Chair of FNG and head of FNG Switzerland, wirth@forum-ng.org, tel. +41 43 535 99 38.
Dr. Ingeborg Schumacher-Hummel, FNG board member, schumacher@forum-ng.org, tel. +41 79 3091205.

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Please see also:
Germany, Austria and Switzerland: Sustainable investment markets in Germany, Austria and Switzerland reach record high

FNG Switzerland is part of the Sustainable Investment Forum (Forum Nachhaltige Geldanlagen, FNG), which covers Germany, Austria and Switzerland. This specialist association for sustainable investments currently has around 180 members and is committed to promoting a more sustainable approach to business within the finance industry. FNG awards the Transparency logo for sustainable investment funds, publishes the FNG Sustainability Profiles and is a founding member of the European Sustainable Investment Forum (Eurosif).

Forum Nachhaltige Geldanlagen (FNG), the industry association for sustainable investment in Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, represents more than 180 members which are working to promote sustainability in the financial sector. These include banks, investment companies, rating agencies, financial advisers and academic institutions. FNG promotes dialogue and the exchange of information between the worlds of business, academia and politics and has been working to improve the legal and political framework for sustainable investments since 2001. FNG awards the Transparency logo for sustainable mutual funds, publishes the FNG Sustainability Profiles and is a founder member of the European umbrella organisation Eurosif.

The Sustainable Investment Market Report – Germany, Austria and Switzerland is the central yearly publication of Forum Nachhaltige Geldanlagen (FNG). It serves industry insiders, journalists, scholars, and politicians as a source of up to date market data. Besides volume figures, which are already collected since 2005, the market report provides a wide range of supplementary data and information, which allow deriving current trends and developments. In addition, the chapter on Switzerland is separately published in an English version. Both publications are available for download at the FNG homepage.