



ESBG Charter for Responsible Business

Brussels, May 2008

ESBG Charter for Responsible Business

Preamble

ESBG MEMBER BANKS all over Europe 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:

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

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, ESBG recommends a commitment to the following responsible principles:**

Fair and clear relations with customers

In order to build and maintain a long-term relationship of confidence with customers, 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
- Consider all cases of financial difficulty sympathetically
- Inform and communicate with customers and deal with customer complaints quickly and efficiently.

Promotion of accessibility and financial inclusion

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

- Serve all segments of the population without any discrimination on the basis of age, gender or ethnic background, 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 access channels accessible to persons with physical disabilities or impairments.

Environment–friendly business

ESBG member banks recognise that the environmental challenge is becoming one of the main collective hazards ever experienced worldwide. As part of their strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR), ESBG and its members wish to make a contribution in favour of the planet and are aware of the need to:

- Recognise the risks and opportunities caused by environmental issues for their business
- Consider the impact of their business on the environment, both direct in terms of own operations and indirect in terms of customers and suppliers
- Pay attention to the impact of the business on climate change and global warming and how climate change and global warming impacts on the business
- Incorporate the environmental dimension in banking offers, operations and processes as well as in relations with suppliers, as appropriate
- Promote products and services that respect social, environmental and sustainable development criteria.

Making a responsible contribution to the community

It is part of the role and identity of 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
- Provide financial services throughout the country and contribute to the economic and social development in all regions in which they operate
- Drive local economic dynamism by financing economic development projects, including small and micro projects aimed at creating jobs and reducing social exclusion
- Support local civic commitment and contribute to social welfare through donations and community partnership

programmes in such fields as culture, research and development, education, social welfare and the preservation of natural and historical heritage.

Responsible employers

In their role as responsible employers and as part of their philosophy, 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 bank 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
- Pursue a responsible relocation and redundancy policy towards employees in case of reorganisation or restructuring.

Communication

- Transparency is key. Communication of activities and policies plays an important role for responsible business. Accordingly, 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 European level. This information will be updated on a regular basis.

ESBG - The European voice of savings and retail banking

ESBG (European Savings Banks Group) is an international banking association that represents one of the largest European retail banking networks, comprising about one third of the retail banking market in Europe. As at the start of 2006, the ESBG comprised approximately 870 individual savings and retail banks operating 84,000 branches and employing 971,000 people with total assets amounting to €5,216 billion. The ESBG represents the interest of its members vis-à-vis the EU Institutions and generates, facilitates and manages high quality cross-border banking projects.

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



ESBG

European Savings Banks Group aisbl

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