ASSET ALLOCATION IN EUROPE:
What challenges and opportunities lie ahead?

2nd TASK FORCE MEETING
Brussels, 24 October 2017

AGENDA

12:00 – 12:30 Registration & lunch

12:30 – 13:00 Introductory remarks
Chairman: Jean-Pierre Pinatton, Supervisory Board, Oddo BHF
Rapporteurs: Karel Lannoo, CEO, CEPS and Cosmina Amariei, Researcher, ECMI

13:00 – 13:30 Opening address
Nathalie Berger, Head of Insurance and Pensions Unit, DG FISMA, European Commission

13:30 – 15:00 Session 1. Insurance companies
The insurance sector is the largest institutional investor in Europe and remains highly concentrated in a small number of countries. Despite a shift towards products featuring lower guarantees and a more flexible return structure, non-unit-linked still constitute the bulk of the policies on the balance sheets of life insurers. On the assets side, the process of de-risking has come to a halt and has started to reverse in recent years. Some insurers have been gradually increasing their exposure to higher-yielding debt instruments but also to infrastructure, private equity and direct lending. On average, non-life insurers operate at higher shares of equity than life insurers.

- What are most relevant constraints/opportunities on the balance sheets of insurers?
- Are the concerns about the increasing duration mismatch and re-investment risk warranted? What types of risk management strategies are currently being employed?
- What are the main drivers behind externalising portfolio management and other types of services (reporting, data analytics, etc.)?
- Should prudential regulation be used as tool to (dis) incentivise investment in certain asset classes? Is the current regulatory framework (Solvency 2) conducive to long-term investment?

Panel debate (40 minutes)
Christian Jochum, Head of Strategy Development, Managing Director, Zurich Insurance
Mireille Aubry, Prudential Regulation, Standards and Foresight Officer, Covea
Claudio Bocci, Partner & Head of Asset Management, Prometeia
Dimitris Zafeiris, Head of Risk & Financial Stability Department, EIOPA

Discussion & wrap-up (50 minutes)
Europe’s pension savings gap is projected at around €2 trillion a year, and there is no one ‘silver bullet’ for solving this increasingly complex problem. Over the last ten years, European pension funds (defined benefit or defined contribution, occupational or personal, mandatory or voluntary plans) have experienced an increase in their investments. At present, there is significant heterogeneity in the asset allocation among member states, with respect to direct or indirect holdings of equity in particular. When it comes to future challenges, the pension product mix (and underlying investment strategy) will have to accommodate the longevity ‘risk’ and deliver satisfactory and stable returns over time.

- What is the outlook for asset allocation (traditional vs alternatives) and investment strategies (active vs passive, cash flow vs liability driven) in the medium and long run?
- Do the main risks for pension funds appear to be on the return portfolio, or rather on the matching portfolio? Does the business model play a significant role?
- Are pension funds reconsidering their in(out)-sourcing of asset management or co-investment/partnerships with other institutional investors?
- What does PEPP need to induce adequate savings for future retirement income? Is it going to be sufficiently attractive for both savers and providers?

Panel debate (40 minutes)

Dimitris Zafeiris, Head of Risk & Financial Stability Department, EIOPA
Matti Leppälä, Secretary General, PensionsEurope
Hans van Meerten, Professor of International Pension Law, Utrecht University
Martin Parkes, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy, BlackRock

Discussion & wrap-up (50 minutes)

17:00 – 17:30
Conclusions & discussion about the 3rd meeting