KNF International Conference on Finance

Warsaw, 23 September 2026

Building a strong, simple, and efficient financial system for Europe

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to make one of my first visits as Chair of the EBA to an EU capital, here in Poland, a country whose financial sector stands as a success story of European integration. All Europeans can join you in taking pride in this success of yours.

It is a privilege to be here to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the KNF. The KNF is a highly valued partner of the EBA. The title of the conference made me think of the famous Odyssey by Homer. Ulysses was successful navigating uncertainty as he was driven by a purpose: to go home.

Let's not forget the very purpose of the European Union: to ensure prosperity, stability and peace.

Today, the European project is at a crossroads. Yet Poland's remarkable success within the EU remains a powerful source of confidence in Europe's future. Few people realise that Poland's GDP per capita in purchasing power terms has now surpassed that of several long-established advanced economies. This achievement belongs first and foremost to Poland and its citizens, but it has also benefited a lot from the European integration journey.

The coordinated European regulatory and supervisory responses to the Global Financial Crisis and subsequent Euro crisis have made our banking systems more resilient, more stable, more integrated and more competitive. Today, European banks are among the strongest institutions in the world.

Now, as every experienced manager knows, success can breed complacency. What worked over the past decade and a half cannot be taken for granted in a rapidly changing environment. The question before us is, therefore, not whether the European banking sector has succeeded. The question is whether it is ready for the next decade.

Competitiveness as a strategic imperative

The first challenge is competitiveness.

Across Europe, there is broad recognition that competitiveness must become a strategic priority. Economic growth, innovation, defence, digitalisation and the green transition all require substantial investment. Europe needs a financial system capable of mobilising savings efficiently and channelling them into productive investments.

Banks have a central role to play in this effort. Strong banks are not an alternative to capital markets; they are an essential complement and perhaps a pre-requisite. Europe needs both a resilient banking sector and deeper capital markets if it is to achieve its long-term ambitions. A key link between the two is securitisation.

The good news is that European banks start from a position of strength. After more than a decade of reforms, they are well capitalised, liquid and profitable. Since 2020, profitability has improved considerably and the gap with international peers has narrowed significantly. EU banks have a return on equity of around 11%, demonstrating a substantial improvement in competitiveness and providing a solid foundation for future growth.

At the same time, banking is about scale. Over the past decade, the share of EU banks among the world's largest institutions has declined. If Europe wants globally competitive banking groups, we must continue to remove unnecessary obstacles to cross-border activity and enable banks to benefit from the scale and efficiency that a truly integrated Single Market can provide.

A risk landscape that is changing rapidly

While banks are stronger than they were fifteen years ago, the environment in which they operate is becoming increasingly complex. This is a second challenge.

Geopolitical tensions have returned. Technological transformation is accelerating. Cyber risks are growing in scale and sophistication. Non-bank financial intermediaries are playing a greater role in global financial markets. And financial markets can react abruptly to changing economic and financial conditions.

At the same time, financial interconnectedness continues to deepen. Cross-border exposures are expanding and access to funding is increasingly international. Banks compete not only for customers, but also for talent, capital and investment opportunities on a global scale.

These developments create significant opportunities. But they also introduce new channels through which risks can spread across institutions, markets and jurisdictions.

The lesson is clear: resilience remains indispensable. The lessons of the Global Financial Crisis should not be forgotten simply because current conditions appear favourable. Banking remains a business built on prudent risk management, sound governance and long-term confidence.

The unfinished business of European integration

A third challenge is fragmentation and the unfinished business of European integration.

Despite the achievements of the Single Market, barriers to cross-border banking activity remain. These barriers constrain efficiency, limit economies of scale and they reduce the ability of European institutions to compete globally.

A more integrated European banking market would benefit households and businesses. It would support investment, improve risk sharing, strengthen financial stability and enhance Europe's capacity to finance its strategic priorities.

Advancing integration is therefore not simply a financial sector objective. It is an economic and strategic imperative for Europe as a whole. It is essential if one is to reap the benefits of a 450 million consumers market, which was the objective of has the European integration project.

How the EBA Is responding

These challenges are not abstract. They require practical solutions. This is where the EBA is focusing today.

Our objective is clear: to preserve the resilience of the European banking system while enabling it to remain competitive, innovative and capable of supporting Europe's long-term prosperity. How are we trying to support these objectives? Let me give you a few examples .

Firstly, we are making proposals to simplify regulation and supervision.

A resilient framework should also be an efficient framework. We have made 21 recommendations to simplify requirements, improve proportionality and reduce unnecessary complexity, while maintaining the high standards that underpin confidence in the European banking sector.

Our objective is not deregulation. It is smarter regulation: preserving resilience while ensuring that compliance and supervisory resources are directed where they create the greatest value.

Secondly, we are in the process of reducing bank reporting burdens

Reporting is an essential supervisory tool, but it must be proportionate.

The EBA has proposed significant reductions in reporting requirements, cutting reporting data points by up to 50%. This should be complemented by more consistency and coordination in reporting across the European framework.

The same simplification philosophy has guided our preparation for the EU-wide stress test that EBA will organise in 2027.

Thirdly, we need to ensure that prudential requirements work together coherently. Over time, different layers of prudential requirements have been introduced to strengthen safety and stability.

Last June we proposed to simplify the design and interaction between microprudential, macroprudential and resolution requirements, to achieve greater coherence and simplicity.

Regulation should be strong, but it should also be understandable, proportionate and operationally effective.

Fourthly, we continue to improve our tools to strengthen resilience to future risks.

The EBA's EU-wide stress test, conducted every other year is key for assessing the resilience of the banking sector in a forward-looking manner.

In a world characterised by heightened uncertainty, rapid technological change and evolving geopolitical risks, forward-looking assessments of resilience are more important than ever. As a complement to this, the EBA has been tasked by co-legislators with the development of regular crisis simulation exercises.

Last but not least, we are assuming new responsibilities in a changing financial landscape

The role of the EBA continues to evolve alongside developments in the financial sector. We are taking on important new mandates, especially in the areas of the supervision of significant stablecoin issuers, oversight related to critical third-party providers under the digital operational resilience framework, DORA, which we operate with our EIOPA and ESMA partners. DORA is a great tool at the current juncture, to help us understand and address ICT vulnerabilities. These responsibilities reflect a broader reality: financial stability increasingly depends not only on banks themselves, but also on the wider ecosystem of technology providers, market infrastructures and financial intermediaries on which modern finance relies.

Of course, we also do our utmost to bring evidence to the competitiveness debate. Competitiveness has rightly become a central priority in Europe. The EBA is carrying out analytical work on competitiveness, market integration and the functioning of the Single Market.

Conclusion

Let me conclude. As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the KNF, we should recognise how far both Poland and the European financial sector have come.

The progress has been remarkable. Over the past two decades, Europe has built a banking system that is significantly more resilient, better capitalised and better prepared to withstand shocks than at any point in recent history. Poland's own experience demonstrates the benefits of sound institutions, openness and long-term commitment to economic integration. Anniversaries are great opportunity both to celebrate and to reflect on what comes next. How nice to turn twenty! Warm congratulations to the KNF and best wishes for the next twenty years!

Thank you for your attention.