**Reply form**

**on the Joint Consultation Paper on the review of SFDR Delegated Regulation regarding PAI and financial product disclosures**

12 April 2023ESMA34-45-1218

**Responding to this paper**

The ESAs invite comments on all matters in the Joint Consultation Paper and in particular on the specific questions in this reply form. Comments are most helpful if they:

* respond to the question stated;
* indicate the specific question to which the comment relates;
* contain a clear rationale; and
* describe any alternatives the ESAs should consider.

ESMA will consider all comments received by **4 July 2023.**

**Instructions**

In order to facilitate analysis of responses to the Joint Consultation Paper, respondents are requested to follow the below steps when preparing and submitting their response:

* Insert your responses to the questions in the Joint Consultation Paper in this reply form.
* Please do not remove tags of the type <ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_1>. Your response to each question has to be framed by the two tags corresponding to the question.
* If you do not wish to respond to a given question, please do not delete it but simply leave the text “TYPE YOUR TEXT HERE” between the tags.
* When you have drafted your responses, save the reply form according to the following convention: ESMA\_CP SFDR Review\_nameofrespondent.

For example, for a respondent named ABCD, the reply form would be saved with the following name: ESMA\_CP SFDR Review\_ABCD.

* Upload the Word reply form containing your responses to ESMA’s website (**pdf documents will not be considered except for annexes**). All contributions should be submitted online at [www.esma.europa.eu](http://www.esma.europa.eu) under the heading ‘Your input - Consultations’.

**Publication of responses**

All contributions received will be published following the close of the consultation, unless you request otherwise. Please clearly and prominently indicate in your submission any part you do not wish to be publicly disclosed. A standard confidentiality statement in an email message will not be treated as a request for non-disclosure. A confidential response may be requested from us in accordance with ESAs’ rules on access to documents. We may consult you if we receive such a request. Any decision we make not to disclose the response is reviewable by ESMA’s Board of Appeal and the European Ombudsman.

**Data protection**

The protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the ESAs is based on Regulation (EU) 2018/1725[[1]](#footnote-1). Further information on data protection can be found under the [Legal notice](http://www.eba.europa.eu/legal-notice) section of the EBA website and under the [Legal notice](https://eiopa.europa.eu/Pages/Links/Legal-notice.aspx) section of the EIOPA website and under the [Legal notice](https://www.esma.europa.eu/legal-notice) section of the ESMA website.

**General information about respondent**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of the company / organisation | Association of Real Estate Funds (AREF) |
| Activity | Other Financial service providers |
| Are you representing an association? |  |
| Country/Region | UK |

**Questions**

1. : Do you agree with the newly proposed mandatory social indicators in Annex I, Table I (amount of accumulated earnings in non-cooperative tax jurisdictions for undertakings whose turnover exceeds € 750 million, exposure to companies involved in the cultivation and production of tobacco, interference with the formation of trade unions or election worker representatives, share of employees earning less than the adequate wage)?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_1>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_1>

1. : Would you recommend any other mandatory social indicator or adjust any of the ones proposed?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_2>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_2>

1. : Do you agree with the newly proposed opt-in social indicators in Annex I, Table III (excessive use of non-guaranteed-hour employees in investee companies, excessive use of temporary contract employees in investee companies, excessive use of non-employee workers in investee companies, insufficient employment of persons with disabilities in the workforce, lack of grievance/complaints handling mechanism for stakeholders materially affected by the operations of investee companies, lack of grievance/complaints handling mechanism for consumers/ end-users of the investee companies)?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_3>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_3>

1. : Would you recommend any other social indicator or adjust any of the ones proposed?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_4>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_4>

1. : Do you agree with the changes proposed to the existing mandatory and opt-in social indicators in Annex I, Table I and III (i.e. replacing the UN Global Compact Principles with the UN Guiding Principles and ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work)? Do you have any additional suggestions for changes to other indicators not considered by the ESAs?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_5>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_5>

1. : For real estate assets, do you consider relevant to apply any PAI indicator related to social matters to the entity in charge of the management of the real estate assets the FMP invested in?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_6>

We do not believe that any PAI indicator related to social matters should be applied to the entity in charge of the management of the real estate assets that the financial market participant (FMP) invested in. It would be sufficient to require the FMP to apply social PAI indicators.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_6>

1. : For real estate assets, do you see any merit in adjusting the definition of PAI indicator 22 of Table 1 in order to align it with the EU Taxonomy criteria applicable to the DNSH of the climate change mitigation objective under the climate change adaptation objective?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_7>

We agree, for real estate assets, the definition of PAI indicator 22 of Table 1 should be adjusted in order to align it with the EU Taxonomy criteria applicable to the DNSH of the climate change mitigation objective under the climate change adaptation objective.

Although, aligning the definition will not address the problem of using EPCs. We believe that it is imperative, as an foundation for progress, that the EPC methodology and ratings be harmonised across the EEA as required under the recast European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and that an EPC methodology is defined on actual in-use (as opposed to theoretical) operational emissions.

AREF were co-sponsors, with INREV and the Investment Property Forum (IPF), of the Real Estate Solutions Paper ([SFDR-Real-Estate-Solutions-Paper7-June-2023.pdf (aref.org.uk)](https://www.aref.org.uk/uploads/assets/9e2362c2-fd25-4382-9a7839be89ec3046/SFDR-Real-Estate-Solutions-Paper7-June-2023.pdf)) which provides proposals for solving challenges arising from SFDR for real estate investments. We support the request for guidance in the Real Estate Solutions Paper as soon as practicable on how to apply:

- the Energy Efficient Buildings PAI to the different methodologies / ratings of the EPC in each EEA member state.

- the PAI to countries outside of the EEA where the EPC does not exist and where NZEB is not in effect

Also, as indicated in the Real Estate Solutions Paper, it is vital that when disclosing emissions between real estate assets, particularly between existing and newly constructed buildings, that new embodied emissions are considered with operational emissions to enable a valid comparison of total emissions. Focusing on operational emissions only has the potential to mis-signal to some investors that new buildings that are close to net zero are more beneficial and deter the rejuvenation of existing buildings.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_7>

1. : Do you see any challenges in the interaction between the definition ‘enterprise value’ and ‘current value of investment’ for the calculation of the PAI indicators?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_8>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_8>

1. : Do you have any comments or proposed adjustments to the new formulae suggested in Annex I?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_9>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_9>

1. : Do you have any comments on the further clarifications or technical changes to the current list of indicators? Did you encounter any issues in the calculation of the adverse impact for any of the other existing indicators in Annex I?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_10>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_10>

1. : Do you agree with the proposal to require the disclosure of the share of information for the PAI indicators for which the financial market participant relies on information directly from investee companies?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_11>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_11>

1. : What is your view on the approach taken in this consultation paper to define ‘all investments’? What are the advantages and drawbacks you identify? Would a change in the approach adopted for the treatment of ‘all investments’ be necessary in your view?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_12>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_12>

1. : Do you agree with the ESAs’ proposal to only require the inclusion of information on investee companies’ value chains in the PAI calculations where the investee company reports them? If not, what would you propose as an alternative?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_13>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_13>

1. : Do you agree with the proposed treatment of derivatives in the PAI indicators or would you suggest any other method?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_14>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_14>

1. : What are your views with regard to the treatment of derivatives in general (Taxonomy-alignment, share of sustainable investments and PAI calculations)? Should the netting provision of Article 17(1)(g) be applied to sustainable investment calculations?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_15>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_15>

1. : Do you see the need to extend the scope of the provisions of point g of paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the SFDR Delegated Regulation to asset classes other than equity and sovereign exposures?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_16>

We do not believe that it is necessary to extend the scope of the provisions of point g of paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the SFDR Delegated Regulation to asset classes other than equity and sovereign exposures. The reason for this is that point d of paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the SFDR Delegated Regulation already relates to real estate.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_16>

1. : Do you agree with the ESAs’ assessment of the DNSH framework under SFDR?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_17>

In the main, we believe that the ESAs’ assessment of the DNSH framework under SFDR is generally correct.

However, it would be extremely helpful to confirm whether real estate assets with a carbon reduction objective under SFDR Article 9.3 qualify as “Sustainable Investments”. This should provide clarity on whether they fall under the “safe harbour”, meet the minimum eligibility requirements defined by the SFDR for real estate assets, without having to meet DNSH criteria with regard to the fossil fuel exposure and inefficient building criteria (EPC of C or below or not meeting NZEB requirements) and disclose PAI indicators. These assets could simply monitor DNSH and disclose PAI indicators.

This interpretation would create a means for many real estate transition funds that buy energy inefficient buildings with an EPC label F, for example, and upgrade them to EPC label A or B, to disclose under the provisions of SFDR Article 9.3. This would make it much easier to attract capital from investors keen to financially support achievement of the Paris Agreement’s carbon reduction goals, which is critically needed.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_17>

1. : With regard to the DNSH disclosures in the SFDR Delegated Regulation, do you consider it relevant to make disclosures about the quantitative thresholds FMPs use to take into account the PAI indicators for DNSH purposes mandatory? Please explain your reasoning.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_18>

We do not believe that mandatory disclosures about the quantitative thresholds FMPs use to take into account the PAI indicators for DNSH purposes would be at all helpful. Transparency about how FMPs meet the criteria for the PAI indicators for DNSH purposes would be much more helpful than thresholds.

We would prefer to see more guidance provided concerning how FMPs should determine the PAI indicators for DNSH purposes; for example guidance in this regard for real estate loans would be helpful.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_18>

1. : Do you support the introduction of an optional “safe harbour” for environmental DNSH for taxonomy-aligned activities? Please explain your reasoning.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_19>

We support the introduction of an optional “safe harbour” for environmental DNSH for taxonomy-aligned activities, especially if clarity can be provided as we outlined in our response to Question 17 above. This would make it much easier to attract capital from investor keen to financially support achievement of the Paris Agreement’s carbon reduction goals, which is critically needed.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_19>

1. : Do you agree with the longer term view of the ESAs that if two parallel concepts of sustainability are retained that the Taxonomy TSCs should form the basis of DNSH assessments? Please explain your reasoning.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_20>

If the criteria are clear and unambiguous, using the Taxonomy TSCs to form the basis of the DNSH assessment could lead to less risk of greenwashing, either purposeful or inadvertent.

However, the unintended consequences of not being able to classify investment into a building that is EPC C or below, with the expressed intention of uplifting it to B or above, remains. This is a major failing of the regulation that will disincentive investment into the transformation of buildings from stranded to green.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_20>

1. : Are there other options for the SFDR Delegated Regulation DNSH disclosures to reduce the risk of greenwashing and increase comparability?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_21>

As indicated in the AREF, INREV and IPF sponsored SFDR Real Estate Solutions Paper ([SFDR-Real-Estate-Solutions-Paper7-June-2023.pdf (aref.org.uk)](https://www.aref.org.uk/uploads/assets/9e2362c2-fd25-4382-9a7839be89ec3046/SFDR-Real-Estate-Solutions-Paper7-June-2023.pdf)), other options should be considered for the SFDR Delegated Regulation DNSH disclosures for real estate to reduce the risk of greenwashing and increase comparability. These include providing more guidance on how to apply rules related to the use of EPCs, guidance on determining exposure to fossil fuels, use of pre- and post-31 December 2020 standards for determining inefficient real estate assets, mandating publicly available data to support operational emissions disclosures and including embedded carbon in the DNSH screen.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_21>

1. : Do you agree that the proposed disclosures strike the right balance between the need for clear, reliable, decision-useful information for investors and the need to keep requirements feasible and proportional for FMPs? Please explain your answers.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_22>

We believe that the proposed disclosures aim to strike a reasonable balance between the need for clear, reliable, decision-useful information for investors and the need to keep requirements feasible and proportional for FMPs. However, there is some room for improvement, as we have set out in our responses to Questions 17 and 21.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_22>

1. : Do you agree with the proposed approach of providing a hyperlink to the benchmark disclosures for products having GHG emissions reduction as their investment objective under Article 9(3) SFDR or would you prefer specific disclosures for such financial products? Do you believe the introduction of GHG emissions reduction target disclosures could lead to confusion between Article 9(3) and other Article 9 and 8 financial products? Please explain your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_23>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_23>

1. : The ESAs have introduced a distinction between a product-level commitment to achieve a reduction in financed emissions (through a strategy that possibly relies only on divestments and reallocations) and a commitment to achieve a reduction in investees’ emissions (through investment in companies that has adopted and duly executes a convincing transition plan or through active ownership). Do you find this distinction useful for investors and actionable for FMPs? Please explain your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_24>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_24>

1. : Do you find it useful to have a disclosure on the degree of Paris-Alignment of the Article 9 product’s target(s)? Do you think that existing methodologies can provide sufficiently robust assessments of that aspect? If yes, please specify which methodology (or methodologies) would be relevant for that purpose and what are their most critical features? Please explain your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_25>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_25>

1. : Do you agree with the proposed approach to require that the target is calculated for all investments of the financial product? Please explain your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_26>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_26>

1. : Do you agree with the proposed approach to require that, at product level, Financed GHG emissions reduction targets be set and disclosed based on the GHG accounting and reporting standard to be referenced in the forthcoming Delegated Act (DA) of the CSRD? Should the Global GHG Accounting and Reporting Standard for the Financial Industry developed by PCAF be required as the only standard to be used for the disclosures, or should any other standard be considered? Please justify your answer and provide the name of alternative standards you would suggest, if any.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_27>

We understand that the PCAF standards do not work very well for direct real estate investment but there are not any other standards, such as SBTi’s real estate pathway and the BBP framework, that would work any better. Hopefully, over time, suitable standards will be developed.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_27>

1. : Do you agree with the approach taken to removals and the use of carbon credits and the alignment the ESAs have sought to achieve with the EFRAG Draft ESRS E1? Please explain your answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_28>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_28>

1. : Do you find it useful to ask for disclosures regarding the consistency between the product targets and the financial market participants entity-level targets and transition plan for climate change mitigation? What could be the benefits of and challenges to making such disclosures available? Please explain you answer.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_29>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_29>

1. : What are your views on the inclusion of a dashboard at the top of Annexes II-V of the SFDR Delegated Regulation as summary of the key information to complement the more detailed information in the pre-contractual and periodic disclosures? Does it serve the purpose of helping consumers and less experienced retail investors understand the essential information in a simpler and more visual way?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_30>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_30>

1. : Do you agree that the current version of the templates capture all the information needed for retail investors to understand the characteristics of the products? Do you have views on how to further simplify the language in the dashboard, or other sections of the templates, to make it more understandable to retail investors?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_31>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_31>

1. : Do you have any suggestion on how to further simplify or enhance the legibility of the current templates?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_32>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_32>

1. : Is the investment tree in the asset allocation section necessary if the dashboard shows the proportion of sustainable and taxonomy-aligned investments?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_33>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_33>

1. : Do you agree with this approach of ensuring consistency in the use of colours in Annex II to V in the templates?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_34>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_34>

1. : Do you agree with the approach to allow to display the pre-contractual and periodic disclosures in an extendable manner electronically?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_35>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_35>

1. : Do you have any feedback with regard to the potential criteria for estimates?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_36>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_36>

1. : Do you perceive the need for a more specific definition of the concept of “key environmental metrics” to prevent greenwashing? If so, how could those metrics be defined?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_37>

In January 2023, several real estate associations updated a jpint paper on ESG Metrics For Real Estate (<https://www.aref.org.uk/uploads/assets/40b88c44-cd3f-4c90-9b19d672c6c56b55/Submission-to-FCATCFDISSB-Proposals-ESG-Metrics-for-Real-Estate13-January-2023.pdf>).

We would ask the ESAs to recommend the adoption of sector-specific environmental and social metrics for real estate as proposed in the ESG Metrics For Real Estate paper. The aim of the proposals are to achieve consistency, comparability and a holistic ESG view – applying decision-useful, robust, transparent, quantifiable, measurable, objective, trackable, and verifiable thresholds and criteria applicable to real estate and aligned to TCFD, SDR, SFDR reporting and disclosure requirements on climate and sustainability and evidence suitability. They are also aligned with INREV’s Sustainability Reporting Guidelines, which awe understand are a widely adopted industry standard, both in Europe and elsewhere.

These recommended metrics were submitted to the UK FCA in response to its request for public input to the UK’s Sustainable Disclosures Requirements proposal.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_37>

1. : Do you see the need to set out specific rules on the calculation of the proportion of sustainable investments of financial products? Please elaborate.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_38>

We do not see a need to set out specific rules on the calculation of the proportion of sustainable investments of financial products. However, if adopted, a “comply or explain” requirement should be used as specific rules could be difficult for real estate transition strategies to comply with. The reason for this is that the calculation of the proportion of sustainable investments of financial products would be constantly changing as real estate assets are retrofitted and achieving higher EPC ratings, resulting in the proportion of sustainable investments therefore being continually in flux.

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_38>

1. : Do you agree that cross-referencing in periodic disclosures of financial products with investment options would be beneficial to address information overload?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_39>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_39>

1. : Do you agree with the proposed website disclosures for financial products with investment options?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_40>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_40>

1. : What are your views on the proposal to require that any investment option with sustainability-related features that qualifies the financial product with investment options as a financial product that promotes environmental and/or social characteristics or as a financial product that has sustainable investment as its objective, should disclose the financial product templates, with the exception of those investment options that are financial instruments according to Annex I of Directive 2014/65/EU and are not units in collective investment undertakings? Should those investment options be covered in some other way?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_41>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_41>

1. : What are the criteria the ESAs should consider when defining which information should be disclosed in a machine-readable format? Do you have any views at this stage as to which machine-readable format should be used? What challenges do you anticipate preparing and/or consuming such information in a machine-readable format?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_42>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_42>

1. : Do you have any views on the preliminary impact assessments? Can you provide estimates of costs associated with each of the policy options?

<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_43>

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<ESMA\_QUESTION\_SFDR\_43>

1. Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC, OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)