

PRESS RELEASE
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Celebrating excellence in emerging markets: East Capital Awards 2024 honours Optima Bank, Gravita, FPT Corporation, and Qifu Technology

For over two decades, East Capital has celebrated companies within its investment portfolio that drive positive change. The prestigious East Capital Awards highlight those organizations that stand out for their growth, governance, and pioneering achievements. In 2024, the Awards reflect the remarkable geographical spread and strength of East Capital's emerging market's universe, spanning Greece, India, Vietnam, and China. We are proud to announce this year's winners across four categories: Best IPO, Discovery of the Year, Best Growth, and Best Corporate Governance.

- [Optima Bank – Best IPO Award](#)
- [Gravita – Discovery of the Year Award](#)
- [FPT Corporate - Best Growth Award](#)
- Qifu Technology - Best Corporate Governance Award

"As we navigate the dynamic shifts in global markets, these companies exemplify the resilience and innovation needed to thrive," says Jacob Grapengiesser, Partner and Chief Investment Officer (CIO) at East Capital. "Their geographical diversity showcases the strength of our emerging market's universe, with each company—whether from Greece, Vietnam, China, or India—bringing a unique competitive edge. We are thrilled to celebrate their outstanding performance and positive impact on their respective sectors."

Best IPO Award: Optima Bank

Optima Bank is a Greek challenger bank. Founded in 2018, they have been steadily gaining market share thanks to a vastly superior customer offering, known for its fast service, sleek branch design and user-friendly mobile application. With a Net Promoter Score of 84, they rank among the best companies in the world in terms of customer satisfaction. Despite a contraction in the Greek lending market in the first half of 2024, they grew their loan book by 50%. Their strong brand, lean structure and a favourable competitive environment have led to an impressive return on equity of 27% in 1H 2024, one of the highest in the eurozone financial sector. The company raised EUR 151m through a heavily over-subscribed IPO on the Athens Stock Exchange in September 2023. Since then, the stock has returned 79% in EUR terms, generating significant alpha for many of our funds.

Discovery of the Year Award: Gravita

Gravita is one of India's largest recycling companies, currently focused on lead (largely from vehicle batteries), with fast-growing aluminium, rubber and plastics businesses. The company has burst onto investors' radars recently thanks to a number of positive regulatory changes that will accelerate the shift from informal to formal recycling, something Gravita will be a key beneficiary of, with earnings growth of 25%-30% expected for the next three years. When we first invested in September 2023, the stock wasn't covered by any major brokers, but since then India's six largest brokers have all initiated on the company, and the stock has surged 183% from our initial purchase price.

Best Growth Award – FPT Corporation

FPT Corporation is one of Vietnam's leading IT companies, it operates in local and global IT services, telecommunications, and education. The company has consistently grown its net income at a CAGR of 22% over the past five years (2019-24e), resulting in a cumulative earnings growth of 2.7x during this period. Reflecting its strong operational performance, FPT's share price has returned an impressive 41% in USD on an annualised rate basis since 2019, generating significant alpha for our Global Frontier Fund. We expect the company to continue expanding at similar levels, driven in particular by growth in its global IT services and education segments.

Best Corporate Governance Award: Qifu Technology

Qifu Technology is one of China's leading lending platforms, with 51 million cumulative users and a best-in-class technology backbone. The company's prudent risk management approach has led to significant outperformance against peers, with earnings up 32% in 1Q 2024 despite a challenging macroeconomic backdrop. Equally impressive is the company's best-in-class approach to capital allocation, with excess capital returned to shareholders in a timely manner. The all-in-yield (dividends and buybacks) for 2024 was 17% in August, when the latest buyback programme was announced. Crucially, the company will also cancel any shares bought back. The company's governance is supported by a strong board, with an independent chairman and 5/9 independent directors, although we hope to see more gender diversity in the future - there is currently one woman on the board. Going forward, the company intends to maintain its total payout ratio at around 70% and plans to buy back 30% of its total shares over three years. This will no doubt continue to support the stock, which has returned 96.7% in USD YTD, generating significant alpha for our Global Emerging Markets Sustainable fund.

About East Capital Awards

The East Capital Awards were established in 2004 to recognise prominent portfolio companies. The award for **Best Growth** is awarded to a company that has shown remarkable growth in terms of sales, market share and profit margin in recent years. **Best IPO** is awarded to the portfolio company that has completed the most successful IPO in the current year. **Discovery of the Year** is awarded to a company that East Capital's investment team deems to have excellent prospects for good development going forward. The **Best Corporate Governance** award goes to a company with a very high standard of corporate governance.

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About East Capital

East Capital is an active asset manager specialising in emerging and frontier markets. Our investment teams base their investment strategy on in-depth knowledge of local markets, fundamental analysis and frequent company visits. Evaluation of ESG-related risks and opportunities forms an integral part of the investment process. We favour investments in companies that show long-term sustainable growth and have responsible owners.

East Capital is part of East Capital Group, a global asset manager based in Sweden since 1997. We offer a range of investment solutions within equities, fixed income securities, real estate and alternatives. The essence of our business is not only to find attractive investment opportunities, but also to work to drive positive change, influencing industries around the world to become more sustainable. We have a broad range of international investors including leading institutions, companies and private individuals. For further information, please visit our website www.eastcapital.com

Risk information: Past performance is no guarantee for future performance. Fund units may go up or down in value and may be affected by changes in exchange rates. Investors may not get back the amount invested.

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