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Awards ceremony*

20th Edition of the CECA Awards for Community Welfare Projects and Financial Education

Madrid

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Deputy Governor

* English translation from the original in Spanish.

Good morning.

I am delighted to be here today, on this special occasion, to celebrate and recognise the exceptional work of those who strive every day to improve our society through financial education and community welfare projects. I extend my most sincere congratulations to the award-winners and, naturally, to the Spanish Confederation of Savings Banks (CECA) for organising and making this event possible.

We live in an increasingly complex world, where the economic decisions we make in our day-to-day lives can have a significant impact on our own and our families' well-being. This is why financial education has become a fundamental necessity. It's not just about knowing how to manage money, it's about understanding how the financial system works and how savings and investment decisions affect our future, and about being aware of the risks and opportunities present in today's economic environment.

Financial education is much more than theoretical knowledge; it is empowering. It helps us make informed decisions, avoid over-indebtedness, plan for the future and protect ourselves for the unexpected. If you understand concepts such as compound interest, inflation or asset diversification, you are better prepared to face life's challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise.

In Spain, as in many other countries, there is still a significant financial literacy gap. According to various studies, a large proportion of the population admits to having difficulties understanding financial products, interpreting banking terms and conditions or calculating the real cost of a loan. In extreme cases this lack of financial education can lead to economic vulnerability and social exclusion.

For all these reasons, initiatives such as those we are rewarding today are essential. Financial education programmes help not only to improve knowledge, but also to foster values such as responsibility, solidarity and sustainability. Because a financially educated society is a freer, fairer and more resilient one.

What is more, financial education is a driver of equality. It allows everyone, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, to access the same opportunities to grow and develop. It is a key tool in the fight against poverty and exclusion and it makes a decisive contribution to building a more prosperous and equitable future.

However, the work of financial institutions extends beyond offering products and services to their customers. The community welfare projects implemented by many have, for decades, been a fundamental pillar for social development and well-being. Through their community welfare programmes and foundations, financial institutions have helped improve the quality of life of millions of people across the whole of Spain.

These projects range from promoting education and culture, supporting scientific research and protecting the environment, to providing assistance to the most vulnerable population groups. Thanks to collaboration between financial institutions, public administrations and non-profit organisations, neighbourhoods have been transformed and urban spaces recovered, offering hope to those who need it the most.

Community welfare projects thus embody financial institutions' ethical and social commitment. They are living proof that profit and economic gains can and should be accompanied by responsibility and solidarity. In a world where trust in institutions is more necessary than ever, such programmes help strengthen the link between financial institutions and society, generating shared value and contributing to sustainable development.

Today at this awards ceremony we celebrate the efforts, dedication and vision of those who have committed to financial education and community welfare. You are the drivers of change and your work is essential to move towards a more aware, better prepared and more caring society.

The world continues to evolve at great speed. New technologies, the digitalisation of financial services and the emergence of new sector players pose challenges, but also great opportunities. Financial education needs to adapt to these changes, incorporating content on cyber security, digital finance and the circular economy, to ensure that no one is left behind.

In addition, financial institutions' community welfare projects must continue to be relevant and effective. They need to respond to new social needs and promote collaboration and innovation, while keeping their focus on transparency, inclusion and citizen participation, so that projects have a real and lasting impact.

Conclusion

In short, financial institutions' community welfare programmes and financial education are two fundamental levers for social progress and well-being. In their different ways they each help to ensure that citizens are better informed, more responsible and more caring. This is why today we celebrate the commitment of those who work every day to improve the lives of others and we reiterate our support so that this work may continue to grow and multiply its impact.

Thank you, once again, to all the award-winners, to CECA and to all those who have made this event possible. Your work is the best investment in our future. Let us continue to work together, with enthusiasm and commitment, to ensure that financial education and community welfare projects continue to be drivers of change and sources of hope for all.

Congratulations and thank you very much!