

FOREWORD

The importance of education and financial inclusion has never been more obvious and topical, as these are two of the fundamental priorities of the Institute of Financial Studies (ISF). Practically, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digitization at the level of all entities, both from the private and from the public environment. Thus, when talking about the objectives and activity of the ISF for the next period, it assumes the role of promoter of financial education and financial inclusion for non-banking financial markets.

When it comes to financial education, most people would agree that its primary goal is to improve financial outcomes for consumers, in other words, to lead to visible behavioral changes, people making wiser choices about what to do with their money.

However, factors beyond our control can influence our financial decisions. We live in a society where consumption matters, followed by immediate satisfaction, and so behavior is affected by this. We live in a society where long-term investments (life insurance, private pension, etc.), for the majority of the population, are not a priority and are not seen as a necessity, although in other more developed societies it is an important concern. If we pay close attention to the complexity and diversity of financial products, we feel the need for a healthy financial education.

Returning to the change in behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic, we can say that the digitization process has visibly accelerated. Digitization brings improvements in the sustainability and resilience of non-banking financial markets, but also in supporting new generations of consumers, much better informed about financial issues, as a result of modern technologies.

Applying behavioral science in financial education and research programs, although a relatively new tool, can provide good prospects for changing consumer decision-making, along with the biases that can influence their financial decisions.

By researching and studying financial phenomena and mechanisms, we will be able to identify future needs for financial education and training. Combining all the ways of teaching with the ideas resulting from behavioral research can create the premises for smart financial education, resulting in behavior change and can act in ways that can improve the financial well-being of the individual or society as a whole.

All of the above have as a common and intrinsic component the building of confidence in the markets for non-banking financial products, so that it is clear that financial education and consumer protection play an important role in the work of the IFS.

Through its activities, IFS supports the Financial Supervisory Authority in further implementing measures to ensure the integrity and stability of financial markets

and to strengthen the supervisory process. IFS contributes to increasing the professionalism of actors in non-banking financial markets and aims to fulfill the function of financial education, by organizing activities, campaigns and programs of information and education in the financial field, at national level.

Last but not least, one of IFS's priorities is to become an integrator of financial education initiatives in the non-banking financial sector and to identify key groups that have the potential to multiply the information effect.

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