



Maria Luísa Albuquerque

Commissioner for Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union, European Commission

Making our markets work for us

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

It's a pleasure to be with you today. I have had the privilege of engaging with many of you since taking on the role of Commissioner for Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union.

This Financial Forum offers us a chance to take the pulse of the financial services sector, exchange perspectives, and develop a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The last time we met in this format was in Warsaw in April, and the mood was marked by uncertainty.

The prospect of new U.S. tariffs loomed large, with forecasts warning of a serious impact on EU growth in the worst-case scenario. That would have been bad news for European businesses, workers, and citizens alike.

And it was in Warsaw last April where EU finance ministers came together to pledge unity in face of the US's decision to disrupt our trading relationship.

Since then, we have come through, as the Commission President mentioned in her State of the Union address, with the best possible deal out there, giving European businesses an advantage over their competitors. But most importantly, and I expect crucially for many in this room, it gave businesses the necessary stability, as well as a chance to breathe.

In this time of global insecurity, stability for businesses is not evident. We, as the European

Union, need to work towards a situation where external factors cannot easily derail our progress. This underlines the need for a more competitive Europe, and indeed, as we heard last week in the State of the Union address, our ability to determine our own destiny.

The Competitiveness Compass announced in January charts the course towards a stronger Europe, and the Savings and Investments Union will provide the fuel for us to reach our destination by freeing up Europe's investment capability.

When we last met, we had only just launched the Savings and Investments Union strategy. Well, six months down the road, we have already started delivering. I would like to use my remarks today to speak about what progress we have made in recent months, and what is coming around the corner.

In June, we launched the first major initiative under the strategy, with our proposals to revitalise EU securitisation.

The reforms we propose will boost the EU's securitisation market, which in terms of its relative size, lags considerably behind other major jurisdictions. The market for securitisation in Europe is also highly concentrated, with 80 percent of securitisation activity happening in just five Member States.

Like most other parts of the SIU, this proposal is about channelling more investment into the real economy. It is about fuelling growth, innovation, and

job creation across the EU. For financial institutions, it creates new opportunities to issue securitisations and free up capital for further lending to citizens and businesses. For investors, it offers more choice and deeper, more dynamic capital markets.

To deliver this, we have focused on making the market easier and cheaper to operate in, while safeguarding financial stability.

The proposal is now in the hands of the European Parliament and Member States. My services and I stand ready to support them so that we can move quickly and deliver positive change on the ground.

And we do need to move fast, the world is not waiting for us.

Over the summer, we pressed ahead with preparing the next elements of the SIU Strategy. We launched several consultations, and the response from both the public and industry was strong.

I am sure many of you in this room contributed, and I would like to sincerely thank you for that. Your input and experience as practitioners in the market is invaluable to our work.

The next major items, which will be launched later this month, relate to Savings and Investment Accounts and financial literacy.

Experience across several Member States, and indeed further afield, shows us that Savings and Investment Accounts, SIAs, can be a powerful tool to boost retail participation in capital markets,

particularly when paired with the right incentives, like tax benefits.

That is why we will issue a Recommendation encouraging Member States to adopt SIA frameworks, aligned with best practices we have identified. While fully respecting that taxation is a national competence, the evidence clearly shows that incentives matter for citizen engagement. So, our proposal will also include guidance on tax incentives.

Once published, we will closely monitor Member States' follow-up. Some already have schemes in place. But many do not, and here lies a real opportunity to open the door to greater investment and wealth creation for their citizens.

Alongside this, we will launch a Communication on a comprehensive EU Financial Literacy Strategy.

Too many of our citizens still struggle to manage their finances effectively. With the right knowledge, everyone could feel empowered to make informed financial decisions, budget better and save more.

Financial literacy will also raise awareness of the risks and opportunities of investment solutions.

This is about more than individual resilience and wellbeing, though that alone is vital. Higher financial literacy and wider retail participation will also contribute to more funding for European companies and priorities.

We know that Europeans are some

of the best savers in the world, and there is an opportunity here for Europeans to be a part of the solution, while reaping the benefits of Europe's success.

Looking beyond the coming weeks, towards the end of the year, we will publish a package on pensions, as well as proposals on market integration and supervision.

On pensions, a stronger supplementary pensions sector can serve a double purpose: providing citizens with greater financial security in retirement, and at the same time helping to channel long-term savings into capital markets and strategic investments that boost the EU economy. This is all the more important as we face common demographic challenges across Europe.

Pensions, by their very nature, are long-term. That is why they are such powerful drivers of capital market development. It is no coincidence that the Member States with the most advanced supplementary pension systems are also those with the deepest capital markets. My vision is to see this success replicated across the Union.

Of course, pensions remain a national competence, and Member States are at very different stages of development. That is why we will issue a Recommendation on auto-enrolment on occupational pensions, pension tracking systems and dashboards, guiding towards best-practice options those who wish to introduce or strengthen these tools.

In parallel, we will propose targeted changes to the IORP II and PEPP frameworks. For IORP II, our focus is on bringing more transparency on costs and returns, stronger risk management, and ensuring greater long-term value for members – the workers and citizens whose savings they manage. For PEPP, we will propose changes to make the framework more efficient and attractive for investors and providers. Both reforms are designed to mobilise more savings towards productive investments.

Beyond pensions, and within the same timeline, we are also working to advance market integration.

By year end, we will present a legislative package on trading, post-trading, and asset management.

The goal is to remove cross-border barriers, cut administrative costs, and simplify the rules.

As we progress towards deeper market integration, it is crucial for the EU supervisory framework to evolve as well. Industry feedback highlights challenges such as divergent supervisory practices, duplications and inconsistent application of EU law. This creates additional costs, complexity, and legal uncertainty for operators. In addition, supervisors lack a coherent overview over cross-border entities and activities, and coordination is limited in case action is needed outside a national context.

That undermines competitiveness, discourages cross-border activity,

and makes the EU a less appealing investment destination.

We are considering two avenues to approach these problems:

First, we are considering a proposal to transfer supervisory powers to ESMA for the most significant cross-border entities. In this context, we are looking at possible centralised supervision of certain market infrastructures, such as central counterparties, central securities depositories, and trading venues. We also see the benefit of more centralised supervision for new and rapidly evolving areas where supervisory capacities need to be up to the task, such as Crypto Asset Service Providers.

This targeted centralisation of supervision becomes even more logical in a context where market barriers are removed, implying significant scope for increased cross-border activity in our Savings and Investments Union. This in turn requires sufficient supervisory capacity to deal with cross-border situations.

Let me be clear, transferring supervision to ESMA would not sideline national authorities; on the contrary, it would imply efficient cooperation with national authorities, in the interest of ensuring better oversight and more informed decision-making.

In parallel, efforts will continue on enhancing the use and effectiveness of supervisory convergence tools, which currently have limited application.

All of this would imply changes

to the governance and decision-making processes of ESMA, and we have various models to consider based on other existing models of centralised supervision.

Like any great reform, building a true Savings and Investments Union requires collective conviction and buy-in from every corner of the Union.

I have made it a priority to visit every Member State, and I am committed to reaching all of them by early next year.

In every capital I have visited, the message is the same. Stakeholders see the clear, tangible benefits of our strategy. And in each capital, I have made it clear that once the proposals are on the table, it is our shared responsibility to move from theory to practice, and swiftly.

Before I finish, I would like to return to something I outlined the last time we gathered in this forum six months ago: my vision for the SIU.

I want to be clear that within the Commission, we have no intention nor appetite to replicate any other market.

In the same manner that Europe forged a new path for itself through the creation of the Single Market, significantly transforming global trade and boosting our global standing, we have the potential to do this again with our financial markets.

The Savings and Investments Union is European by design, driven by our collective desire for concrete positive impact for

citizens, and built on our core values of diversity, inclusion, and empowerment.

It will create a virtuous cycle of investment, where our citizens can invest in their own futures and in the future of our economy.

So let me underline that this project is not an effort to replicate the US, the UK or any other existing market; it is an effort to create something entirely new and authentically European, grounded in our own values.

I want to thank you all for your continued support in this effort, and I look forward to hearing your feedback on our upcoming proposals.

Thank you.