

The SBA adopts new areas of focus and strategic priorities

Basel, April 07, 2017 – Under the leadership of Chairman Herbert J. Scheidt, the Board of Directors of the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA) has defined the focus of the association's activities and the strategic priorities for 2017. Concomitant with this, the business priorities of the SBA's office will be realigned and the Executive Board will be reinforced with the addition of new members.

Overarching areas of focus for effective lobbying

- Three overarching areas of focus: clear positioning, acting with foresight and close collaboration between the members of the SBA and other associations
- Board of Directors defines focus of the association's activities and strategic priorities for 2017
- Repositioning of the SBA's office at the organisational level
- Silvan Lipp and Philipp Halbherr as new members of the Executive Board

The Swiss Bankers Association (SBA) is committed to helping ensure that also in future, Switzerland will continue to have one of the strongest, most competitive and innovative financial centres with a strong financial centre infrastructure, competitive banks and attractive locations for the international financial community. In the view of Herbert J. Scheidt, three overarching areas of focus are key if the activities and perception of the SBA by the government and the public are to be successful:

Firstly, clear positioning of what Swiss Banking stands for. The SBA's mandate is to sharpen and continually reinforce the profile and the reputation of the banking sector through professional promotion at home and abroad. This is an important prerequisite for creating a broad understanding of the concerns of the sector and therefore credibly representing the interests of the banks vis-à-vis the government and the public to the benefit of Switzerland. A first example of a series of planned measures is the trip to Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore and Hong Kong that will be made by a delegation of industry representatives from 12 until 19 April 2017, and which will be led by Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer, Head of the Federal Department of Finance (FDF).

Secondly, it is essential that the SBA act with foresight and collaborate proactively with the government, the administration, the supervisory authorities and business in the relevant areas – both at home and abroad. “As the SBA, we want to take on an even greater role as the thought leaders for the framework conditions of tomorrow”, emphasizes Herbert J. Scheidt. “The sector can only effectively influence the development of framework conditions if it recognises the relevant issues at an early stage, and from the outset, contributes its expertise on the basis of clear positions. This applies for issues in Switzerland, but also for international bodies such as the OECD or the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. It is particularly at the international level that future framework conditions are defined, which at a later point in time are transposed into national law, and therefore determine the competitiveness of the Swiss banks”, says Herbert J. Scheidt.

Thirdly, of key importance is the close collaboration between the members of the SBA and other associations. The efficient use of the outstanding professional expertise found at the banks is the foundation of professional lobbying. It is also important to bundle the strengths within the financial industry with the objective of pulling together, and in doing so, strengthening the financial centre’s footprint. One example of this is the Asset Management Platform, which was founded together with the Swiss Funds and Asset Management Association (SFAMA), and where the two associations are already collaborating in a coordinated manner. This approach will allow the SBA to closely follow developments in the sector and therefore, as the direct point of contact and representative of all the banks, voice their concerns to the government in the interests of competitive framework conditions.

Strategic priorities for 2017

At the beginning of the year, the Board of Directors defined the strategic thematic priorities for 2017. At the Committee of the Board of Directors’ meeting held on 4 April 2017, these were defined in greater detail and action plans were approved.

- *Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI)*: implementation of the AEOI remains at the very top of the SBA’s agenda. In addition to ensuring a level playing field in the international context and making improvements in terms of market access, it is of key importance that the issue of data protection and data security are addressed proactively.
- *Financial Services Act (FinSa) and Financial Institutions Act (FinIA)*: with FinSA and FinIA, two legislations are being passed that are key to the Swiss financial centre. The banks support the planned legislations, as they create stable and predictable framework conditions for financial services.
- *Basel III/IV*: the SBA will closely follow the further developments of the BCBS reforms and in Switzerland, will advocate for competitive rules without a Swiss finish for transposition into national law.
- *Pensions*: pensions are a central matter for the banks, and in the area of occupational pension plans, the SBA wants to specifically raise awareness of the “third contributor” (investment returns).
- *Regulatory process*: lastly, improvements to the regulatory process and the reduction of regulatory costs are highly relevant matters for the SBA.

Alignment of the business priorities with fields of competence

To reach the objectives that have been set, key competencies will be further refined within the SBA and will be more closely linked to one another in day-to-day operations: firstly, the competencies in Private Banking, Asset Management,

Retail Banking and Capital Markets, which have an in-depth understanding of the practical banking business; secondly, the bundling of important specialist competencies for the assessment of technical issues; and thirdly, the competent and therefore effective communication and lobbying of government and the public. The SBA is repositioning itself at the organisational level in line with these competencies:

- The SBA communicated in December 2016 that the Communications and Public Affairs departments will be merged to in future facilitate communication with the government, the media and the public from a single source.
- The specialist departments Tax, Legal & Compliance as well as Regulation & Accounting will be merged into one department and placed under a single management.
- The two business areas Retail Banking & Capital Markets as well as Private Banking & Asset Management will be reinforced with the addition of further personnel.

Reinforcement of the Executive Board

The SBA's Executive Board will be aligned with the new structures and new members will be joining:

- Silvan Lipp will join the SBA in July 2017 as a Member of the Executive Board and Head of the new Communications and Public Affairs department. Silvan Lipp has extensive experience in public affairs, public relations and professional lobbying. For the last five years, Silvan Lipp has held senior roles at UBS AG in the Public Affairs department, currently as Deputy Head Governmental Affairs Switzerland. Silvan Lipp has an excellent network in the Swiss government and business community, as well as in-depth knowledge of Swiss economic and financial market policy. Before joining UBS, Silvan Lipp worked at Economiesuisse, and led a number of campaign projects, among others in the Communications department.
- Rolf Brüggemann, Member of the Executive Board and previously Head Retail Banking and Capital Markets, assumed responsibility for the specialist departments at the beginning of April 2017. As an attorney with longstanding experience in supervision, legal and compliance, Rolf Brüggemann has the ideal prerequisites to further develop the Tax, Legal & Compliance as well as the Prudential Regulation & Accounting specialist departments.
- Philipp Halbherr is a Member of the Executive Board and has been responsible for the Retail Banking and Capital Markets business areas since the beginning of April 2017. The former Member of the Executive Board of Zürcher Kantonalbank (ZKB) and former Member of the Board of Directors of SIX Group AG holds a doctorate in economics and has longstanding and far-reaching management and practical experience in various areas of banking. Philipp Halbherr, who at ZKB most recently led the business unit Institutionals and Multinationals, is not only highly familiar with the banking environment and financial market infrastructure, but also has first-hand knowledge of the multifaceted regulatory environment.
- The person who will assume responsibility for the Private Banking and Asset Management business areas will be announced at a later date. The hiring process for this position will be finalised shortly. The SBA's Executive Board will therefore be complete by mid-year and will be aligned with the Board of Directors' key strategic areas of focus.

Press and media inquiries

Our team is happy to respond to any media inquiries.

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