

John Berrigan
Closing remarks at High-Level Conference
‘Capital Markets Union: investing for a stronger, prosperous and
sustainable European Union‘
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I would first like to **thank everyone** who has contributed to today’s conference. Our **keynote speakers** who have shared their valuable insights and highly interesting points of view with the audience. Our three **moderators** who were thoroughly well prepared for their sessions and set the stage for the good discussions of different aspects of the Capital Markets Union. The **speakers** on the panels and fireside chats, whose in-depth knowledge and interesting contributions to the discussion were pivotal for making this conference a success.

Last but not least, the **audience** – those physically present, it is nice to see you all again, after two and a half years. And we also had remote participation, all showing the great interest in this important project for us. And thank you for your active involvement in answering our SLIDO-questions.

The discussion was extremely rich and cannot be summarised in a few minutes. I think there is **overwhelming consensus that the CMU is essential if we are serious about delivering on our economic policy but also our political objectives.**

In his welcome address, **Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis** underlined the great importance of the CMU project, even more so now against the background of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and its repercussions for the rest of the world.

The keynote speakers also made important points. Commissioner Gentiloni referred to the new context of increased uncertainty, making it more urgent than ever to build a strong Europe, a competitive economy, a resilient Economic and Monetary Union, backed by a solid financial system with deep and liquid markets and a strong international currency.

Commissioner McGuinness explained to us the state of play of the 2020 CMU action plan and the proposals the Commission will table in the next few months. She reminded us that there is no silver bullet, or one single measure, that will deliver the CMU, but that CMU needs a lot of patience and perseverance.

In the session on **CMU in a global context**, speakers gave us a sobering reality check, saying that the EU is still punching below its weight as regards capital markets.

Speakers also told us that the world is increasingly uncertain and de-globalisation is on the rise. Risks of political and economic fragmentation are increasing. That means that, on financial issues, regulators need to cooperate even more, building on the relationships already built to deal with the consequences of the 2008 and then the Covid crisis. They told us that the EU can help shape these global standards as it is doing on sustainable finance, where we are a world leader.

Making capital markets more accessible to citizens is also an important CMU objective. The **panel discussion** gave us a good idea of where different stakeholders see the key issues that need to be addressed in order to facilitate retail investment in the EU. The question was raised of whether they are properly advised. And this is a very critical question.

In this regard, distribution channels matter, but there is still no agreement on how to overcome the issue of high costs. Not unexpectedly, we heard different views about the role of inducements. On the other hand, there is clear consensus that investing in capital markets is really critical for investors to accumulate wealth over a long time frame and that equity investment has a role to play here.

In the **fireside chat** of Commissioner McGuinness and Member of European Parliament Benjumea, the Commissioner highlighted the vital importance of removing barriers and blockages to overcome fragmentation of the single market, acknowledging that it will take time, but that we must advance here.

The importance of **financial literacy** is very high also if we want people to make use of the opportunities offered by capital markets. What we need here are transparency, clarity, accuracy, and certainly no hyped up claims.

In the session on '**access to finance**' speakers called on politicians to not only verbally support the CMU but also be ambitious when negotiating the legislative proposals on the table. Member States should not only agree on major EU reforms when there is a crisis but also have a long-term strategic vision. We also need retail investors to have trust in financial markets – this notably means simple products, financially educated investors and information that is easily understandable.

I would like to interject something from myself here: 22 years of experience, trying to build an EU capital market, confirmed for me that is not an easy task. It takes a lot of technical preparation, a lot of complex legislative reforms. But it also takes a lot of courage to subordinate established national interests to the systemically important, but typically more diffuse, economic benefits of market integration.

But as difficult as all that is, we must recall the EU has done this before. We have done it with other parts of the Single Market, which are far more advanced in terms of integration than ours, we've done it with the launch of the Euro, and we've done it, at least in part, with the Banking Union.

So what we need to do what we did in all those cases, which is to build political momentum. And there I echo the comments of others today. The Commission, as you heard from the Executive Vice-President, Commissioner Gentiloni and Commissioner McGuinness, remains as committed as ever to building CMU. But the CMU is not and will not be built in Brussels.

We will provide the framework: the hard work beyond that framework must take place in the Member States, so we need the support of co-legislators, and we particularly need the support of private markets participants. We need your support to be loud and clear, not only in gatherings like this, but when you go back home at the national level, so that you Member State authorities understand that you want an integrated capital market.

As long as that is understood across the Member States, will we get the political momentum that we need.

Now let me move to what is next. As a follow up to the CMU Action Plan, we are organising later this month a *FORUM to discuss the regulatory framework protecting and facilitating investment in the EU*. During that Forum, we will present the revised policy approach and a toolbox of possible targeted measures to improve the framework and address issues between investors and host State in the Single Market, including feedback and follow up mechanisms.

The FORUM will bring together companies and investor associations from various sectors, legal practitioners, academics, civil society organisations, Member States authorities as well as Commission officials. The event will take place in a hybrid format on 28 June 2022 in Brussels. I invite you to register on the Forum's website.

Before I stop I would like thank the team that has taken care of the preparation of the conference and all the organisational aspects involved. Thank you!