

Corporate Governance Statement of Stefnir 2020



By issuing this corporate governance statement Stefnir hf. (Stefnir) is fulfilling the requirements set out in recognized guidelines current at the time this Financial Statement is approved by the company's board of directors and the provisions of Article 19 of Act No. 161/2002, cf. Article 12 of Act No. 75/2010. The Guidelines on Corporate Governance, 5th edition, issued by the Icelandic Chamber of Commerce, SA – Business Iceland, and Nasdaq Iceland hf. and the OECD's Principles of Corporate Governance from 2015 were used as a reference when Stefnir hf.'s corporate governance statement was written. The Guidelines on Corporate Governance and the Principles of Corporate Governance can be viewed on Stefnir's [website](#).

In 2012 Stefnir was the first Icelandic company to be recognized for "Excellence in good corporate governance." This recognition was awarded by the Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Iceland and is based on an audit performed by

KPMG ehf. Stefnir since been recognized in this way on repeated occasions and therefore remains a model company in good corporate governance in Iceland.

The board of directors of Stefnir believes that good corporate governance is a key factor behind Stefnir's success as a leading fund management company in Iceland. Corporate governance provides companies with a framework in which objectives are defined, which tools should be used to achieve these objectives and how the success of these objectives is measured. Good corporate governance is designed to provide the right incentives to the board of directors and management to exploit the opportunities which serve the interests of the company, the shareholders and the general public. Good corporate governance also enables the board to perform its monitoring duties effectively.

Stefnir hf. is an independent financial company under the Financial Undertakings Act No. 161/2002.

The company manages undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities, investment funds and professional investment funds in accordance with Act No. 128/2011. In addition to this, the company is licensed to operate asset management services, investment advisory and to manage financial instruments for collective investments, cf. Article 27 (1.1-3) of Act No. 161/2002. Stefnir has assets of ISK 252 billion under fund management. Stefnir has a team of 22 people with a diverse range of expertise and experience from the domestic and international financial markets.

Stefnir is a subsidiary of Arion Bank hf. The company is fully owned by Arion Bank and a related company. The company's corporate governance statement serves to encourage open and reliable communications between the board, shareholders and other stakeholders such as unit holders in funds managed by Stefnir, parties that service and participate in the operations of Stefnir, employees and the general public.

The company's operations are subject to restrictions by the legislator. The company's operations are governed by acts of law including the Financial Undertakings Act No. 161/2002 and the UCITS, Investment Funds and Institutional Investor Funds Act, No. 128/2011. Stefnir is supervised by the FME under Act No. 87/1998.

Risk management and active internal control are mainstays of the responsible operation of a fund management company. The board of directors affirmed the company's risk policy at the end of 2019. The policy is as follows:

“Stefnir's board of directors is aware that risk management and active internal control are the mainstays of a responsible fund management company. By setting out a clear risk policy the board wishes to encourage and support a corporate culture at Stefnir which is characterized by a keen sense of risk awareness. The aim is also to communicate clear messages to all the company's stakeholders.

All risk within Stefnir's operations is identified and assessed on a regular basis. The company has established processes to monitor and report this risk. There is a special emphasis on minimizing reputational risk for the benefit of all stakeholders. Stefnir operates a strong control environment which utilizes policies, processes and systems to appropriate internal controls

and risk mitigation. Stefnir has in place a continuity plan to ensure the ability to operate despite a severe business disruption. Through meticulous corporate governance the board of directors ensures that the internal processes and risk management systems are implemented throughout Stefnir.”

The company's risk appetite has been defined and this work was based on international models which were adapted to Icelandic conditions and the company. The company's auditing and risk committee helped to define the risk appetite and tolerance limits. The board of directors of Stefnir will review the company's risk appetite on an annual basis to take into account changes in the company's internal and external environment.

Compliance, internal auditing and risk management are partly outsourced to Arion Bank with the permission of the FME. The heads of the relevant divisions regularly report the results of their assessments to the board of directors of Stefnir and the audit and risk committee. Internal monitoring and risk management is the responsibility of a member of risk management who is part of the company's operations team. All supervisory measures are documented and regularly assessed by the team. The audit and risk committee is informed of the progress of these measures.

The structure and organization of internal corporate governance are vital tools for the effective management of the company, the separation of different business units and the prevention of conflicts of interest. Internal corporate governance at Stefnir has been assessed and the board of directors is of the opinion that the company operates in accordance with the standards set out there concerning best practice in internal corporate governance.

The company's accounting is the responsibility of Arion Bank's finance division. The FME has authorized the outsourcing of this task. Arion Bank is also the depositary of Stefnir hf. and the price calculations of funds managed by Stefnir are the responsibility of the Bank. The audit and risk committee examines the company's financial statement and obtains the opinion of an external auditor on the six-month financial results and 12-month financial results of Stefnir and the funds managed by Stefnir. Reporting to the board of directors with respect to the accounts is the responsibility



of the committee; the board also meets the auditing company Deloitte.

Stefnir's core values have been an important guideline for employees and the board of directors, who devised them together, in their day-to-day work.

The first core value is "success through knowledge" which implies that our strengths are embodied in the combination of knowledge, experience, professional corporate governance and fund management. Meticulous working practices, responsibility and reliability lay the foundations for future success. By doing this we are safeguarding our clients' interests.

Our second core value is "the ambition to excel" which describes our progressive, determined and dynamic approach in which we do not hesitate to seek new ways to achieve our goals. Fertile thinking, ambition and financial clout provide a platform for us to lead the way in developing new financial products. This is how we create key opportunities to excel for the benefit of our clients.

The third and final core value is "united in a strong team" and it describes how the way we operate is characterized by clearly defined team work, mutual respect and a healthy team spirit in which we support each other in what we do. We are known for our well-considered decisions which we regularly review and re-evaluate. This is how we harness the synergy of a dynamic team in order to provide our clients with outstanding service.

The board of directors approved the code of conduct in 2018 which reflects the ethical standards according to which the board and employees work. Other benchmarks can be found in employment agreements, the conflicts of interest policy and the board of directors' rules of procedure.

The company has not formally adopted a policy on sustainability but in setting out its strategy and defining its role the board of directors has underlined the importance of being guided by the interests of clients, owners, employees and society as a whole when managing funds and running the company. At the beginning of 2018 Stefnir became a signatory to the Principles for Responsible Investment and undertakes to provide information on how it takes into account environmental, social and governance issues when managing its investments. During the year Stefnir submitted its first progress report to PRI and it will be possible to keep track of the company's progress on responsible investment as more reports are added to the PRI database. The company is also one of the founding members of Iceland SIF, which was founded in 2017. Iceland SIF is an independent forum for discussion and education on responsible and sustainable investment. Responsible and diverse investment options and thorough disclosure of information are central to the corporate social responsibility that the company aspires to represent. In 2018 the board of Stefnir adopted a policy on responsible investment which applies to investments by funds managed by the company and how Stefnir can have a positive influence

on our society, to the benefit of fund members and other stakeholders.

Stefnir has adopted a policy on conflicts of interest. The objective of the policy is to protect clients and fund members and to safeguard the independence and reputation of the company and its employees. The policy applies equally to directors and employees and implies that the company will take all available measures to prevent conflicts of interest from damaging the interests of clients and fund members. An extract of the policy and other rules designed to prevent conflicts of interest, e.g. rules on business dealings by employees of Stefnir, can be found on the company's [website](#).

Stefnir has five board members and two alternate members. The majority of the board is independent of Arion Bank, Stefnir's parent company, and the company itself. All board members are elected at a shareholders' meeting of the company. The managing director is hired by the board and has the mandate from the board to manage the day-to-day operations of the company. Board meetings are held regularly, on average once a month and more often if required. Stefnir's attorney is the secretary to the board and provides legal advice to the directors at board meetings. There were 14 board meetings during the year and there was a quorum present at every meeting. The board's rules of procedure, work schedule and articles of association can be seen on the company's [website](#), www.stefnir.com.

The board of directors of Stefnir comprises the independent board members Sigrún Ragna Ólafsdóttir, Chairman, self-employed, Kristján Jóhannsson, Vice Chairman, chairman of Icepharma hf, and Þórður Sverrisson, self-employed. Dependent board members are Flóki Halldórsson, former managing director of Stefnir hf. and Ragnhildur Sophusdóttir, attorney at Arion Bank hf. Sigrún Ragna took over as chairman from Hrund Rudolfsdóttir in August 2019, Kristján Jóhannsson joined the board in June 2011, Þórður Sverrisson in March 2014, Ragnhildur Sophusdóttir in March 2016 and Flóki Halldórsson in April 2019. Further information on board members at Stefnir can be found on the company's [website](#).

The alternate board members are Ásgerdur Hrönn Sveinsdóttir, area manager at Arion Bank hf., and

Þórhallur Örn Guðlaugsson, lecturer in the faculty of business administration at the University of Iceland. The audit and risk committee was appointed by the board of directors in August 2019. The committee consists of the board members Þórður Sverrisson, Kristján Jóhannsson, and Flóki Halldórsson. The audit committee met seven times in 2019 and a quorum was present on each occasion. Two committee members are independent of the company and their broad expertise in business administration, auditing and management was put to good use in the course of the committee's business. The committee submits its annual report to the board of directors in the first quarter of every year. The committee's rules of procedure can be found on the company's [website](#).

The board of Stefnir appointed Sigrún Ragna Ólafsdóttir, Flóki Halldórsson and Þórður Sverrisson to serve on the remuneration committee of Stefnir in August 2019. The main roles of the committee are to prepare a proposal for a remuneration policy for the company and to make proposals on salaries and other remuneration to the managing director, other management and the board of Stefnir. The committee also deals with a range of monitoring functions related to remuneration and human resources. The remuneration committee met six times in 2019 and a quorum was present on each occasion. The committee works in accordance with its rules of procedure and has established a work schedule for its operating year. The rules of procedure of the remuneration committee are not publically available. The committee submits its annual report to the board of directors in the first quarter of every year. The company's remuneration policy can be viewed on its [website](#).

The company does not have a nomination committee.

The board of directors of Stefnir jointly devised the following mission statement for the board:

The board's key role is to establish a corporate strategy and ensure that it is implemented. The core of the strategy is for the company to be a leading fund management company and to ensure that the company is guided by the interests of clients, owners, employees and society at large. The focus is on running a solid and profitable business and minimizing risk. The board places a strong emphasis on good corporate governance and ensuring that the board and company operate at all times in compliance with the law, rules and good business practices.

The role of the board is defined in more detail in the rules of procedures and the company's articles of association.

The board evaluates its own work and that of the chairman on an annual basis and makes proposals for improvements. For the assessment the board uses an anonymous, digital questionnaire. The results of the assessment are then discussed at a board meeting and the board's proposals for improvements are assigned to people for completion.

The company's managing director since 1 April 2019 is Jökull H. Úlfsson, born in 1963. Jökull completed a cand. oecon degree in finance from the University of Iceland and is a qualified stockbroker. Jökull has extensive experience of the financial markets, where he has worked for the last 25 years. The main duties of the managing director are to manage the day-to-day business of the company, implement strategy and follow the instructions given by the board of directors, cf. Article 68 (1) of the Public Limited Companies Act. He is responsible for reporting to internal and external supervisory bodies. The managing director is authorized, upon approval by the board, to grant other employees of the company the power to carry out limited aspects of their duties.

The managing director is responsible for analyzing, measuring, monitoring and supervising risks associated with the operations of the company. The managing director shall maintain an organizational chart that clearly specifies areas of responsibility, employees' authorizations and channels of communications. The managing director shall formalize objectives for internal control in consultation with the board and ensure that the follow-up is efficient. The managing director hires and dismisses the employees of the company, other than those discussed in Article 16 of Act No.

161/2002 and discharges them. The board's rules of procedure were established with reference to Article 54 (2) of the Financial Undertakings Act and Article 70 (5) of the Public Limited Companies Act. The rules of procedure are largely based on Guidelines No. 1/2010 of the Financial Supervisory Authority (FME) and the company's articles of association, as well as the work undertaken in relation to the company's recognition as a model company in good corporate governance.

The board of directors' rules of procedure cover in detail the protocol for communications between shareholders and the board. The rules basically state that the chairman of the board is responsible for communications between the board and shareholders. The chairman shall ensure that the board is informed of all communications with shareholders and that at every board meeting a report, verbal or in writing, shall be given on communications with shareholders between meetings. The rules of procedure can be viewed on Stefmir's [website](#).

No judgments for punishable acts according to the Criminal Code, the Competition Act, Financial Undertakings Act or laws on public limited companies, private limited companies, book-keeping, annual accounts, bankruptcy or taxation, nor under special legislation applicable to parties subject to public supervision of financial activities, have been passed on Stefmir hf.

Stefmir has been a leader in many areas and has placed great importance on offering its clients competitive and responsible investment options in virtually all asset classes. It is vital that the company is able to share information accurately and easily with investors. The company's [website](#) performs an important role in this respect by displaying detailed information on all the Stefmir funds available to the public.