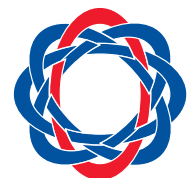


LOOKING BACK  
THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2005

LOOKING FORWARD  
THE CHALLENGES OF 2006



WSBI - The Global Voice of Savings and Retail Banking



WORLD SAVINGS BANKS INSTITUTE

This annual report gives you an overview of WSBI's activities in 2005 and the work programme for 2006.

For more information on WSBI, do not hesitate to contact the communications department at + 32 2 211 11 11 or [info@savings-banks.com](mailto:info@savings-banks.com)

The ESBG (European Savings Banks Group) has issued a separate annual report. If you would like to receive it, send an e-mail to [info@savings-banks.com](mailto:info@savings-banks.com)



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## THE GLOBAL VOICE OF SAVINGS AND RETAIL BANKING

As the global voice of savings and retail banking, WSBI was active on various fronts in 2005 to help its members from developed and developing countries alike to successfully cope with globalisation of financial markets, increased competition and implementation of international regulatory frameworks. During 2005, WSBI completed a review of its statutes, to ensure a greater participation and representation of non-European members and to strengthen the role of the four regional groups (Africa, Asia & Pacific, Latin America & the Caribbean, Postal Savings Banks Forum). This structure will enable WSBI to define joint positions and deliver strong policy messages at regional level.

Throughout 2005, WSBI and its members focused an important part of their activities and efforts on the provision of sustainable access to financial services to the largest number of citizens and entrepreneurs. WSBI will define operational solutions to improve access to finance and will particularly build on the tremendous actions undertaken in 2005 in the context of the United Nations International Year of Microcredit, to seek further support and recognition from policy and decision-makers.

The 2006 WSBI World Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia will be a unique opportunity to promote further these achievements and WSBI's collective strength, at the highest level. WSBI intends to deliver its vision on "Savings banks: the retail gateway to global markets. Driving sustainable development" and will particularly seek to profile further WSBI members with regional, national and international stakeholders. The intention is to give visibility to WSBI members' major contribution to sustainable economic development, and efficient, competitive and pluralistic retail banking markets.

In 2005, WSBI launched focused initiatives to raise the awareness of its members on the importance to promote their corporate social responsibility (CSR) achievements and experiences, and increase in this way their visibility with international stakeholders. WSBI members can be seen as benchmarks for socially responsible retail banking practices.

Unlike other professional organisations that are mainly focused on lobbying activities, WSBI develops, in addition to interest representation, important activities in the field of business cooperation, consultancy and training. All these activities are focused on the creation of a pluralistic and sustainable retail banking market that brings the advantages of increased competition and globalisation to the largest number of customers.

More than ever, in a highly competitive and fast-changing environment, WSBI and its members need to act as partners and develop strategic business alliances. Investigating new areas and opportunities for further business cooperation within



the savings banks' network will therefore be one of WSBI's priorities over the coming months.

For Consultancy services, amongst the increasing number of international projects carried out, two should be highlighted specifically: the EU sponsored series of conferences in 30 countries relating to dissemination of information to SMEs in the Basel II context, which has been successfully delivered, and the extension of the EU-China Financial Services Cooperation Project. They clearly demonstrate the added value created by WSBI and its members active in the various project consortia.

WSBI also conducted professional development services in the form of trainings in 2005, and intends to develop further these activities in 2006, through partnerships with members and strategic partners.

2006 will be a challenging year, during which WSBI, with the help and support from the members all over the world will demonstrate the solidarity, cohesion, strength and commitment of the savings banks community.

Dr. Holger BERNDT  
President



Chris DE NOOSE  
Chairman of the Management  
Committee



Access to finance is now widely recognized as an essential building block achieving economic growth, reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion. Numerous studies, including those of the World Savings Banks Institute (WSBI), have confirmed that well developed inclusive financial systems are associated with more rapid economic growth, better income distribution and poverty reduction. In this context, savings banks and socially committed retail banks play a very important role: they extend the financial access to a majority of the population in the countries where they operate, and support the national financial systems by collecting domestic savings and channeling resources in local investments.

Fostering sustainable access to financial services therefore continues to be the main priority of WSBI. In 2005, a series of initiatives were carried out to position WSBI and its members in the forefront of the international debate on access to finance and strengthen the institutional relationships with international organisations and policy makers. In a further stage, WSBI also developed and promoted operational solutions to support the members and other financial institutions to improve the current situation.

### **Fostering sustainable access to financial services is a priority of WSBI.**

#### **Microcredit as a means to increase access to finance**

Microcredit is of paramount importance to increase access to finance. This range of “small-scale” financial services that are provided to the lower income strata of the population improves greatly these client’s capacity to take their development in their own hands. As proximity banks, savings banks have essential assets that make them ideally equipped to provide microfinance services. They are accessible because of their geographic proximity and tend to have relatively low requirements for accessing their services. They also provide a whole range of financial services in a sustainable manner.

For this reason, WSBI has concentrated much effort on the organisation of conferences and seminars, on its own initiative, or in the framework of the United Nations Year of Microcredit 2005. An international seminar on the sustainability of Microcredit was organised in cooperation with the Peruvian WSBI member FEPCMAC (Federacion Peruana de Cajas Municipales de Ahorros y Créditos), while the Government Savings Bank of Thailand hosted a major international conference on “Empowering the Grassroots Economy: Microfinance for Growth and Happiness”.

WSBI also played a very active role in the various international activities organised by the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and contributed to two United Nations projects: the Blue Book Initiative and the Data Project.



## The Blue Book Initiative

An extensive consultation process on how to build inclusive financial sectors took place with the aim of publishing a “Blue Book” highlighting the obstacles and establishing a policy agenda for the development of the financial sector. WSBI and its members actively participated in the multistakeholders meetings, aimed at collecting relevant data and inputs. WSBI also organised and chaired the Latin American meeting held in Santiago (Chile). More than 80 personalities from the microfinance industry in Latin America gathered in Santiago during two working sessions and produced a considered analysis of the specific obstacles that access to finance encounters in the region.

On top of the consultation process, several WSBI publications fed directly the chapters of the Blue Book, which now presents several facts from WSBI membership and from WSBI research work on access to finance. Among the WSBI documents published during the UN Year of Microcredit and that supported the drafting of the Blue Book are the proceedings of the 2004 World Bank/WSBI Access To finance Conference, the report on selected experiences from WSBI members in the provision of microfinance, the Latin American Mobilisation of Savings Resolution and the findings of the study on “ Access to Finance: Measuring the Contribution of Savings Banks”.

Finally, the Access to finance Resolution adopted by WSBI General Assembly in 2004 was featured in the Blue Book as one of the “Key reference documents on international good practices on access to finance”. \*

## The Data Project

This project aims at improving the data available on Access to Finance in order to address current gaps, anticipate future needs and reach agreement on the best way to make progress. WSBI was present in a panel discussion held in Paris by the World Bank and various international development agencies. WSBI shared its own findings and views on the way to collect information about the unbanked population. In particular, WSBI presented a major step forward by being one of the first institutions to provide worldwide estimates on the level of access at a country and regional level. At that same time, WSBI presented its preliminary findings on the specific contribution of savings banks to access (see below “Study on Access to finance – What does it mean and how do savings banks foster access”)

\* This resolution is available on [www.savings-banks.com](http://www.savings-banks.com) or by sending an e-mail to [info@savings-banks.com](mailto:info@savings-banks.com)



## Measuring the contribution of savings banks

As a follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the 2004 WSBI initial Access to finance study, WSBI partnered with Oxford Policy Management for a research study focused on “Measuring the contribution of savings banks”. The study was built on WSBI members’ data and findings. It was presented at the occasion of the WSBI 2005 General Assembly and demonstrates further that an economy improves its chances to provide full access to finance when a strong savings bank sector or another form of proximity banking is present.

Using for the first time realistic and reliable data, the study was able to revise significantly previous estimates of the number of accounts which could potentially be opened in “accessible” financial institutions (e.g. community, cooperative, development and savings banks, credit unions, specialist microfinance schemes, all the institutions that are not aimed exclusively at one specific segment of the market) in some 130 developing and transition economies. The outcome of this new methodology was that 1,4 billion “accessible” accounts exist. Savings banks and socially committed retail banks are by far the largest identified suppliers of accessible accounts across the developing and transition world – accounting for some three-quarters of all such accounts. This however does not mean that the battle for Access to Finance has been won. The bulk of the work remains to be done and the Access to Finance study makes a strong case that for developing and transition economies to move towards full access, there is a need for a strong savings banks or other proximity bank presence.

Given the interest that the research work raised, WSBI decided to publish a study drawing together the results of two previous studies commissioned by WSBI on Access to Finance. The original papers were “Access to Finance – a study for WSBI”, completed in October 2004, and Access to Finance – Measuring the Contribution of Savings Banks”, completed in November 2005. The new publication “Access to Finance – What does it mean and how do savings banks foster access” was published in January 2006 and is becoming a reference reading for all those interested in the topic of access to finance worldwide.

## The road ahead: main challenges for savings banks and public authorities

Based on the main findings and analysis of the study, WSBI outlined a number of challenges and priority areas for further joint initiatives.

### For savings banks

Savings banks around the world should endeavour to maintain and further extend the accessible distribution network by optimising existing distribution channels and creating new ones and by using new technologies. They should continue providing accessible, low cost, low risk products offered in a fully transparent way (linked to literacy efforts if needed). They are invited to co-operate with local specialised



microfinance institutions to complete the distribution network in remote areas.

Savings banks should, through the WSBI network, make available data on achieved results in expanding access. They should also set ambitious goals for building greater access, by using savings banks' economies of scale and existing infrastructure to bear down on cost of delivery of products to make these affordable to the largest number of clients.

In order to achieve these goals, savings banks from the developed and developing world should increase their co-operation and exchange of best practices.

### **For policy makers, regulators and supervisors**

Above all, authorities should ensure a sound macroeconomic, political and legal environment, in which economic and social activity can prosper. This is far more effective than trying to mandate access and interfere with product design. Certainly, in some cases, regulation might be needed, but there should be a better balance between the direct and indirect costs of regulation and the expected benefits. It is particularly important to avoid any counterproductive measures, whereby regulation creates more exclusion.

Public authorities should also endeavour to set up an enabling environment, in which market players of different size, origin, ownership structure and mission can compete with each other in order to give the customer the broadest possible choice of services. They should in addition contribute to the efforts to measure access to finance and encourage financial literacy programmes at the country level. Finally, they should be encouraged to set access to finance as a major development goal in each country's economic strategy and set goals to improve access at a supranational level.

### **A set of actions to deliver**

In order to streamline all the needed efforts, a comprehensive WSBI action plan has been built, with focus on four central themes:

- to increase and improve communication to all stakeholders;
- to continue the research. Joint projects are under way with the World Bank as well as with CGAP to examine the extent that very poor people are reached via the savings banks branch network and to what degree poor people really use the financial services they are offered;
- to pursue the offer of training and the exchange of best practices between WSBI members;
- to foster business cooperation between WSBI members.



## The working plan for 2006

In 2006, WSBI will participate in a World Bank Global Conference in May, dedicated to finding leading strategies and best operational solutions for extending financial services and building inclusive financial systems. WSBI will also, with cooperation from CGAP, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, undertake an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic profile and financial habits of clients of some selected WSBI member institutions.

Finally, WSBI has identified the areas where our members and other financial institutions need to work in order to further extend financial access :

- roll out basic access products with standardised features backed by common literacy programmes;
- developing guidance on credit portfolio refinancing for microfinance institutions without deposit-taking capacity;
- participating in development of basic national access products;
- developing affordable international remittances products.

## Remittances as an essential growth engine

The economic role of remittances is undeniable. They represent a formidable source of finance for development and investments, that may generate sustained growth. They often represent a significant part of the nation's GDP and may directly influence the structure and growth of imports and exports, and the speed of urban or rural development. They affect demographic patterns education, health and social security issues. Remittances play a crucial role in the wider debate on access to finance (or the lack thereof) for both migrants and their relatives and communities in their home countries.

## **Remittances play a crucial role in the wider debate on access to finance (or the lack thereof) for both migrants and their relatives and communities in their home countries.**

This was clearly demonstrated during the launch of the World Bank Global Development Finance Report and the Global Economic Prospects (GEP) Report in the Brussels premises of WSBI in November 2005. In their study on migrant remittances, the two authors of the report, Uri Dadush and Andrew Burns estimated official remittances at an annual 225 billion USD.

The challenge for policy makers and the financial sector is to encourage flows via the formal financial system, thereby fostering economic development and increasing access to finance for a larger number of people. However real and tangible, remittances remain too often an underestimated business case. One of the conclusions of the postal savings banks forum organised by WSBI in November 2005 was that postal savings banks should take more advantage of their extensive physical



distribution networks in both sending and receiving countries. Major challenges in this field are that remittances should be used as a stepping stone for expanding access to financial services for emigrants in originating and receiving countries and secondly reducing remittance costs and channeling remittance flows toward productive activities.

The conviction that remittances are not just “sending some money home” was shared by the participants in the conference “Remittances and Financial Inclusion: Cross-regional perspectives”, organised by WSBI and the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank in Brussels in May. Remittances are an ideal way to bring migrants into the financial and ultimately into the larger social system. To provide remittances services in an optimal way, alliances should be built to leverage local expertise and improve cost-effectiveness. The real business is beyond remittances: it is the first point of entry to a relationship with new customers that are often left outside the financial sector. Participants all agreed on the need to improve market knowledge and adapt regulation in the field of anti-money laundering and fight against terrorism in a way that is proportionate to the characteristics and the real risk of remittances.

Finally, WSBI developed a package of consultancy services geared towards governments, international organisations and financial institutions for studying, recommending and implementing solutions in the field of remittances.

**B**e it the fostering of a transatlantic dialogue on retail banking, the implementation of Basel II or the reform of the postal bank institutions, WSBI has endeavoured, in 2005, to be the global voice of retail banking and to work towards the creation of an enabling environment for savings banks all over the world, independent of location, size, structure or customer base. The creation and maintenance of a level playing field is one of the priorities WSBI will pursue in 2006.

### Fostering a transatlantic dialogue for retail banking

In 2005, WSBI/ESBG launched the EU/US Retail Banking Forum with a first conference in Brussels. The Forum, the very first initiative of its kind, brings together stakeholders from the US and the EU in order to foster a trans-Atlantic dialogue on issues of importance to all retail banks. It represents a platform for the exchange of views, knowledge and opinion and aims to promote a better understanding of the systems of retail banking and financial regulation of European and US markets and eventually, to contribute to policy-setting in the field of financial regulation.

In his opening address for the conference, Mr. Almunia, the European Commissioner in charge of Economic and Monetary Affairs stressed the importance of strengthening the internal market and integrating financial services in order for Europe to remain globally competitive.

**The EU/US forum represents a platform for the exchange of views, knowledge and opinion and seeks to promote a better understanding of retail banking systems on both sides of the Atlantic.**

The conference focused on three topics:

- **Supervision:** high-level speakers included Mr. John M. Reich, director of the US Office of Thrift Supervision and Mr. José María Roldán, Chairman of the Committee of European Banking Supervisors (CEBS). The general debate on supervision on both sides of the Atlantic seems to have shifted from a focus on supervisory structures to a focus on the practical means to make the existing tools and frameworks function effectively in a new and complex prudential environment. Another issue which was much discussed was that of how to ensure a level playing field between small, local banks and internationally-active banks in the areas of Basel II and prudential supervision.
- **Payments:** Mark W. Olson, Member of the Board of Governors of the US Federal Reserve System and Ms. Gertrude Tumpel-Gugerell, Member of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank introduced the discussion. The lively debate between panelists Mr. David Deacon, Head of Unit, Internal Market and Services DG, European Commission; Ms. Priscilla Holland, Senior Director, International and Corporate Payments, NACHA; Mr. Denis Beau, Chairman of the PSSC-Eurosystem; Mr. Thomas Stokes, Community Affairs Officer, Federal Deposit



Insurance Corporation (FDIC) covered the determining factors and forces leading towards a single payment area in the US and the demonstrated versus expected benefits of a single payments area to customers. Panelists also discussed the extent to which the EU and US payment systems are comparable, as well as the objective factors that could lead to the conclusion that a single payments area is more conducive to prompting innovation in payments products and services.

- Regulation of capital markets: the debate was launched by keynote speakers Mr. Charles M. Horn, Senior Partner, Mayer Brown and Mr. Alexander Schaub, Director General, Internal Market and Services Directorate General at the European Commission. The panel was moderated by Mr. Karl-Burkhard Caspari, Chairman, Market Transparency Expert Group, Committee of European Securities Regulators (CESR). Conclusions highlighted that the main objectives being pursued currently in capital markets in both the EU and the US are to improve the functioning of the financial markets as well as increase the protection of investors. Panelists however highlighted that a number of rules are still specific only to one of the two jurisdictions. Both EU and US participants also agreed that competition between different types of markets and different types of orders are something that regulators must deal with on both sides of the Atlantic, in their efforts to create a deep, liquid market and to provide adequate consumer protection.

WSBI/ESBG in partnership with its American Member, America's Community Bankers, will continue to organise and host yearly conferences and workshops in the context of the EU/US Retail Banking Forum. A comparative study on the EU & US Retail Banking markets will be published in the first half of 2006 and a one-day seminar will be organised on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May. The next conference will take place in Washington on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November.

## **Implementation of the Basel II Accord and impact on the prudential supervision of financial institutions**

WSBI and its members also monitored the implementation of the Basel II Accord on financial institutions' capital requirements, and its potential impact on the supervision of banks. In the opinion of WSBI the transposition of the Basel II framework in national legislation should be seen as an opportunity to improve risk management capacities of the financial institutions and not as the start of a debate on supervisory structures. The capital adequacy ratio requirements should not be unduly used to favour one type of financial institutions over another, but should be neutral as regards the business organisations of banks, worldwide. A level playing field should be ensured between small, local banks and internationally active banks and WSBI will spare no efforts to achieve this goal.



## **A Roadmap for the reform of Postal bank institutions**

The reform of Postal banks remains on the agenda of all institutions, be it giants such as the Japan Post or smaller institutions in Eastern Europe or Africa.

Since 1997, WSBI has organised on a yearly basis the Postal Savings Banks Forum as a venue where member postal savings institutions -which account for approximately one third of all WSBI member institutions- can exchange information, develop and strengthen mutual cooperation.

At the end of 2004, WSBI discussed the issue of the reform of postal savings institutions with the World Bank and released a Road Map that lists the hurdles to overcome in the reform process and gives a number of suggestions on how to conduct the reform. Amongst the recommendations are the integration in an overall plan, the respect of rules of corporate governance, and the creation of a strict separation between the Post and the Postal Savings Institution. In parallel, WSBI reinforced its collaboration with the UPU (Universal Postal Union).

### **Postal savings banks should transform into fully-fledged retail banks, to put the potential of their extensive network to the full benefit.**

At the 2005 meeting of the Postal Savings Banks Forum, the reform drive of the institutions was still the centre of the debates. However, the market and technological evolutions were certainly not forgotten. This is illustrated by the theme of the meeting : "The future of postal savings institutions in a technology driven market environment with ongoing institutional changes". The focus was put on the payments industry, that has been shaken up over the last years by a radical change from heavily paper-based transactions to electronic and online payment services. Postal savings banks should accelerate the pace in this domain and should be aware of the major revenue sources offered by multi-channel banking. Postal savings banks should also transform into fully-fledged retail banks, to put the potential of their extensive network to the full benefit.



## REACHING OUT TO ALL THE MEMBERS: THE REGIONAL GROUP ACTIVITIES



**B**eing an international organisation, represented in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, it is essential for WSBI to keep in very close contact with its members, among other means via annual regional group meetings. This allows us to stay in contact with the market reality. While most of the activities of the regional group meetings have been described in the previous chapters, this chapter provides the reader a short and comprehensive overview of the activities of each specialised group.

### The Asia/Pacific Regional Group

The annual Asia-Pacific regional group meeting was held from 7 to 8 July 2005 in Hanoi (Vietnam), hosted by the Vietnam Postal Savings Company. 37 participants from Cambodia, China, India, Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, among which various Asian WSBI members and representatives of WSBI discussed on the theme "Retail Banking Policies in the Asia-Pacific: What role for retail banks?". During a wide variety of agenda items and workshops, participants stressed the importance of regional cooperation for business in areas such as microfinance and remittances. Participants were also actively encouraged to take part in initiatives in the framework of 2005 UN Year of Microcredit. They attended presentations on Corporate Social Responsibility, the implementation of Basel II, Payment infrastructures and Islamic Banking.

### Latin America and Caribbean Regional Group (GRULAC)

The annual meeting took place in Santiago (Chile) and was hosted by Banco Estado on 17 and 18 April 2005. The event gathered more than 60 WSBI members from Latin America and Spain as well as regional and international organisations. The main topic was "Access to Popular Savings: Contribution to the International Year of Microcredit 2005". The debates focused on the analysis of cultural, institutional and legal aspects of the mobilisation of savings in Latin America.

During the meeting, the Group's members adopted a Savings Mobilisation Resolution taking up most of the ideas related to the situation of savings at a regional level, outlining the commitments of savings banks from an institutional and operational perspective and requesting favorable policies conducive to the stability of the economic and institutional environment in which savings banks from Latin America and the Caribbean evolve.

As a continuation of the meeting debates, participants took part in two working sessions that WSBI organised under the auspices of the International Year of Microcredit, in collaboration with the United Nations, and the publication of the Blue Book. In addition and with WSBI support, several members actively participated in the Microcredit Summit for Latin America and the Caribbean which took place from 19 to 22 April in Santiago.



## Africa Regional Group

The Kenya Post Office Savings Bank (KPOSB) hosted the 11th WSBI Africa Regional Group meeting, which took place on 27-28 June 2005 in Mombassa (Kenya). The theme of the meeting "Savings Banks: Pillars in Building Inclusive Financial Systems in Africa" aimed at celebrating the United Nations Year of Microcredit. The event successfully brought together nearly 50 delegates from several African members: Benin, Cape Verde, Comores, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Madagascar, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe as well as non-member institutions: MicroSave-Africa, AAR Health Services, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, Eurogiro and the German Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation.

The meeting identified three major challenges faced by savings banks in Africa in their endeavour to modernise. These are commercial, technological and regulatory challenges. Bearing in mind the above mentioned challenges, African savings banks identified their needs for professional management systems and a rooted corporate governance culture and pursued their efforts in automation and computerisation in order to cope with the type of financial discipline required in a banking environment. They strengthened their efforts to the field of customer orientation and consider retail banking (including microfinance) as the way forward in their endeavour to restructure into fully-fledged banks.

### West Africa Subgroup

During their 7th meeting from 17 to 18 March 2005 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), the members of this subgroup, which gathers postal savings institutions and postal checking institutions from the WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union) had the opportunity to deliberate on administrative issues, restructuring options, business cooperation initiatives and projects supported by the Regional Central Bank. At the conclusion of the meeting, members were encouraged to complete the opening of correspondent accounts with each other; to explore all options for the provision of inexpensive cross-border money transfer services; and to join the member-based and non-profit making entity "Groupement Interbancaire Monétique" (GIM-UEMOA).

### East Africa Subgroup

The Association of Savings Banks of East Africa (ASBEA) convened the WSBI-facilitated Seminar on Entrepreneurial Branch Operations (4th – 9th September 2005) in Kampala (Uganda) and held its 1st Conference on 1st July 2005 in Mombassa (Kenya). The theme of this Conference was "The Role of Savings Banks in East Africa: Opportunities and Challenges".



## **Portuguese Speaking Cooperation Group “Lusophone Group”**

The Portuguese-speaking cooperation group, created in 1990, is an autonomous group within WSBI gathering savings banks from a number of Lusophone countries: Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Macau, Mozambique and Portugal. The Group meets once a year for its Annual General Assembly and seminars (“Jornadas Tecnicas”). In 2005, these were held in Fortaleza, Brasil, on 2-4 May and were hosted by Caixa Economica Federal, who held the presidency of the Group.

The General Assembly was an opportunity to review the activities performed over the last months, to assess the overall situation of its member organisations and to discuss new cooperation strategies as well as a plan of activities for 2005-2006. Members decided in particular to explore cooperation opportunities in the field of international remittances (with notably: the launch of a fact-finding study and the translation of the WSBI Master Agreement into Portuguese) and to start the publication of a quarterly newsletter in order to foster exchange of best practices between members.

A seminar was held in parallel to the General Assembly on the theme: “Access to microfinance: Lusophone Group contribution to the International Year of Microcredit”, including presentations by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Brazilian Central Bank, the Economic and Social Development Bank of Brasil (BNDES) and the Brazilian office supporting the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SEBRAE).

## **WSBI Postal Savings Banks Forum**

The theme of the 2005 meeting of the WSBI Postal Savings Banks Forum was “The future of postal savings institutions in a technology driven market environment with ongoing institutional changes”. Conclusions of this forum, that could count on the participation of members from Burkina Faso, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, India, Japan, Romania, South Africa, Senegal and Vietnam, have been presented earlier in this report.



## MOVING FORWARD ON SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BANKING ACTIVITIES



Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is commonly understood as the business contribution to sustainable development and covers different fields: human rights, human resources, relations with clients, suppliers and other stakeholders, corporate governance, environment and contribution to community and society. It is increasingly viewed, across the world and across all business sectors, as a strategic issue to ensure the development of a sustainable world and to enhance business competitiveness. It is high on the policy priority lists of a number of international organisations, who seek to increase the awareness and involvement of companies.

WSBI and ESBG Members have a long history of commitment to the communities in which they operate. This is one of their key specific features, which makes them crucial players on retail banking markets and supports the need for banking pluralism, for a rich and diversified offer of financial services to all types of customers. WSBI and ESBG Members are therefore keen to promote their experience and achievements, developed in the various CSR fields, in order to strengthen their contribution to EU and international related-debates, increase the visibility of their return model and be identified as one of the references for socially responsible retail banking activities and professional practices.

As part of the collective commitment in favour of CSR, WSBI launched members' raising awareness initiatives in 2005, on the CSR concept and the importance of the ongoing debates for savings banks in general. They also sought to encourage members to contribute to WSBI/ESBG CSR work and to give more visibility to their CSR policies and achievements at national level:

- European Members held an exchange of experiences to get a better knowledge and understanding of their respective CSR activities, priorities and organisation;
- introductory, general presentations on the CSR concept, its key components and WSBI/ESBG related activities were made at the Africa and Asia/Pacific Regional Group meetings. They raised interest from a number of members and already gave the occasion to exchange experiences;
- a dedicated workshop on Proximity banking and social responsibility was organised at the WSBI 2005 General Assembly. The objective was again to call attention of the attendants, especially representatives from the Latin American Members, on CSR-related debates and highlight the importance of this issue for savings banks. It also provided a platform for an exchange of experiences from different parts of the world and case-studies from Thailand, Peru, Spain and Chile were shared.

As a follow-up to these meetings, WSBI members were invited to provide examples of their achievements to enrich savings banks' contribution to the general CSR debate and to serve as a basis for a CSR Report, drafted on the model of the ESBG Report<sup>1</sup>. The objective will be to illustrate the diversity and wide-range of CSR policies and projects launched by savings banks across the world, based on concrete case studies provided by WSBI members. A great number of such examples have already been received from Africa, Latin America and Asia and the Report will be released in the course of 2006.

<sup>1</sup> "Savings Banks' Socially responsible activities, a wealth of experience". Available at [www.savings-banks.com](http://www.savings-banks.com) or by sending an e-mail to [info@savings-banks.com](mailto:info@savings-banks.com).



WSBI/ESBG was increasingly involved over the last year in a number of international fora, where various aspects of CSR were being dealt with, e.g. the United Nations Global Compact, the United Nations Environment Programme-Finance Initiative, the Global Reporting Initiative, the International Standardisation Organisation, EU calls for proposals and projects etc. The intention was not to take part in all the initiatives identified, but to obtain an overview of current and upcoming developments, build contacts with piloting and involved institutions, assess the likely direct or indirect impact for the members and select those projects which called for a more active WSBI/ESBG contribution.

By becoming a priority participant to the United Nations Global Compact (UN GC), which is an international, voluntary network and forward-looking, political forum seeking to involve companies in finding solutions to the challenges of globalisation and sustainable development, WSBI/ESBG's will raise the overall CSR profile of savings banks and will offer high-level contact building and exchange of experiences with other members and active stakeholders.

WSBI/ESBG will pursue its active dialogue with stakeholders and international institutions involved in the definition of the CSR policy, in the coming months and actively contribute to the debates and initiatives launched in the various CSR fields. Besides, a working session on "Savings banks and Foundations, contribution for a sustainable development" will take place at the 21st WSBI World Congress in Kuala Lumpur. This will provide a further occasion and opportunity to send messages to policy makers and the public at large and raise the profile of savings banks in the CSR context.

**M**ore than ever, in a highly competitive and fast-changing environment, WSBI and its members need to act as partners and develop strategic business alliances. Investigating new areas and opportunities for further business cooperation projects amongst the savings banks' network will therefore be one of our priorities of the coming months.

### First International Business Workshop

WSBI/ESBG has organised its first International Business Workshop, which took place in Brussels on 30 & 31 May 2005. It was attended by some 30 senior managers from WSBI/ESBG member banks in China, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam in addition to France, Germany, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The objective of the Workshop was to provide a forum for networking and to exchange information, experience and best practice on international business issues focused on the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to identify potential business cooperation possibilities.

During 2005, a lot of work has been done to prepare the 2nd meeting on Business Cooperation in the WSBI Asia-Pacific Regional Group. This meeting was held in Bangkok on 26-27 January 2006 at the invitation of the Government Savings Bank. It brought together 22 representatives from 7 member institutions as well as Eurogiro, Eufiserv and WSBI/ESBG. Mr. Yongyuth Tariyo, First Executive Vice President of GSB, chaired the meeting.

The theme of this meeting was "Delivering customer value in payments" and the objective was to exchange experiences and try to identify business cooperation opportunities in the field of high value as well as retail and commercial payments among the WSBI members in the region.

Payments are an important aspect of business for WSBI members. However, many institutions face restrictions on settlements especially on inter-bank transactions. Since settlement networks and systems are strongly connected to central banks and authorities, WSBI is requested to help member institutions on access to payment. Another consideration was how to minimize the cost of transactions since member institutions usually deal with a large number of low value transactions.

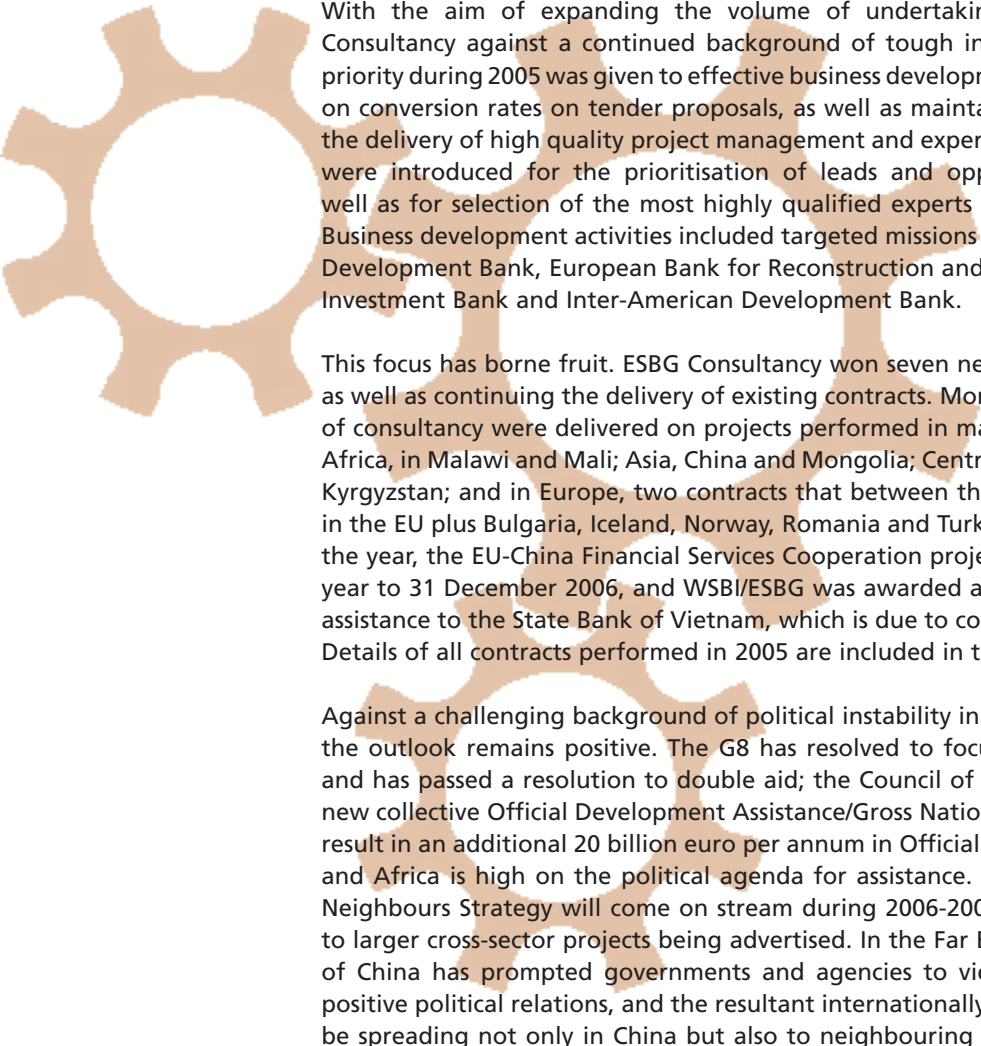


## PROVIDING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE THROUGH SUCCESSFUL CONSULTANCY SERVICES



The provision of consultancy services is one of the practical ways in which WSBI and ESBG help to improve access to finance, through its contribution to the development of well-functioning financial sectors. Since the early 1990s, ESBG Consultancy<sup>2</sup> has tendered for, led and managed contracts that directly or indirectly benefit members and potential members. Services delivered include institution building, organisation and operational development, management and staff training, research and policy formation. Today, WSBI/ESBG is recognised worldwide as a leading European provider of technical expertise to retail banks and banking sectors. The support of ESBG membership to this activity through access to intellectual property and the provision of banking experts is a clear and concrete example of their commitment to corporate social responsibility.

### ESBG Consultancy delivered more than 4000 person days of consultancy on projects performed in Europe, Asia and Africa.



With the aim of expanding the volume of undertakings performed by ESBG Consultancy against a continued background of tough international competition, priority during 2005 was given to effective business development activities and a focus on conversion rates on tender proposals, as well as maintaining a constant grip on the delivery of high quality project management and expertise. Rigorous procedures were introduced for the prioritisation of leads and opportunities identified, as well as for selection of the most highly qualified experts suitable for assignments. Business development activities included targeted missions to the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank and Inter-American Development Bank.

This focus has borne fruit. ESBG Consultancy won seven new contracts during 2005, as well as continuing the delivery of existing contracts. More than 4,000 person days of consultancy were delivered on projects performed in many regions of the world: Africa, in Malawi and Mali; Asia, China and Mongolia; Central Asia, in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan; and in Europe, two contracts that between them spanned 30 countries in the EU plus Bulgaria, Iceland, Norway, Romania and Turkey. Further, at the end of the year, the EU-China Financial Services Cooperation project was extended by one year to 31 December 2006, and WSBI/ESBG was awarded a new contract to provide assistance to the State Bank of Vietnam, which is due to commence in January 2006. Details of all contracts performed in 2005 are included in the table that follows.

Against a challenging background of political instability in some parts of the world, the outlook remains positive. The G8 has resolved to focus on poverty alleviation and has passed a resolution to double aid; the Council of Europe has decided on a new collective Official Development Assistance/Gross National Income ratio that will result in an additional 20 billion euro per annum in Official Development Assistance, and Africa is high on the political agenda for assistance. In addition, the EU Near Neighbours Strategy will come on stream during 2006-2007, which is likely to lead to larger cross-sector projects being advertised. In the Far East, the dynamic growth of China has prompted governments and agencies to vie against each other for positive political relations, and the resultant internationally funded projects seem to be spreading not only in China but also to neighbouring countries. With access to

<sup>2</sup> WSBI-ESBG Consultancy contracts are performed in the name of ESBG.



finance being given high priority in international financial institutions, a continued pipeline of opportunities is assured.

In September 2005, the WSBI Board approved a 10 point plan that recognises the potential as well as ESG Consultancy's ability to win contracts internationally. With this in place, we look forward to a continued growth in projects performed worldwide, to the benefit of WSBI members everywhere.

The following table provides an overview of contracts managed during 2005:

Region	Project Name	Contracting Authority	Contract Duration	Project Objective	Consortium Partners
<b>Africa</b>					
Mali	Feasibility study into the creation of a municipal bank	Belgian Technical Cooperation	11 March 2005 – 22 April 2005	To determine the feasibility of establishing a municipal bank, and to determine the methods and resources required for its establishment	ESBG (leader) CNCE (F)
Malawi	Restructuring and privatisation of the Malawi Savings Bank – Phase II	Malawi Privatisation Commission (World Bank funded)	31 March 2005 – 31 December 2005	Assist the Government of Malawi in implementing approved restructuring strategies and options to fully commercialise Malawi Savings Bank; this will prepare Malawi Savings Bank for possible private sector participation in phase 3	ESBG (leader) CNCE (F) Swedbank KPMG Malawi
<b>Asia</b>					
China	EU-China Financial Services Cooperation Project	EuropeAid	Originally 31 December 2002 – 30 December 2005, now extended to 31 December 2006	To provide Technical Assistance to assist China in its efforts to restructure its financial services industry (banking, insurance and securities) in line with its international commitments following WTO accession.	ESBG (leader) CNCE (F) SBFIC (D) Swedbank (SE) Lloyds TSB Bank (UK) GDV (German Insurance Assoc) Vienna Stock Exchange (AT)
Mongolia	Mongolian Savings Bank Resolution	Ministry of Finance and Economy, Mongolia (World Bank funded)	1 May 2004 – 30 April 2005	Study visit for MOFE officials to study savings bank restructuring in Europe. Prepare a business plan and action plan for the resolution of the future of the savings bank	ESBG (leader) Swedbank



Region	Project Name	Contracting Authority	Contract Duration	Project Objective	Consortium Partners
Vietnam	Support to the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV)	EuropeAid	15 December 2005 – 14 June 2007	To assess the extent to which Vietnamese banks are compliant with prevailing regulations and are reporting information reliably. Assess the usefulness of current information reported Provide training to SBV inspectors	ESBG (lead) CNCE (F) LloydsTSB (UK) Ernst & Young (VN)
<b>Central Asia</b>					
Azerbaijan	Collection of public utility fees	National Bank of Azerbaijan (World Bank funded)	Dec 2005 – Dec 2006	To review the options and the cost of improving the collection of public utilities fees in Azerbaijan	ESBG
Kyrgyzstan		National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic (NBKR)	29 June 2005 – 31 March 2006	Assist NBKR with the introduction of a RTGS system	ESBG
<b>Europe</b>					
European Union, European Economic Area + EU Accession countries	Impact of the Basel II Accord on Small and Medium size enterprises (SMEs)	European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry	31 March 2004 – 31 January 2006	Information dissemination through the organisation of conferences and relevant background material of the impact of Basel II Accord on SMEs. ESBG has delivered 60 conferences in 30 countries.	ESBG (leader) Lloyds TSB Bank (UK) UEAPME (B)
Mainly Spain, Belgium and Estonia	INNOBANK	EU (e-Ten Programme)	30 December 2004 – 30 June 2006	Market validation under real market conditions of intelligent new branch office technologies	La Caixa (E) – (leader) Fortis Bank (B) Hansabank (Ee) ESBG Fujitsu (E) TBS (E) FhG-IAO (D) University of Stuttgart (D)
Central and Eastern Europe	EU-EBRD SME Finance Facility	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	April 2001 – April 2006	Framework Contract relating to technical assistance programme to introduce SME lending methodologies and systems to banks participating in a EBRD SME credit line	ESBG (leader) CNCE (F) SBFIC (D) Swedbank(Se) Lloyds TSB Bank (UK) Enterplan Ltd (UK) GFA Management



Region	Project Name	Contracting Authority	Contract Duration	Project Objective	Consortium Partners
Central and Eastern Europe	EU-EBRD Municipal Finance Facility	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	March 2004 – March 2007	Framework contract relating to TA programme to introduce methodologies and systems for lending to municipal authorities by banks participating in a EBRD credit line.	ESBG (leader) CNCE (F) Swedbank (Se) Ernst & Young (Cz)
<b>Global</b>					
	FIRST Initiative	Multi-donor	April 2005 – February 2007 with a further 2 year extension possible	A Multi-donor programme to support capacity building and policy development projects in financial sectors in developing countries.	ESBG
	EU Global Framework Facility, Lot 10	EuropeAid	16 September 2005 – 15 September 2007	Framework contract for relatively small and short-term (less than 1 year) assignments in the area of "Support to Industry / Commerce / Services (Lot 10)" in countries benefiting from EU external aid.	Pohl Consulting and Associates (D) (Leader) ESBG Environmental Resources Management Ltd (UK) and Wiener Börse AG (A)
	EU Global Framework Facility, Lot 11	EuropeAid	16 September 2005 – 15 September 2007	Framework contract for relatively small and short-term (less than 1 year) assignments in the area of "Macro Economy, Public Finances and Regulatory Aspects (Lot 11)" in countries benefiting from EU external aid.	Pohl Consulting and Associates (D) (Leader) ESBG BDA (EE), Crown Agents (UK), Danish Patent and Trademark Office (DK), Development Researchers' Network (I), Environmental Resources Management (UK), GDSI (IRL) PKF (UK) LLP, Swedish Institute for Public Administration (S)

**W**SB I provides professional development services for members in the form of trainings: workshops, seminars, study visits and in the form of conferences with the financial and expert support of its members. During 2005, 3 seminars, 5 workshops and 2 conferences brought over 500 banking professionals from all over the world together to learn and to exchange experiences about a wide range of professional topics.

### **New Marketing Tools and Policies**

In the highly changing and competitive environment which retail banking is undergoing, service quality, marketing and communication are all of highest importance to savings and retail banks. It was along these lines that WSBI launched, in cooperation with the Fédération Nationale des Caisses d'Épargne (FNCE, France), a workshop on New Marketing Tools and Policies. The workshop was organized twice during 2005 for The Government Savings Bank of Thailand (GSB, Thailand, Bangkok, January 2005) and the Vietnam Postal Savings Service Company (VPSC, Vietnam, Hanoi, July 2005) respectively. The training reviewed major marketing, distribution and communication policies applied by fellow savings banks. One of the beneficiaries (GSB Thailand) expressed major interest in further developing the training by focusing on customer segmentation strategies, training which was scheduled for January 2006.

### **Internal Control for Financial Institutions**

In the light of the importance of regulations such as the Sarbanes Oxley act for Internal Control or Basel II for capital requirements, WSBI had developed during the previous year a strong focus on risk management and internal audit in its trainings. These had been provided from a general but practical perspective and concluded that the topic deserved a more in depth and targeted treatment. This conclusion resulted in the delivery of a seminar in Lome, Togo, September 2005, to the benefit of WSBI members in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), enhancing the role of corporate governance and compliance. The wide spectrum and changing nature of risks presented motivated a request for a forthcoming training on Risk Management, to be delivered in 2006.

### **Savings mobilisation**

Core to savings and retail banks activities, savings mobilization is a topic for which exchange of experiences is always welcome –and requested– by WSBI members. In cooperation with the Fédération Nationale des Caisses d'Épargne (FNCE), WSBI delivered two workshops on the topic to The Savings Bank of Bénin (Cotonou, April 2005) and to AMONATBONK (Savings Bank of The Republic of Tajikistan, Moscow, August 2005) respectively. Both events presented a selection of successful savings products offered by fellow savings banks, with a special focus on product design and marketing. Both trainings concluded with the organisation of working groups devoted to the design of virtual products, presenting amongst others, products to channel migrants remittances, finance a specific event (marriage, popular festivity), project (university studies) or asset (real estate purchase). Both institutions expressed



their willingness of participating in additional workshops on consumer credit and/or distribution policies, which is the natural training sequence following a training on savings mobilization.

### **Efficient and Entrepreneurial Branch Management**

Physical distribution channels lie at the core of savings and retail banks assets to ensure width and depth of coverage in terms of providing financial products and services. Distribution policies were tackled in the form of trainings from two different perspectives:

- 1) How to complement physical channels with new distribution methods in order to improve operational efficiency in the branch (Workshop on Efficient Branch Management for La Poste of Senegal, Dakar, April 2005) and
- 2) How to improve quality of service and customer satisfaction within the branch (Seminar for WSBI members within the Association of Savings Banks of Eastern Africa ASBEA, Kampala, September 2005). Both trainings benefited from the cooperation of the Fédération Nationale des Caisses d'Épargne (FNCE).

### **Retail Banking Strategy**

At a time when many savings and postal savings institutions are moving towards higher performance levels in a highly competitive environment, African regional members welcomed the regional seminar on Retail Banking Strategies (Mombassa, Kenya, June 2005). The seminar was organized in close cooperation with the Fédération Nationale des Caisses d'Épargne (FNCE, France) and the Deutscher Sparkassen- und GiroVerband (DSGV, Germany) and the Sparkassenstiftung für Internationale Kooperation (SBFIC, Savings Banks's Foundation for International Cooperation, Germany). The presentation by several savings and retail banks of their experiences in dealing with the definition of a clear strategy and a proper implementation of this, resulted in a very interactive and participative seminar which motivated an interest for an in-depth targeted seminar on the operational implementation of the strategy, to be developed and delivered in 2006.

The topic was also object of a Bank Management Simulation seminar (Bank Strategies and Operational decisions in a Competitive Environment, Bangkok, Thailand, December 2005) delivered in cooperation with the Sparkassenstiftung für Internationale Kooperation (SBFIC, Savings Banks's Foundation for International Cooperation, Germany) and Deutscher Sparkassen- und GiroVerband (DSGV).



## **Forthcoming training & development**

Thanks to the demand from several of our members, the following trainings are already foreseen for 2006:

- Government Savings Bank of Thailand
  - Workshop on advanced marketing tools and policies
  - Simulation seminar on Branch management
- Vietnam Postal Savings Services Company
  - Workshop on Risk Management
- Vietnam Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development
  - Workshop on Risk Management
- Senegalese Post
  - Workshop on Change Management/Corporate Culture
  - Workshop on Card Payments
- WSBI members in WAEMU
  - Workshop on Risk Management
- African WSBI members
  - Workshop on operational implementation of strategy

Moreover, WSBI will team up with its members and/or strategic partners to develop additional topics during the year 2006, such as Islamic Financial Services or Housing Microfinance. In the light of their importance and interest, topics such as Risk Management or Microfinance will continue to be addressed under the form of conferences and/or trainings in 2006.

### Internal Organisation

The Internal Organisation Department is responsible for accounting, budgeting, budget control, ICT, distribution and multiplication of documents, as well as for the Joint Office premises, documentation and archives, personnel and overall organisation matters.

Concerning ICT, continuous efforts were made throughout the year to increase the functionality of the network and the applications to give a maximum satisfaction to the users. Special attention was given to Security, Contingency and accessibility of the resources.

### Communications

The objective of the WSBI/ESBG communication activities is to give more voice to the activities of the organisation, particularly towards the EU and international institutions and to enhance its profile and image with the various target groups. To this effect, the communication department uses the full range of PR tools.

In the field of media relations, press releases and interviews were used to maintain a permanent dialogue with the international press and to voice the positions of WSBI/ESBG in the various debates and discussions that dominate the international financial sector.

Several issues of the thematic series Perspectives have been published, on Microcredit and on the legal environment of Savings Banks in Europe. These publications are aimed at the institutional and general public as well as at ESBG members.

During the year, several events have been organised to provide members with occasions for networking and to capture the attention of specific groups of decision makers and opinion leaders. On top of the traditional WSBI reception on the occasion of the annual International Monetary Fund/World Bank meetings, a seminar of the newly created EU/US forum was organised. The latter was not only an occasion to listen to top-level speakers, but also to facilitate discussions between representatives of the European and US financial sector.

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

CEBS - Committee of European Banking Supervisors	This committee advises the European Commission on banking policy issues and promotes convergence of supervisory practise across the European Union.
CESR – Committee of European Securities Regulators	CESR is an independent Committee of European Securities Regulators. The role of the Committee is to Improve coordination among securities regulators, Act as an advisory group to assist the EU Commission and work to ensure more consistent and timely day-to-day implementation of community legislation in the Member States.
CGAP – Consultative Group to Assist the Poor	The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) is a consortium of 33 public and private development agencies working together to expand access to financial services for the poor, referred to as microfinance. CGAP's staff, working from World Bank offices in Washington, DC and Paris, serve donor agencies, microfinance institutions (MFIs), and other microfinance practitioners.
CRD - Capital Requirements Directive	The Capital Requirements Directive transposes the Basel 2 accord in EU law. Basel 2 aims to strengthen the soundness and stability of the international banking system by establishing capital ratios that are representative of modern banks' risk management practices.
SBFIC – Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation	The Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation (SBFIC) of the German savings banks, promotes and advises the institutional and economic development of savings banks and similar financial institutions in central and eastern Europe, and in developing countries across Africa, Asia and central America.
UEAPME – Union Européenne des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (European Union of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Entreprises)	UEAPME is the employer's organisation representing the interests of European crafts, trades and SMEs at EU level. UEAPME is a recognised European Social Partner. UEAPME incorporates 78 member organisations consisting of national cross-sectorial SME federations, European branch federations and other associate members, which support the SME family.



UNDESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs	The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options. It facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.
UNDP	UNDP is the UN’s global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.
UPU – Universal Postal Union	With 190 member countries, the UPU is the primary forum for cooperation between postal services and helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services. In this way, the organisation fulfils an advisory, mediating and liaison role, and renders technical assistance where needed. It sets the rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations to stimulate growth in mail volumes and to improve the quality of service for customers.
WAEMU – West African Economic and Monetary Union	Economic and monetary organisation of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinée Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

## About WSBI



WSBI (World Savings Banks Institute) is the only global representative of savings and retail banks. Founded in 1924, it represents savings and retail banks and associations thereof in 86 countries of the world (Asia-Pacific, the Americas, Africa and Europe – via the European Savings Banks Group). At the start of 2005, assets of member banks amounted to more than €7,506 billion.

As the international voice of savings and retail banking, WSBI works closely with international financial institutions and donor agencies. It thereby represents savings and retail banks' interests at an international level while also facilitating the provision of access to financial sectors worldwide, e.g., through training, consultancy services, etc., be it in developing or developed regions.

WSBI members are typically savings and retail banks or associations thereof. They are often organised in decentralised networks and offer their services throughout their region. WSBI member banks have reinvested responsibly in their region for many decades and are one distinct benchmark for corporate social responsibility activities throughout the world.



Rue Marie-Thérèse, 11 ■ B-1000 Brussels ■ Tel: +32 2 211 11 11 ■ Fax: +32 2 211 11 99  
info@savings-banks.com ■ www.savings-banks.com

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