

WSBI



ESBG

The Global Voice of  
Savings and Retail Banking



# WSBI-ESBG CHARTER FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

November 2017





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## PREAMBLE

WSBI-ESBG member banks all over the world enjoy a long history of socially responsible banking. Although their organizational structure differs from country to country, they share important values in their business policy, which are embedded in the three “R”s:

- **Retail:** active in providing retail financial services for individual consumers, households, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), local authorities
- **Regional:** broad decentralised distribution network, providing local and regional outreach
- **Responsible:** socially responsible approach to business and bringing a return to society

WSBI-ESBG has been a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact since 2006, whose 10 Principles provide a complete description of the commitments to follow in the area of social and environmental responsibility. Based on this, WSBI-ESBG pays deep consideration to the new set of 17 measurable Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), formally accepted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, and which range from ending world poverty to fighting climate change and further developments by 2030.

The existing United Nations Global Compact and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals have inspired the foundations of the WSBI-ESBG Charter for Responsible Business, which is clearly more focused on banking topics.

WSBI-ESBG member banks have a strong commitment to sustainable development and address their corporate social responsibility (CSR) as an integral part of their business. Accordingly, **WSBI-ESBG recommends a commitment to the following responsible principles.**

## 1. FAIR AND CLEAR RELATIONS WITH CUSTOMERS

In order to build and maintain a long-term relationship of confidence with customers, WSBI-ESBG member banks:

- Provide clear and honest information on products and services and other terms and conditions of use.
- Advertise responsibly and ensure the visibility of information on products and services both in the branches and on Internet sites.
- Provide advice that meets the needs of customers and promote products and services that are appropriate to their personal circumstances and risk profile, paying special attention to disadvantaged people.
- Consider all cases of financial difficulty sympathetically.
- Inform and communicate with customers and deal with customer complaints quickly and efficiently.
- Work against corruption via, amongst others, adequate anti-money laundering policies.

## 2. PROMOTION OF ACCESSIBILITY AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

As fair partners for all segments of society, WSBI-ESBG member banks:

- Serve all segments of the population, so as to ensure financial inclusion in society.
- Promote savings and facilitate access to modern financial products and services that are tailored to the financial profile of the person concerned, including those with lower incomes or modest means.
- Ensure accessibility and proximity banking close at hand by means of their dense network of branches throughout the country, including low-populated and economically disadvantaged areas, and via a well-developed range of electronic access channels.
- Make branches and distribution channels as accessible as possible to persons with physical disabilities, impairments.
- Provide financial education programmes to fulfil the commitment of providing citizens with a better knowledge of financial issues that will enable them to make informed choices through their lives.

## 3. ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

WSBI-ESBG member banks recognise that the environmental challenge and climate change are some of the main collective hazards ever experienced worldwide. As part of their strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development, WSBI-ESBG and its members contribute to the mitigation of climate change and therefore they:

- Acknowledge the risks and opportunities caused by environmental issues and try to adapt their business accordingly.
- Work towards mitigating the impact of their business on the environment, both directly in terms of own operations and indirectly in terms of customers and suppliers.
- Promote projects in energy efficiency, green transport and green energy, mainly via the loan business.
- Promote products and services that respect social, environmental and sustainable development criteria.

## 4. MAKING A RESPONSIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

It is part of the role and identity of WSBI-ESBG member banks to:

- Link their business objectives and success to the needs of the local communities and society in which they operate, over and beyond their customer base and paying special attention to newcomers in these communities.
- Provide financial services throughout the country and contribute to the economic and social development in all regions in which they operate.
- Drive local economic growth, entrepreneurship and jobs.
- Engage with communities through multi-stakeholders partnerships or corporate philanthropy, in such fields as culture, social entrepreneurship, education, integration, and the preservation of natural and historical heritage.
- Commit to the integrity of the staff, management and governing bodies.

## 5. RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYERS

In their role as responsible employers and as part of their philosophy, WSBI-ESBG member banks:

- Are equal opportunity employers that do not discriminate on any grounds.
- Provide high-quality jobs and good working conditions for their employees in all the regions in which they operate.
- Promote a corporate culture of staff identification with the employer and a strong value orientation of the responsible role of the savings and retail banks in the region.
- Provide employees with the opportunity to achieve a good work-life balance.
- Promote training and life-long learning opportunities in order to facilitate career advancement.

## 6. THE DIGITAL DIMENSION

WSBI-ESBG members embed the digital dimension in their business models, and therefore:

- Value the sensitive use and transfer of personal client data, enabling for sufficient data security.
- Further promote outreach, democratising finance, and leverage accessibility and proximity banking taking advantage of digital means.
- Address digital exclusion through multiple forms of engagement, including delivery and support channels, and financial education.

## 7. COMMUNICATION

Transparency is key. Communication of activities and policies plays an important role for responsible business. Accordingly, WSBI-ESBG will:

- Publish the Charter and a list of the subscribers.
- Invite the subscribers to communicate publicly on the implementation of the Charter principles.
- Gather evidence and communicate publicly on the implementation of the Charter at a global level. This information will be updated on a regular basis, particularly on the WSBI-ESBG CSR database.

### **About the World Savings and Retail Banking Institute**

WSBI represents the interests of 6,000 savings and retail banks globally, with total assets of \$14tn and serving one billion customers in nearly 80 countries (as of 2014). WSBI focuses on international regulatory issues that affect the savings and retail banking industry. It supports the aims of the G20 in achieving sustainable, inclusive, and balanced growth, and job creation, whether in industrialised or less developed countries. WSBI favours an inclusive form of globalization that is just and fair, supporting international efforts to advance financial access and financial usage for everyone.

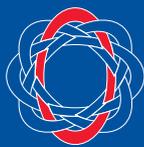
Learn more at → [www.wsbi-esbg.org](http://www.wsbi-esbg.org)

### **About the European Savings and Retail Banking Group**

ESBG is a Brussels-based association that helps its member savings and retail banks thrive, focus on providing service to local communities and boost SMEs. ESBG brings together nearly 1000 savings and retail banks in 21 European countries that believe in a common identity for policy in Europe. Its members represent one of the largest European retail banking networks, comprising one-third of the retail banking market in the European Union, with 190 million customers, more than 60,000 outlets, total assets of €7.1 trillion, non-bank deposits of €3.5 trillion, and non-bank loans of €3.7 trillion. ESBG members come together to agree on and promote common positions on relevant regulatory or supervisory matters

Learn more about ESBG at → [www.wsbi-esbg.org](http://www.wsbi-esbg.org)





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Published by WSBI-ESBG. © November 2017