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## Introduction

The Board of Directors and the Executive Board of Spar Nord consider corporate governance to be a fundamental requirement for maintaining a good relationship with internal and external stakeholders and for meeting the Group's financial and non-financial objectives.

For that reason, Spar Nord's Management backs the efforts to promote corporate governance and has chosen to comply with a vast majority of the 2017 recommendations from the Danish Corporate Governance Committee. A full overview of Spar Nord's position on the recommendations is provided on the following pages and on the Bank's website [sparnord.com/governance](https://sparnord.com/governance).

The updated 2020 recommendations from the Danish Corporate Governance Committee will take effect for financial years starting on 1 January 2021.

In addition, Spar Nord's Management has considered its position on the corporate governance code of Finance Denmark and has chosen to comply with all 12 recommendations. In addition to Spar Nord's position on the general recommendations on corporate governance, the Bank's position on Finance Denmark's corporate governance code can also be viewed in its entirety in this report and on the website [sparnord.com/governance](https://sparnord.com/governance).

## Organisation and corporate governance

The Board of Directors and the Executive Board of Spar Nord consider corporate governance to be a fundamental requirement for maintaining a good relationship with internal and external stakeholders and for meeting the Group's financial and non-financial objectives.

For that reason, Spar Nord's Management backs the efforts to promote corporate governance and has chosen to comply with a vast majority of the 2017 recommendations from the Danish Corporate Governance Committee. The full wording of Spar Nord's position on the recommendations and on Finance Denmark's corporate governance code is available at [sparnord.com/governance](https://sparnord.com/governance).

The updated 2020 recommendations from the Danish Corporate Governance Committee will take effect for financial years starting on 1 January 2021.

### General Meeting

The shareholders in general meeting constitute Spar Nord's supreme governing body. Information about the notice of general meetings, exercise of voting rights etc. is set out in the Bank's articles of association, which are available on [sparnord.com/vedtaegter](https://sparnord.com/vedtaegter). Only the general meeting can amend the articles of association. Amendments require a two-thirds majority of the votes cast and a two-thirds majority of the share capital represented at the general meeting and entitled to vote.

Pursuant to the Bank's articles of association, the right to vote at general meetings for shareholders holding less than 20,000 shares is exercised through delegates (members of Spar Nord's regional bank committees).

Shareholders owning at least 20,000 shares may exercise their voting rights at the general meeting.

### Board of Directors and board committees

Spar Nord's Board of Directors is composed of nine members, six of whom are elected by the shareholders and the remaining three members by the employees. The Bank's Executive Board is not part of the Board of Directors but takes part in all of its meetings. Board members are elected for terms of two years, and half of the members elected by the general meeting are up for election each year, while members elected by the employees pursuant to the Danish legislation are elected for terms of four years.

Spar Nord's Board of Directors has set up three committees: An Audit Committee charged with monitoring and controlling accounting and auditing matters, a Risk Committee charged with responsibility for preparatory work leading up to the Board of Directors' decisions regarding risk management and related issues; and a Nomination and Remuneration Committee is charged with undertaking the preparatory work concerning the annual board evaluation and nomination process.

Each year, the Spar Nord Board of Directors convenes 11 ordinary meetings and holds a strategy seminar and four meetings with the chairmen of the regional bank committees. In 2020, the Board of Directors held a total of 26 physical meetings and telephone conferences.

In addition, 6 meetings were held in the Audit Committee, 4 meetings in the Risk Committee and 5 meetings in the Nomination and Remuneration Committee.

The total board member attendance rate was 98 %. The attendance by each member of the Board of Directors is published on the Bank's website.

### Evaluation and nomination process

The process of nominating members to the Board of Directors is undertaken by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee in dialogue with the combined members of the Board of Directors and with the assistance of the chairmen of the local bank councils of Spar Nord's shareholder regions. On the basis of the annual evaluation of the Board of Directors' work, competencies and composition, any need for recruiting new board members is assessed. If that is the case, the Board will prepare a description of the competences and qualifications required for the candidate. The nomination process generally attaches importance to areas such as management experience, business experience, business acumen, insight into finance and risk management and relevant personal skills.

### Election to the Board of Directors

At the Annual General Meeting in April 2021, three of the members elected by the shareholders are up for election. Per Nikolaj Bukh and Kaj Christiansen have announced that they stand for re-election, and the Board of Directors recommends their re-election, while John Sørensen, after serving six years on the Board, has announced that he will not be standing for re-election.

### Executive Board

The Executive Board is appointed by the Board of Directors and is composed of Lasse Nyby, CEO, John Lundsgaard, Managing Director, Lars Møller, Managing Director, and Martin Kudsk Rasmussen, Managing Director. The Executive Board is the supreme decision-making body as concerns the day-to-day affairs of the Bank, in compliance with the guidelines and directions issued by the Board of Directors. The more specific distribution of duties between the Board of Directors and the Executive Board appears from their rules of procedure.

### **Remuneration of the Board of Directors and the Executive Board**

The remuneration of the Board of Directors and the fees and salaries paid to the Executive Board are shown in the notes to the Annual Report. Board members are paid a fixed annual amount and do not participate in any bonus or option programmes.

The Board of Directors finds that the terms of service of Executive Board members, including severance terms, are in line with general practice in the area, and they are regularly reviewed. The Board of Directors also finds that the overall remuneration is competitive and fair in light of the Executive Board's performance and having regard to long-term value generation for shareholders.

According to its remuneration policy, Spar Nord does not operate with incentive schemes for the Board of Directors and the Executive Board.

## Risk and risk management

Risk assumption is a natural component of banking operations, placing heavy demands on the Bank's risk management organisation and risk management environment.

The following risks are considered the most important for Spar Nord:

- Credit risk
- Market risk
- Liquidity risk
- Operational risk, including IT security

For a more detailed description of risk management in the individual risk areas, including a description of policy, monitoring and reporting, reference is made to the respective sections.

### Risk management organisation

In accordance with Danish legislation, Spar Nord has established a two-tier management structure consisting of a Board of Directors and an Executive Board. Moreover, Spar Nord has established segregation of functions between entities entering into business transactions with customers or otherwise assuming risk on behalf of the Bank, and entities in charge of risk management.

The structure of Spar Nord's risk management organisation is shown in the figure on page 8.

### Board of Directors

It is the duty of the Board of Directors to handle the overall and strategic management with a view to running a healthy and competitive bank, thus securing long-term value for the Bank's stakeholders.

Using Spar Nord's strategic objectives as its point of departure, the Board of Directors determines the Bank's risk profile, which describes the risk within the Bank's most important risk types that the Board of Directors is willing to undertake while meeting the objectives set forth in the strategy.

The objective is to ensure cohesion between Spar Nord's vision and strategy while ensuring that Spar Nord's risk profile is appropriate at all times, having regard to the Bank's capital and liquidity situation.

The Board of Directors has defined a number of risk policies that set out the overall handling and management of the Bank's risks. These policies are reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at least once a year.

In order to underpin the management structure, the Board of Directors has drafted written guidelines for the Executive Board, specifying the areas of responsibility and scope of action. As required and at least once a year, the Board of Directors must assess and update these guidelines.

### Executive Board

In accordance with the guidelines and risk policies issued by the Board of Directors, the Executive Board handles the day-to-day management.

The Executive Board must ensure that the Bank's risk policies and guidelines are implemented in the Bank's day-to-day operations while also ensuring that business procedures or work descriptions have been prepared for all important areas.

The Executive Board delegates specific guidelines and authorisations to selected departments of the Bank with a view to the practical implementation of the guidelines and policies adopted by the Board of Directors.

### Board committees

The Board of Directors has set up a Risk Committee, a Nomination and Remuneration Committee and an Audit Committee charged with arranging the preparatory work for the Board of Directors' consideration of matters relating to the respective topics.

Establishing these board committees helps ensure a better utilisation of the special competences held by the board members, thus ensuring in-depth dealing with the board material. The sole purpose of the committees is to facilitate the transaction of business by the Board of Directors and they have no independent decision-making powers.

The terms of reference of the committees are available at [www.sparnord.com/committees](http://www.sparnord.com/committees), which also provides a presentation of the members and their qualifications.

### Risk Committee

The principal purpose of the Risk Committee is to handle risk-related matters, including to review and assess the adequacy and efficiency of Spar Nord's policies, instructions and systems.

The Risk Committee also serves to advise the Board of Directors on the Bank's overall current and future risk profile and risk strategy and to ensure the correct implementation of the risk strategy in the Bank.

The Risk Committee consists of three independent board members. The Committee held four meetings in 2020.

### Nomination and Remuneration Committee

The principal purpose of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee is to facilitate the decisions to be taken by the Board of Directors with respect to remuneration, including the remuneration policy, and other related decisions that may influence the Bank's risk management. The Committee also serves to facilitate work related to the process of board evaluation, nominating new board candidates, etc.

## Risks

The Nomination and Remuneration Committee consists of three board members, one of which is an independent member and one a member elected by the employees. The Committee held five meetings in 2020.

### **Audit Committee**

The principal purpose of the Audit Committee is to monitor and control accounting and auditing matters, including informing the Board of Directors of the outcome of the statutory audit. Its duties also include monitoring the efficiency of the Bank's internal control system, internal audit and risk management systems for financial reporting purposes.

The Audit Committee consist of three members, two of whom are independent. The Committee held six meetings in 2020.

### **Risk committees**

The Executive Board has set up a number of committees which in specific areas contribute to Spar Nord's risk management, preparing issues and themes for consideration by the Executive Board and Board of Directors.

#### *Solvency and Risk Management Committee*

The Solvency and Risk Management Committee is composed of a member of the Executive Board, Trading Division, Credit Rating, Finance & Accounts and Risk Management. The Committee meets every quarter and serves to formulate targets and principles for calculating adequate own funds and the individual solvency need. The Solvency and Risk Management Committee prepares a recommendation for the individual solvency need and passes it on to the Board of Directors for approval. The Committee handles input from the Market Risk, IT Security and Model Risk Committees to ensure that any capital consequences are dealt with by the primary capital and solvency authority.

#### *Market Risk Committee*

The Market Risk Committee is composed of a member of the Executive Board, Trading Division, Finance & Accounts and Risk Management. The Committee meets every quarter to review developments in Spar Nord's positions, risks as well as the liquidity situation and expectations regarding market developments and future plans.

#### *IT Security Committee*

The IT Security Committee is composed of a member of the Executive Board, the IT department, Risk Management and selected heads of business areas. The Committee serves to advise on and deal with any issues that may arise in relation to the information policy and related rules, procedures and contingency plans.

#### *Model Risk Committee*

The Model Risk Committee is composed of a member of the Executive Board, Risk Management and Credit Rating. The Committee meets once every quarter to discuss and monitor Spar Nord's model risk management.

#### *Credit Committee*

The Credit Committee is composed of two members of the Executive Board and one member from Credit Rating. The Committee deals with credit facilities that exceed Credit Rating's authorisation limits or involve a matter of principle. The Committee meets several times a week. Frequently, matters that have been dealt with by the Credit Committee will be prepared for subsequent discussion among all members of the Board of Directors.

### **1<sup>st</sup> line of defence**

The business units Spar Nord's Local Banks and Trading Division together with the support and control functions represent the 1<sup>st</sup> line of defence. The Bank's day-to-day risk management is handled through risk policies, instructions, limits and a number of internal controls.

The day-to-day management of the Bank's risks is carried out for all of the Bank's principal risk areas, including credit, market, liquidity and operational risk. In order to support the business units in relation to preventing money-laundering and terrorist financing, the Bank has also established an Anti-Money Laundering (AML) function, which is part of the 1<sup>st</sup> line of defence.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> line of defence**

The Bank's 2<sup>nd</sup> line of defence is composed of the risk management function and the compliance function, which has key assignments of monitoring, controlling and reporting the Bank's risks and control environment.

#### *Risk Management Function*

The Risk Management Function is responsible for providing an overview of the Bank and its risk exposure to be able to assess whether such risk exposure is adequately addressed. The Risk Management Function's area of responsibility comprises the Bank's risk-prone activities across various risk areas and organisational units and risks deriving from outsourced functions. The Risk Management Function also serves as a secretariat to the Bank's Risk Committee and will assist the Risk Committee in providing information about the Bank's risk exposure.

The Chief Risk Officer reports directly to the Bank's Executive Board. The Risk Management Function reports to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis. The activities of the Risk Management Function are rooted in the annual plan adopted by the Board of Directors.

Dismissal of the Chief Risk Officer is subject to the prior approval of the Board of Directors.

## Risks

### *Compliance Function*

The Compliance Function is charged with assessing and checking Spar Nord's compliance with applicable legislation, banking sector standards and Spar Nord's internal guidelines, advising on how to reduce compliance risk.

The Head of Compliance reports directly to the Bank's Executive Board. The Compliance Function reports to the Executive Board on a quarterly basis and to the Board of Directors twice a year. The activities of the Compliance Function are rooted in the annual plan adopted by the Board of Directors.

Dismissal of the Compliance Officer is subject to the prior approval of the Board of Directors.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> line of defence**

The Internal Audit Department serves as the 3<sup>rd</sup> line of defence and is responsible for planning and performing an audit to obtain reasonable assurance as to whether the consolidated financial statements and the parent company financial statements are free from material misstatement. The Internal Audit Department also serves as a secretariat to the Bank's Risk Committee.

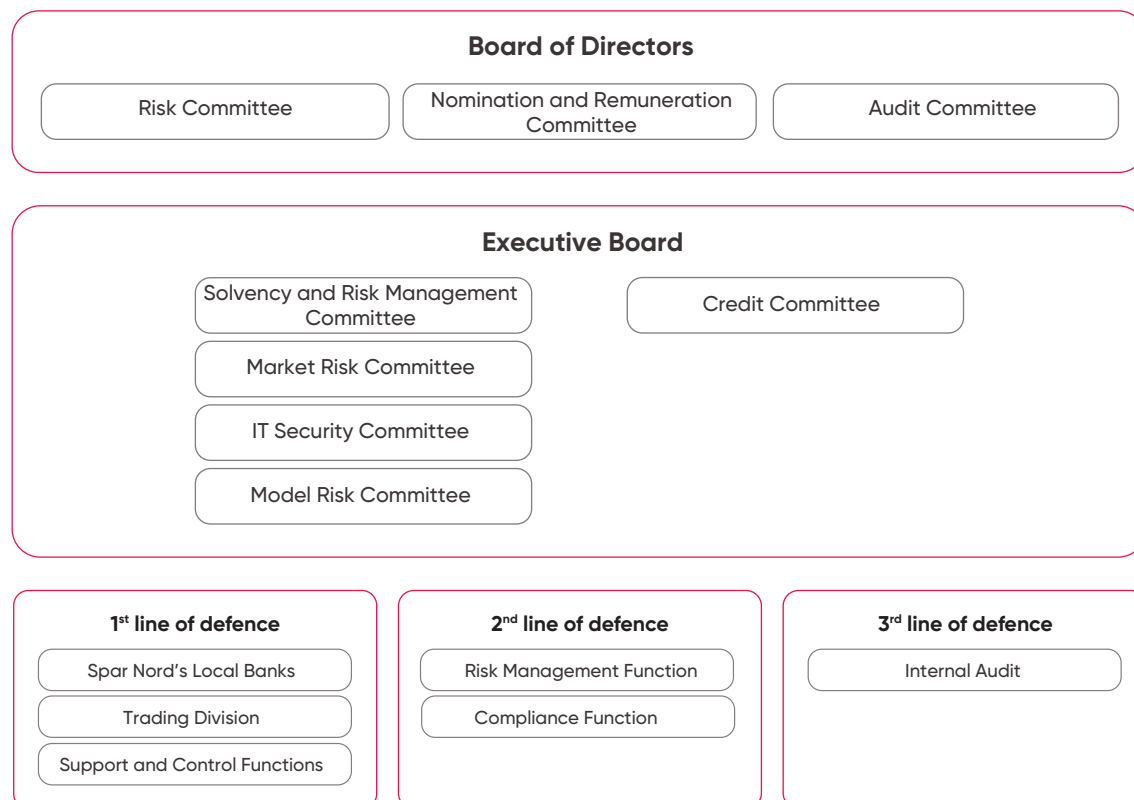
It reports directly to the Board of Directors and regularly reports on an ongoing basis to the Executive Board and the Board of Directors. The Internal Audit Department bases its activities on the annual plan adopted by the Board of Directors. These activities include test examinations of business procedures and internal control systems in key areas subject to risk, including in connection with preparing the financial statements.

Dismissal of the Bank's head of internal audit is subject to the prior approval of the Board of Directors.

### **Reporting**

To ensure an adequate decision-making basis for the Executive Board and the Board of Directors, management receives a substantial volume of reporting material pertaining to the Bank's principal risk areas.

## **Risk management organisation**



## Corporate governance recommendations

The Board of Directors and the Executive Board of Spar Nord consider corporate governance to be a fundamental requirement for maintaining a good relationship with internal and external stakeholders and for meeting the Group's financial and non-financial objectives.

For that reason, Spar Nord's Management backs the efforts to promote corporate governance and has chosen to comply with the vast majority of the recommendations from the Danish Corporate Governance Committee (December 2017).

The updated 2020 recommendations from the Danish Corporate Governance Committee will take effect for financial years starting on 1 January 2021.

### 1. Communication and interaction by the company with its investors and other stakeholders

#### 1.1. Dialogue between company, shareholders and other stakeholders

- 1.1.1. The Committee recommends that the board of directors ensure ongoing dialogue between the company and its shareholders in order for the shareholders to gain relevant insight into the company, and in order for the board of directors to be aware of the shareholders' views, interests and opinions on the company.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*The Board of Directors and Executive Board of Spar Nord give high priority and dedicate considerable resources to the dialogue with the Company's stakeholders. Each year, Spar Nord holds about 30 local shareholder meetings, typically attended by a total of 5-10,000 private shareholders, and the Executive Board and IR usually hold 50-75 meetings with professional and institutional investors. Moreover, Spar Nord focuses on making relevant and timely information available to its stakeholders on its website, along with direct contact details for its management. The Board of Directors receives regular reporting on the Executive Board's and its staff's dialogue with stakeholders.*

- 1.1.2. The Committee recommends that the board of directors adopt policies on the company's relationship with its stakeholders, including shareholders and other investors, and that the board ensures that the interests of the shareholders are respected in accordance with company policies.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*The Board of Directors of Spar Nord has adopted an investor relations policy, a tax policy and a general code of conduct together with strategies and policies in the CSR area.*

- 1.1.3. The Committee recommends that the company publish quarterly reports.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

#### 1.2. General Meeting

- 1.2.1. The Committee recommends that, when organising the company's general meeting, the board of directors plans the meeting to support active ownership.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*At the annual shareholder meetings (see 1.1.1 above), the shareholders of each shareholder region elect delegates to represent the portion of the region's share capital which is not attributable to major shareholders at the Company's general meetings. This ensures that the shareholders, regardless of their nature and size, are involved in the political process.*

- 1.2.2. The Committee recommends that proxies or votes by post for the general meeting allow shareholders to consider each individual item on the agenda.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

#### 1.3. Takeover bids

- 1.3.1. The Committee recommends that the company set up contingency procedures in the event of takeover bids from the time that the board of directors has reason to believe that a takeover bid will be made. According to such contingency procedures, the board of directors should not without the acceptance of the general meeting, attempt to counter the takeover bid by making decisions which in reality prevent the shareholders from deciding on the takeover bid themselves.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

### 2. Tasks and responsibilities of the board of directors

#### 2.1 Overall tasks and responsibilities

- 2.1.1. The Committee recommends that at least once a year the board of directors take a position on the matters related to the board's performance of its responsibilities.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*The Board of Director's position on matters related to the Board's performance of its responsibilities is focused on the annual board evaluation and the Board's subsequent consideration thereof. Furthermore, the Board's performance of its responsibilities and the required competences are typically discussed at the annual strategy seminar.*

## Corporate governance recommendations

- 2.1.2 The Committee recommends that at least once a year the board of directors take a position on the overall strategy of the company with a view to ensuring value creation in the company..

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*The Board of Directors of Spar Nord arranges an annual strategy seminar, and the Company's strategy and the execution thereof are regularly addressed at Board meetings.*

- 2.1.3 The Committee recommends that the board of directors ensure that the company has a capital and share structure ensuring that the strategy and long-term value creation of the company are in the best interest of the shareholders and the company, and that the board of directors presents this in the management commentary of the company's annual report and/or on the company's website.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

- 2.1.4 The Committee recommends that the board of directors annually review and approve guidelines for the executive board; this includes establishing requirements for the executive board reporting to the board of directors.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*In financial businesses, the board of director's role in reviewing and approving guidelines for the executive board is to a wide extent governed by the Executive Order on Governance. Furthermore, the Board of Directors regularly addresses the Executive Board's performance of its duties.*

- 2.1.5 The Committee recommends that at least once a year the board of directors discuss the composition of the executive board, as well as developments, risks and succession plans.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

### 2.2 Corporate social responsibility

- 2.2.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors adopt policies on corporate social responsibility.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*The Board of Directors has worked extensively with various aspects of corporate social responsibility and has adopted a series of policies and action plans for the area. Like in 2019 and 2020, the Bank is a signatory to several UN principles for sustainability and social responsibility. The Company's annual report includes information about policies, actions and progress in the field.*

### 2.3 Chairman and vice-chairman of the board of directors

- 2.3.1 The Committee recommends appointing a vice-chairman of the board of directors who will assume the responsibilities of the chairman in the event of the chairman's absence, and who will also act as effective sparring partner for the chairman.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

- 2.3.2 The Committee recommends ensuring that, if the board of directors, in exceptional cases, asks the chairman of the board of directors or other board members to perform special activities for the company, including briefly participating in the day-to-day management, a board resolution to that effect be passed to ensure that the board of directors maintains its independent, overall management and control function. Resolutions on the chairman's or other board members' participation in day-to-day management and the expected duration hereof should be announced.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

## 3. Composition and organisation

### 3.1 Composition

- 3.1.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors annually evaluates and, in the management commentary, accounts for

- the skills it must have to best perform its tasks,
- the composition of the board of directors, and
- the special skills of each member.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*As part of the annual evaluation process, the Board of Directors addresses its necessary and current skills as well as its composition. The main points of the process and the conclusions are disclosed in the Company's annual report.*

- 3.1.2 The Committee recommends that once a year the board of directors discuss the company's activities to ensure relevant diversity at management levels, prepares, and adopts a policy on diversity. The policy should be published on the company website.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

## Corporate governance recommendations

- 3.1.3 The Committee recommends that the selection and nomination of candidates for the board of directors be carried out through a thoroughly transparent process approved by the board of directors. When assessing its composition and nominating new candidates, the board of directors, in addition to the need for competences and qualifications, should take into consideration the need for integration of new talent and diversity.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*The process of selecting and nominating candidates for the Board of Directors is well described and is reviewed by the entire Board of Directors at regular intervals.*

- 3.1.4 The Committee recommends that the notice convening the general meeting when election of members to the board of directors is on the agenda be accompanied by a description of the nominated candidates' qualifications, including information about the candidates'

- other executive functions, among these memberships on executive boards, boards of directors, and supervisory boards, including board committees in Danish and foreign enterprises, and
- demanding organisational tasks.

Furthermore, it should be indicated whether candidates to the board of directors are considered independent.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

- 3.1.5 The Committee recommends that members of the company's executive board are not members of the board of directors and that a chief executive officer who is stepping down does not take up the position of chairman or vice chairman for the same company.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

- 3.1.6 The Committee recommends that members of the board of directors elected by the general meeting be up for election every year at the annual general meeting.

*Spar Nord does not comply with this recommendation as the members of the Board of Directors are elected for terms of two years.*

*The members of the Board of Directors serve staggered terms, meaning that three members are up for election every year. With terms of two years and staggered terms, the Board of Directors aims at ensuring the necessary continuity in the work of the Board of Directors.*

### 3.2 Independence of the board of directors

- 3.2.1 The Committee recommends that at least half of the members of the board of directors elected by the general meeting be independent persons, in order for the board of directors to be able to act independently of special interests.

To be considered independent, this person may not:

- be or within the past five years have been member of the executive board, or senior staff member in the company, a subsidiary undertaking or an associate,
- within the past five years, have received larger emoluments from the company/group, a subsidiary undertaking or an associate in another capacity than as member of the board of directors,
- represent the interests of a controlling shareholder,
- within the past year, have had significant business relations (e.g. personal or indirectly as partner or employee, shareholder, customer, supplier or member of the executive management in companies with corresponding connection) with the company, a subsidiary undertaking or an associate,
- be, or have been within the last three years, an employee or partner of the external audit firm,
- have been chief executive in a company holding cross-memberships with the company,
- have been member of the board of directors for more than 12 years, or
- be a close relative of persons who are not considered independent.

Even if a member of the board of directors is not covered by the above criteria, certain conditions may exist that lead the board of directors to decide that one or more members cannot be regarded as independent.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

### 3.3 Members of the board of directors and the number of executive functions

- 3.3.1 The Committee recommends that each member of the board of directors assesses the expected time commitment for each function in order that the member does not take on more functions than he/she can manage satisfactorily for the company.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

## Corporate governance recommendations

3.3.2 The Committee recommends that the management commentary, in addition to the provisions laid down by legislation, includes the following information about the members of the board of directors:

- the position of the relevant person,
- the age and gender of the relevant person,
- the respective person's competences and qualifications that are relevant to the company,
- whether the member is considered independent,
- the date of appointment to the board of directors of the member,
- expiry of the current election period,
- the member's participation in the meetings of the board of directors and committee meetings,
- other executive functions, e.g. memberships in executive boards, boards of directors, and supervisory boards, including board committees, in foreign enterprises and demanding organisational tasks, and
- the number of shares, options, warrants and similar in the company, and other group companies of the company, owned by the member, as well as changes in the portfolio of the member of the securities mentioned which have occurred during the financial year.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

3.3.3 The Committee recommends that the annual evaluation procedure, cf. section 3.5, includes an evaluation of what is regarded as a reasonable level for the number of other executive functions, where the number, level and complexity of the other individual executive functions are taken into account.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

### 3.4 Board committees

3.4.1 The Committee recommends that the company publish the following on the company's website:

- the terms of reference of the board committees,
- the most important activities of the committees during the year, and the number of meetings held by each committee, and
- the names of the members of each committee, including the chairmen of the committees, as well as information on which members are independent members and which members have special qualifications.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

3.4.2 The Committee recommends that a majority of the members of a board committee be independent.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

3.4.3 The Committee recommends that the members of the board of directors set up an audit committee and that a chairman of the committee is appointed who is not the chairman of the board of directors.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

3.4.4 The Committee recommends that, prior to the approval of the annual report and other financial reports, the audit committee monitors and reports to the board of directors about:

- significant accounting policies,
- significant accounting estimates,
- related party transactions, and
- uncertainties and risks, including in relation to the outlook for the current year.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

3.4.5 The Committee recommends that the audit committee:

- annually assesses the need for an internal audit, and in such case, makes mandates and recommendations on selecting, appointing and removing the head of the internal audit function and on the budget of the internal audit function,
- ensures that if an internal audit has been established, a description of its functions is available and approved by the board of directors
- ensures that if an internal audit has been established, that adequate resources and competences are allocated to carry out the work, and
- monitors the executive board's follow-up on the conclusions and recommendations of the internal audit function.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*As a financial business with more than 125 employees, Spar Nord has a duty to establish an internal audit function under the Danish Financial Business Act.*

3.4.6 The Committee recommends that the audit committee:

- define guidelines for and establish processes for controlling what non-audit services are provided by the auditor appointed by the general meeting, and
- define guidelines for the process to select and nominate an auditor.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

## Corporate governance recommendations

3.4.7 The Committee recommends that the board of directors establish a nomination committee with at least the following preparatory tasks:

- describe the qualifications required by the board of directors and the executive board, and for a specific membership, state the time expected to be spent on having to carry out the membership, as well as assess the competences, knowledge and experience of the two governing bodies combined,
- annually assess the structure, size, composition and results of the board of directors and the executive board, as well as recommend any changes to the board of directors,
- annually assess the competences, knowledge and experience of the individual members of the board of directors, and report to the board of directors in this respect,
- consideration of candidates for the board of directors and the executive board, and
- propose an action plan to the board of directors on the future composition of the board of directors, including proposals for specific changes.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation by having established a Nomination and Remuneration Committee whose terms of reference include the tasks listed.*

3.4.8 The Committee recommends that the board of directors also establish a remuneration committee with at least the following preparatory tasks:

- to recommend the remuneration policy (including the general guidelines for incentive-based remuneration) to the board of directors and the executive board for approval by the board of directors prior to approval by the general meeting,
- make proposals to the board of directors on remuneration for members of the board of directors and the executive board, as well as ensure that the remuneration is in compliance with the company's remuneration policy and the assessment of the performance of the persons concerned. The committee should have information about the total amount of remuneration that members of the board of directors and the executive board receive from other companies in the group,
- recommend a remuneration policy applicable for the company in general, and
- assist with the preparation of the annual remuneration report.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation by having established a Nomination and Remuneration Committee whose terms of reference include the tasks listed.*

### 3.5 Evaluation of the performance of the board of directors and the executive board

3.5.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors establishes an evaluation procedure for an annual evaluation of the board of directors and the individual members. External assistance should be obtained at least every third year. The evaluation should include:

- Contribution and results,
- Cooperation with the executive board
- The chairman's leadership of the meetings,
- The composition of the board of directors (including competences, diversity and the number of members).
- The need for and usefulness of the committee structure, and
- The organisation and quality of the material that is submitted to the board of directors.

The evaluation procedure and the general conclusions should be described in the management commentary and on the company website. The chairman should account for the evaluation of the board of directors, including the process and general conclusions, at the general meeting prior to the election to the board of directors.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation with respect to performing an evaluation and communicating the results thereof. However, Spar Nord does not have any firm principle in place on how frequent external assistance should be obtained in the evaluation process, as the need for this is considered regularly. It should be noted that Spar Nord has been using external assistance in the evaluation process for the past three years.*

3.5.2 The Committee recommends that once every year the board of directors evaluate the work and performance of the executive board in accordance with predefined criteria. Furthermore, the board of directors should evaluate the need for changes to the structure and composition of the executive board, in light of the company's strategy.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

3.5.3 The Committee recommends that the executive board and the board of directors establish a procedure according to which their cooperation is evaluated annually through a formalised dialogue between the chairman of the board of directors and the chief executive officer and that the outcome of the evaluation be presented to the board of directors.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

## Corporate governance recommendations

### 4. Remuneration of management

#### 4.1 Form and content of the remuneration policy

4.1.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors prepares a remuneration policy for the board of directors and the executive board, including

- a detailed description of the components of the remuneration for members of the board of directors and the executive board,
- the reasons for choosing the individual components of the remuneration,
- a description of the criteria on which the balance between the individual components of the remuneration is based, and
- that the linkage between the remuneration and company strategy and relevant related goals be explained.

The remuneration policy should be approved by the general meeting and published on the company's website at least every fourth year and upon any critical amendments.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

4.1.2 The Committee recommends that, if the remuneration policy includes variable components,

- limits be set on the variable components of the total remuneration package and, by extension, a limit on the total remuneration package,
- a reasonable and balanced linkage be ensured between remuneration for governing body members and the value creation for shareholders in the short and long terms,
- there be clarity about performance criteria and measurability for award of variable components,
- there be criteria ensuring that variable components are earned in full or in part over a period of not less than three financial years,
- ensures the opportunity for the company to reclaim in full or in part variable components of remuneration that were paid on the basis of data, which proved to be misstated and/or influenced by negligence.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*Under Spar Nord's remuneration policy, the Board of Directors and the Executive Board are not eligible for variable remuneration components, and the so-called "material risk takers" may only receive up to DKK 100,000 in variable remuneration components. Employees of the International Division, who are not material risk takers, may receive bonus equivalent of up to 12 months' salary.*

4.1.3 The Committee recommends that remuneration of members of the board of directors does not include share options.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

4.1.4 The Committee recommends that if share-based remuneration is provided, such programmes should have a maturity of at least three years from the date of allocation and be roll-over programmes, i.e. the options are allocated periodically. As a result, no exercise and/or payment should be made until at least three years have passed since the allocation.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

*For a number of years, Spar Nord has not paid share-based remuneration and currently has no plans to do so again.*

4.1.5 The Committee recommends that the maximum length of notice periods be two years and that no severance pay is agreed in addition to the remuneration paid during the notice period.

*Spar Nord does not comply with the recommendation, as three members of its Executive Board are entitled to a notice period of 12 months and severance pay equivalent to two years' salary, while one member has a notice period of 12 months and severance pay equivalent to one year's salary.*

#### 4.2 Disclosure of remuneration

4.2.1 The Committee recommends that the company's remuneration policy and compliance with this policy be explained and justified annually in the chairman's statement at the company's general meeting.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

4.2.2 The Committee recommends that shareholders consider proposals for remuneration for the board of directors for the current financial year at the general meeting.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

- 4.2.3 The Committee recommends that the company prepares a remuneration report that includes information on the total remuneration granted to each member of the board of directors and the executive board by the company and other companies in the group and associates for the last three years, including information on the most important contents of retention and retirement/resignation schemes, be disclosed in the annual report and that the linkage between the remuneration and company strategy and relevant related goals be explained. The remuneration report must be published on the company website.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

### **5. Financial reporting, risk management and audits**

#### **5.1 Identification of risks and transparency about other information**

- 5.1.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors in the management commentary review and account for the most important strategic and business-related risks, risks in connection with the financial reporting as well as for the company's risk management.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

#### **5.2 Whistleblower scheme**

- 5.2.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors establish a whistleblower scheme for expedient and confidential notification of possible or suspected wrongdoing.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

#### **5.3 Contact to auditor**

- 5.3.1 The Committee recommends that the board of directors ensure regular dialogue and exchange of information between the auditor and the board of directors, including that the board of directors and the audit committee at least once a year meet with the auditor without the executive board present. This also applies to the internal auditor, if any.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

- 5.3.2 The Committee recommends that the audit agreement and auditors' fee be agreed between the board of directors and the auditor on the basis of a recommendation from the audit committee.

*Spar Nord complies with the recommendation.*

## Corporate governance code of Finance Denmark

1. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the members respond to all the recommendations of the Committee on Corporate Governance.
2. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the members prepare and publish a code of conduct describing the company's core values and the conduct desired in terms of the company's management and operations.
3. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the members use a well-described, structured process when recruiting candidates for the board of directors and possibly bring in external expertise.
4. **Finance Denmark recommends** that those members whose articles of association contain provisions determining that board members may only be elected from a limited group of individuals explain the background to these restrictions.
5. **Finance Denmark recommends** that board members embark on a training programme in banking operations as soon as possible and at the latest six months after joining the board, unless the board member concerned already possesses up-to-date, special banking skills. The programme should reflect the company's size, business model and complexity.
6. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the members of a board of directors continuously receive skills development opportunities as relevant for their board duties. The topics and scope should be adapted to the company's size, business model and complexity.
7. **Finance Denmark recommends** that each individual board member undertake an evaluation of his or her work for the board. As part of the evaluation, each board member must fill in an evaluation form referring to both management and technical banking matters.
8. **Finance Denmark recommends** that relevant experts be involved in the cooperation with the board of directors, including participation in meetings of the board of directors when particularly complex issues are to be discussed.
9. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the cooperation between the executive board and the board of directors be discussed at least once a year, without the presence of the executive board.
10. **Finance Denmark recommends** that an overview of the participation of the members of the board of directors in board and committee meetings be published on the members' website or similar.
11. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the members consider and explain whether the rules set out in the Danish Financial Business Act (lov om finansiel virksomhed) regarding a cap on the number of executive positions are relevant for the members.
12. **Finance Denmark recommends** that the members focus on the role of the external auditor and the quality of its audit work. Among other things, members should set requirements for the composition of the teams used by external auditors to ensure that a team includes at least two experienced auditors with additional areas of expertise. To be considered an experienced auditor, an auditor must have completed supplementary training aimed at the banking sector and participated in the audit of a commercial bank, savings bank or cooperative bank for at least three years.

*Spar Nord complies with all recommendations.*



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