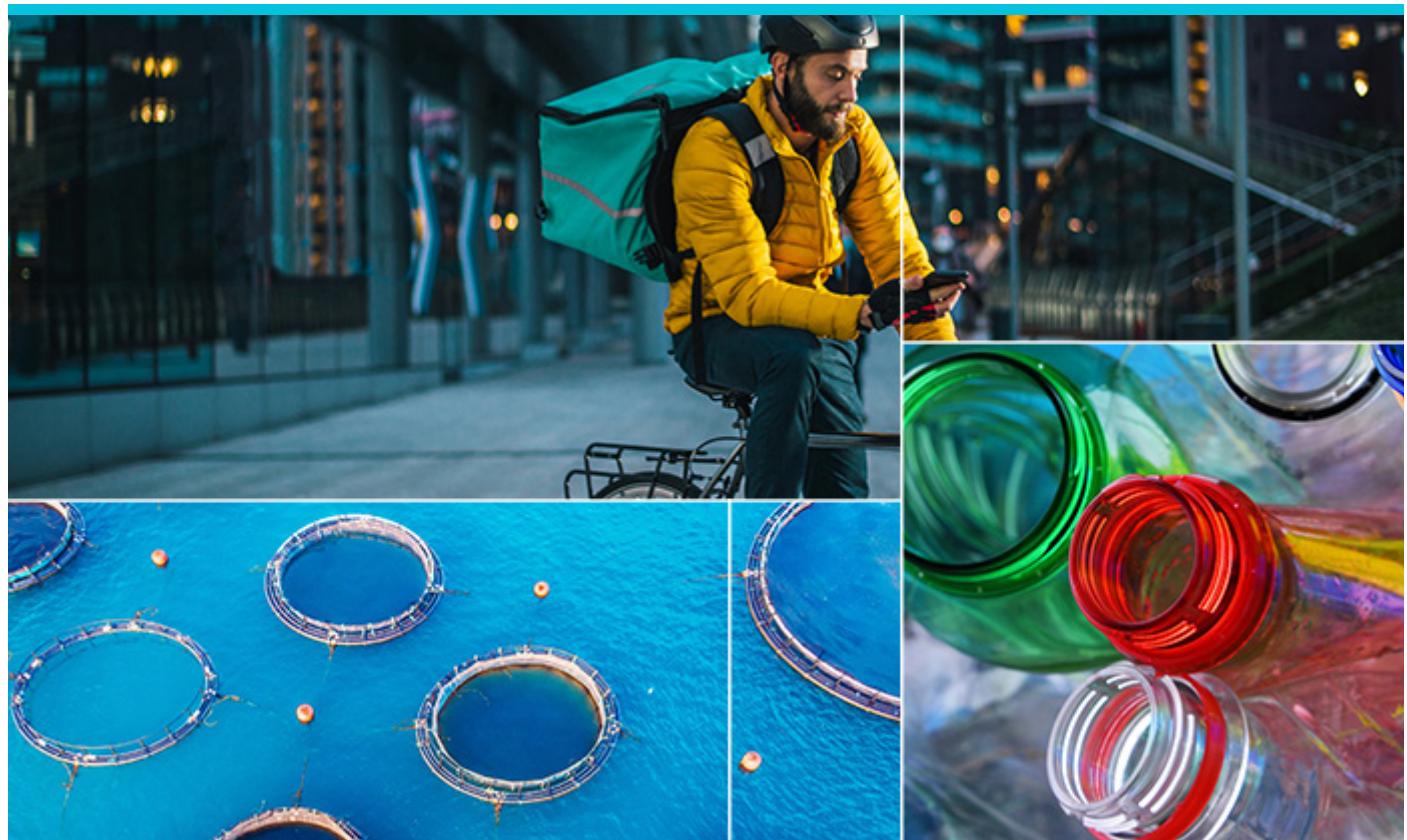




ESG Integration in Action— Energy Transition



Maria-Elena Drew
Director of Research,
Responsible Investing



Donna Anderson
Head of Corporate
Governance

Energy Transition

A cornerstone of the circular economy is that it needs to be underpinned by a shift to renewable energy. Energy transition is an issue that permeates all sectors and asset classes.

To limit global warming to a maximum rise of 1.5°C, carbon dioxide emissions must be contained to defined levels over a period of time—this is known as the world's carbon budget. Assuming a two in three probability of staying within the 1.5°C scenario and with greenhouse gas emissions at 2021 levels, the world's carbon budget will be exhausted in just six years. The figure jumps to 16 years assuming a one in three probability.

The finite nature of the carbon budget emphasizes the urgency for the energy transition effort and the need to bend the emissions curve quickly. The upshot is that, to stay within a 1.5°C global temperature rise, the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.¹

To stay within a 1.5°C global temperature rise, the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.¹

For Europe, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has only added to this sense of urgency, with the conflict resulting in oil and gas price shocks and sparking fears over security of supply from Russia.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has proved deeply concerning. First and foremost is the humanitarian crisis and the egregious impact that events have had on the well-being of people caught in the midst of the combat. While we continue to assess the overall,

long-term ESG implications, one thing has become clear: The conflict has the potential to accelerate the energy transition—particularly in Europe. Russia accounts for 12% of global oil production and 18% of global natural gas production.² Given its proximity, the European Union's (EU) dependence on Russian oil and gas supplies is high. In 2020, more than half of Russia's oil exports and about 85% of its natural gas exports went to Europe.²

It is not easy to switch energy supply quickly without incurring higher costs and hurting the economy. However, the EU is arguably better positioned to do so today given the availability of economical non-fossil fuel alternatives, more innovation in energy consumption patterns, concerns that foreign energy reliance could be used as a weapon, and consumer awareness of the climate and security crises.

This gives the EU a strong reason to push the energy transition harder and faster. In our view, this will mean increased investment in renewables and, perhaps more importantly, in energy efficiency (such as smart appliances and green buildings), electrification, and other innovations.

Several countries have been reconsidering their path to reducing reliance on Russian oil and gas following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, stepping back from Russian gas raises salient questions over whether there is an alternative to gas for building the base for electricity supply. Nations can certainly ramp up the growth of renewables and other fossil-free alternatives but will need to take a pragmatic approach to changing the pace of phasing out legacy fuels—until renewables, hydrogen, and storage technology can reliably and economically deliver. While this will mean short-term disruption, the long-term outlook for clean energy looks more positive.

¹ Net zero means achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those taken out. This state is also referred to as carbon neutral.

² Source: International Energy Agency (based on 2020 production levels).

Energy Transition in RIIM— Disclosure Improvements in 2021

T. Rowe Price equity and credit analysts consider energy transition as a key part of their normal fundamental analysis. They draw upon the analysis of our ESG specialists, who provide a more granular view of the environmental characteristics of specific companies and industries. Areas of focus include greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; decarbonization strategy; investment in renewable energy sources; physical risks; environmental track record, such as oil spills; and overall ESG accountability and transparency (particularly in relation to climate change). These factors are systematically identified in our Responsible Investing Indicator Model (RIIM).

In last year's ESG Annual Report we wrote about a step-change in corporate attitudes toward disclosure. The tone of our interactions with company management teams had changed dramatically, with more actively seeking guidance on what ESG data to disclose and how best to go about it. In 2021, we continued to see improvement, with the level of reported data growing—particularly GHG emissions and other relevant climate data. We also have seen an uptick in companies setting net zero targets.

The improvement in disclosure has enabled an upgrade to some of the quantitative data indicators that feed into our RIIM analysis to measure performance in the energy and emissions category. Whereas historically we included factors related to emissions or renewable energy programs, we can now focus analysis more precisely on performance indicators (e.g., renewable energy use), targets (e.g., scope and quality of emissions reduction targets), and controversies/incidents.

At year-end 2021, roughly USD 1.2 trillion of our AUM resided in portfolios holding equities or corporate bonds.³ We found that just under 60% of securities within the benchmarks of this universe were reporting scope 1-2 emissions.⁴ (This calculation used the weighted average reported data for the benchmarks of our portfolios). For the equity benchmarks, the figure was slightly higher than 60%, while the weighted average for the fixed income benchmarks was dramatically lower, coming in at less than 20%. The range of reported data was extreme across both asset classes (4-93% for equity benchmarks and 3-77% for fixed income benchmarks).

**As of year-end 2021,
just under 60% of
securities in the
equity and fixed
income benchmarks
aligned with our
equity and corporate
bond portfolios
reported scope 1-2
emissions.⁴**



³ As at December 31, 2021. AUM includes assets managed by T. Rowe Price Associates, Inc., and its investment advisory affiliates. Includes Oak Hill Advisors (OHA).

⁴ Scope 1 (direct emissions from owned or controlled sources), scope 2 (indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, or cooling), scope 3 (all other indirect emissions).

Source: Sustainalytics. Analysis by T. Rowe Price using index data.

Energy Transition in Stewardship Activity

In 2021, we held 207 engagements where greenhouse gas emissions were a topic for discussion. We continue to guide companies toward industry best practice disclosure standards—including advocating for disclosures aligned to the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) and the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). These are globally recognized frameworks that emphasize financial materiality. We also continued to emphasize the importance of reporting of scope 1–3 GHG emissions data.

Proxy voting played an important role in our stewardship activities around energy transition in 2021. Climate-related shareholder resolutions were prominent, particularly within high-impact industries, such as the energy, industrials, and financials sectors. According to data from sustainability organization Ceres, there were 136 climate-related shareholder proposals tabled between July 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021,⁵ with just under half of these progressing to a vote at the respective company annual general meetings (AGM).

Climate-Related Resolutions—Voting Examples

ExxonMobil

AGM-May 26, 2021



T. Rowe Price Voted—For

- ExxonMobil faced a contested director election and seven shareholder resolutions, six of which related in some measure to environmental issues. This highly unusual meeting was the result of many factors, not least being the company's general resistance to genuine investor engagement and a perception by investors that it is an outlier on climate transition strategy.
- T. Rowe Price supported three of the four board nominees proposed by the dissident investor. We also supported a shareholder resolution seeking independent board leadership, one for increased shareholder authority to convene meetings, one for climate scenario analysis reporting, and three seeking better transparency on the company's lobbying on climate issues and general political giving. We did not support a resolution brought by an investor who opposes any efforts to mitigate climate risk.
- Apart from the anti-environmental proposal, all the resolutions received strong support from shareholders. In addition, three incumbent directors were replaced.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group

AGM-June 29, 2021



T. Rowe Price Voted—Against

- Kiko Network, a Japanese NGO,⁶ along with three individual shareholders, filed a proposal requesting that Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG) amend its articles to disclose a plan to align the company's strategy with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- Subsequent to the filing of this shareholder resolution, MUFG announced a Carbon Neutrality Declaration, aiming for net zero emissions from its finance portfolio by 2050 and in its own operations by 2030. To facilitate this goal, MUFG became the first Japanese bank to join the Net Zero Banking Alliance.
- T. Rowe Price is an active member of the Asian Corporate Governance Association (ACGA). The ACGA-hosted dialogue between the company and the proponent, Kiko Network, informed our vote decision.
- The company's commitments meant that the resolution had effectively already been addressed, so we did not support it. At the AGM on June 29, 2021, the item received 23% support.

⁵ As of March 31, 2021

⁶ Non-government organization. A nonprofit organization that operates independently of any government, typically with the purpose of addressing a social or political issue.

The securities identified and described are intended to illustrate the case-by-case analysis of climate-related shareholder proposals by T. Rowe Price's governance and responsible investing teams and do not necessarily represent all of the securities purchased or sold by T. Rowe Price. No assumptions should be made that the securities mentioned were or will be profitable. This is not a recommendation to buy or sell any security. The views and opinions above are as of the AGM date noted and are subject to change.

The analysis of climate-related shareholder proposals by our governance and responsible investing teams is conducted on a case-by-case basis. To reach a vote recommendation, we consider:

- The specific circumstances of each company (including the current level of disclosure)
- The company's climate strategy
- The materiality of the issue for the company, i.e., the extent to which it relates to the company's operations

We are unlikely to support resolutions that are excessively prescriptive (be they climate-related proposals or otherwise), as this usually equates to the proponent, in essence, attempting to micromanage the company. Similarly, if we think that the company is already taking sufficient action to address the stated concerns, we will likely withhold our support.

While the nature of our assessment of a company's actions can vary according to the region and industry, specific measures we consider include those detailed on the right.

In 2022, T. Rowe Price plans to step up its current voting against directors who fail in the oversight of material environmental, social, or governance risks. Companies in sectors that are highly exposed to the impact of climate change and that have failed to demonstrate sufficient preparedness for a low-carbon transition will be in scope for a vote against the board chair or other relevant committee member.

Framework for Assessment of Climate-Related Action



ASSESS LEVEL OF DISCLOSURE

- Identify if GHG emission disclosures are TCFD-aligned.
- At a minimum, report scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions.



IDENTIFY EMISSIONS TARGETS

- Seek GHG emission reduction targets.
- Ideally, targets are aligned with goals of the Paris Agreement.



EVALUATE CLIMATE STRATEGY

- Assess if company has a credible decarbonization plan.
- Best practice includes a net zero 2050 carbon emissions target (or national/regional equivalent). A path to achieving the target is key.



CONSIDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

- Assess responsiveness to stakeholder concerns, including willingness to engage and reflect feedback.
- Determine if company demonstrates robust governance procedures around direct and indirect policy advocacy, including board oversight.

Important Information

This material is being furnished for general informational purposes only. The material does not constitute or undertake to give advice of any nature, including fiduciary investment advice, nor is it intended to serve as the primary basis for an investment decision. Prospective investors are recommended to seek independent legal, financial and tax advice before making any investment decision. T. Rowe Price group of companies including T. Rowe Price Associates, Inc. and/or its affiliates receive revenue from T. Rowe Price investment products and services. **Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.** The value of an investment and any income from it can go down as well as up. Investors may get back less than the amount invested.

The material does not constitute a distribution, an offer, an invitation, a personal or general recommendation or solicitation to sell or buy any securities in any jurisdiction or to conduct any particular investment activity. The material has not been reviewed by any regulatory authority in any jurisdiction.

Information and opinions presented have been obtained or derived from sources believed to be reliable and current; however, we cannot guarantee the sources' accuracy or completeness. There is no guarantee that any forecasts made will come to pass. The views contained herein are as of 1 May 2022 and are subject to change without notice; these views may differ from those of other T. Rowe Price group companies and/or associates. Under no circumstances should the material, in whole or in part, be copied or redistributed without consent from T. Rowe Price.

The material is not intended for use by persons in jurisdictions which prohibit or restrict the distribution of the material and in certain countries the material is provided upon specific request.

It is not intended for distribution to retail investors in any jurisdiction.

Australia—Issued by T. Rowe Price Australia Limited (ABN: 13 620 668 895 and AFSL: 503741), Level 50, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Suite 50B, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia. For Wholesale Clients only.

New Zealand—Issued by T. Rowe Price Australia Limited (ABN: 13 620 668 895 and AFSL: 503741), Level 50, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Suite 50B, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia. No Interests are offered to the public. Accordingly, the Interests may not, directly or indirectly, be offered, sold or delivered in New Zealand, nor may any offering document or advertisement in relation to any offer of the Interests be distributed in New Zealand, other than in circumstances where there is no contravention of the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013.

© 2022 T. Rowe Price. All Rights Reserved. T. ROWE PRICE, INVEST WITH CONFIDENCE, and the Bighorn Sheep design are, collectively and/ or apart, trademarks of T. Rowe Price Group, Inc.

APAC-AU-3320
202206-2225475