Swiss Banking

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Marcel Rohner: “Competitiveness must be a goal in its own right for banking regulation”

This year’s Bankers Day organised by the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA) focused on the Swiss financial centre’s competitiveness. In his final address as Chairman of the SBA, Marcel Rohner called on politicians, legislators and regulators to establish competitiveness firmly as a goal in its own right alongside financial stability and client protection when designing operating frameworks. He also stressed the importance of robust vocational training and a culture of responsibility in providing a basis for the financial centre’s long-term success. At today’s Bankers Day event, Rohner passed the reins to the SBA’s new Chairman Giorgio Pradelli, CEO of EFG International.

In his fifth and final Bankers Day address, Marcel Rohner set out the conditions that need to be in place for the Swiss financial centre to remain a prosperous world leader: intense competition, qualified specialists and instinctively practised professional ethics.

Competitiveness requires competition

Rohner stressed that high intensity of competition lays the foundation for innovation, high-quality services and long-term success. For a heavily regulated sector like the financial centre, therefore, he believes that legislation and regulation must be aligned with international norms and keep barriers to market entry low. He noted that protecting clients and safeguarding the stability of the financial system are essential, but insisted that competitiveness must also be a goal in its own right and that successful regulation stems from carefully weighing these interests against each other.

“If legislators and regulators attach less importance to competitiveness than to protecting investors, clients and the stability of the financial system when defining the aims of banking laws and regulations, this can therefore create problems,” said Rohner.

Avoiding missed opportunities

Looking back at Swiss policies over the past few decades, Rohner warned against the consequences of false regulatory and fiscal incentives. He pointed to gold trading, the eurobond market and the fund business as examples of how Switzerland has lost entire fields of activity as well as value creation and know-how to other countries. Politicians, legislators and regulators, he said, must create frameworks that allow Switzerland to seize opportunities like these in future.

Apprenticeships and cutting-edge research as success factors

Rohner also addressed the topic of education and professional development, citing Switzerland’s dual education system as one of its greatest strengths. Apprenticeships, he noted, open up a flexible range of career pathways and provide an outstanding basis for training specialists. He thanked the approximately 130 banks currently training some 3,000 apprentices.

At the same time, Rohner acknowledged the excellent work being done by universities and their contribution to the financial centre’s competitiveness. He noted that the Swiss Finance Institute, founded two decades ago, has been instrumental in raising Switzerland’s international profile in financial research and education. Rohner urged banks to keep investing in training the next generation of staff as well as in cutting-edge research.

Responsibility as a basis for trust

Reviewing the experience of the Credit Suisse crisis, Rohner once again highlighted the banks' special responsibility towards clients, society and their owners as part of a financial system underpinned by the State. This, he noted, is reflected in their meticulous client identification, responsible advice, prudent lending policies and professional management of financial and operational risks.

"Intense competition, the ready availability of qualified specialists and a professional ethics that we have internalised and practise instinctively are the pillars of our future development," said Rohner.

Parting thanks

Rohner thanked his colleagues on the Board of Directors and at the SBA offices for their support and outstanding teamwork over the past five years, stating: "It has been an honour and a privilege for me to hold this office."

SBA Annual General Meeting

At today's SBA Annual General Meeting, the following were elected to the Board of Directors: Markus Ronner, Vice-Chairman of the Board, UBS Group AG; Stefan Bollinger, Chief Executive Officer and Member of the Executive Boards, Julius Baer Group Ltd and Bank Julius Baer & Co. Ltd; Dr Basil Heeb, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Raiffeisen Switzerland Cooperative and Vice-President of the SBA; and Georg Schubiger, Co-CEO of Bank Vontobel AG.

Giorgio Pradelli takes over as Chairman

Bankers Day also marked the handover of the SBA chairmanship from Marcel Rohner to Giorgio Pradelli, CEO of EFG International: “I am delighted to be taking over this position and am aware of its importance for the Swiss financial centre. Marcel Rohner has led the Bankers Association through a challenging time with his outstanding experience and prudence, as a result of which it is now in an excellent position to face the future. Continuity is important to me, but always with a focus on what lies ahead. Together with politicians, authorities and the industry, I want to play a part in further strengthening the Swiss financial centre’s competitiveness so that it can support our open, innovative and export-oriented national economy”, said Giorgio Pradelli.

Bankers Day is regarded as the most important industry event for the Swiss financial centre. It is aimed at SBA members, partner associations and representatives of the authorities, and takes place at a different location in Switzerland each year. The 2026 event was attended by some 400 participants in St. Gallen. The programme also includes the SBA’s Annual General Meeting. The full **speech by Dr Marcel Rohner** is available on the SBA website.

About the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA)

The SBA is the umbrella organisation of the Swiss banks. It represents the sector nationally and internationally vis-à-vis the private sector, policymakers, the authorities and the general public. The SBA advocates for open markets, scope for entrepreneurial freedom and a level playing field. As a centre of competence, it propagates banking expertise and actively engages in future topics. The SBA was founded in Basel in 1912, and its membership today comprises around 260 institutions and over 9,000 individuals.

Press and media inquiries

Our team is available to respond to enquiries from members of the media.

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