

WSBI

The Global Voice of
Savings and Retail Banking

TAKING THE DIGITAL PATH, KEEPING A HUMAN TOUCH

STATEMENT OF THE 24TH WORLD CONGRESS OF SAVINGS AND RETAIL BANKS

Washington, 24 – 25 September 2015

WSBI-members, comprising savings and retail banks from around the world, gathered in the US capital for the 24th World Congress of Savings and Retail Banks to discuss the theme "Mainstreet Banking in a Digitised World". They concluded:

- As savings and retail banks of all sizes and legal forms, our diversity is crucial to maintaining the stability of the financial system. We believe that preventing the concentration of economic and financial resources in the hands of a few is essential to ensure a financial system that serves the greatest possible number of people and businesses.
- Financing the real economy is central to our vocation. We safeguard deposits and put them to work through effective and responsible lending. Retail banking serves the diverse financial needs of individuals, households, small and medium-sized businesses across all sectors, and local authorities. That makes it unique. We provide a broad range of retail products and services that improve the financial well-being of our customers.

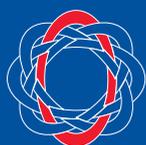
- We foster close, interactive relationships with the customers and communities we serve. We reach out to customers through a wide range of easy-to-use channels to provide the services they need – whether they live in rural areas, the heart of a metropolis or anywhere in between. We maintain a close, synergistic relationship with the community as a whole.

- We take a "double bottom line" approach to banking: we balance the need for financial sustainability and returns to society. Promoting financial inclusion is part of our heritage and remains core to our mission today. We engage in financial education in the communities we serve.

How will the ongoing global wave of digitization affect these objectives and what opportunities will arise? WSBI members in Washington concluded:

- Keeping pace with the accelerating speed of digitisation is a challenge for all banks and regulators. But it offers an unparalleled opportunity to fulfil our mission even more effectively.

- Digitisation is universal, affecting everyone around the globe, shaping the personal and professional life of each individual. Digitisation goes far beyond merely improving existing processes: it changes the way things are done and our interactions with other people and objects.
- Digitisation is not just seizing opportunities enabled by new technologies. Digitisation provides more choices for people and companies and creates new open spaces for action. It offers new ways for WSBI members to connect, creating deeper client relationships. It is a catalyst for social innovation, which will change how people live and work together. Overcoming the challenges and seizing the opportunities of digitisation is not just about buying the latest ground-breaking technology: it is closely linked to our human resources and the way we organize creating value for society.
- Close to their customers and deeply-rooted in their region and society, savings and retail banks witness and share in the massive changes underway: they too are affected by the digital revolution and will play an active role in it, maintaining their long-standing tradition of adopting new technologies and incorporating them in the products they offer.
- Digitisation changes how customers and banks communicate with each other. Physical branches will become less essential to processing customer transactions. But their importance will increase as they become the centres of an intensified high-quality customer advisory service. We do not believe retail banks will become pure "online banks".
- Our task is to extend the trust that is the cornerstone of our proximity relationship into the digitised world. Customer advice – high quality and close at hand – will be key. We will continue to invest in staffing our branches with highly-trained people. Shifting transaction banking more and more onto digital platforms will free-up resources for high-quality customer-advice. To be stable, reliable partners during the digital transformation, savings and retail banks must continue treating their clients as people, not digital data.
- Savings and retail banks are strongly committed to treating all digital data as strictly confidential, whether entrusted to them by customers or acquired via data mining. They stress the particular responsibility of policy-makers, regulators and supervisors worldwide to create and apply a regulatory framework that allows and fosters innovation, but simultaneously ensures the security, data and consumer protection that is key to preserving trust in the financial system. Yet we note a worrying tendency by some policy-makers to adopt light-touch regulation for new digital competitors in financial services, whilst leaving incumbent savings and retail banks burdened by heavy regulation.
- Digitisation is an opportunity for us to reinforce our profound commitment to customer proximity. Harnessing digital technologies will help us promote our traditional business model of bringing retail financial services responsibly to customers who are geographically close to us and who share our core values. Savings and retail banks will seize digital opportunities to reach out to new customers, especially to those with inadequate access to financial services, and to strengthen their relationship with existing clients.
- WSBI-members reconfirm the aims and commitments of their 2012-Marrakech declaration. Those include the WSBI members enhancing further their efforts towards the provision of an account for everyone. First, by continuing to implement a shared vision among members to successfully advance financial access and financial usage. Second, through innovations, with a view to provide competitive and adapted services to clients and extend further their outreach to the unbanked and underserved segments.
- To help achieve these ambitions, WSBI and its members call upon stakeholders, policy-makers and regulators to support their global financial inclusion challenge. Policy should aim to boost innovation and technological solutions, not hamper it. Reasonable, proportional framework is also required, thereby stimulating diversity of financial services providers.



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Published by WSBI. © October 2015