

The Alternative Bank Switzerland. A brief outline

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Policy guidelines

- Observing ethical principles takes precedence over maximizing profits.
- Banking activities are based on transparency and all approved loans are published.
- Tax evasion is expressly excluded at the start of any business relationship.
- Loans are granted to support ecological and social projects.
- Solidarity is encouraged between depositors and borrowers: it enables loans to be granted at reduced rates of interest.
- Internal operations are largely democratic.
- Clients and the public are informed about the role and effect of money in our society.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity for both sexes is part of the bank's strategy.

Key financial data at 30 June 2011

	CHF	Euros (approx.)
Balance sheet total	1 059 million	882 million
Balance sheet growth	+ 4,5 %	
Client assets	975 million	812 million
Number of clients	25'942	
Usable loans in francs	849 million	707 million
Number of creditors	830	
Number of shareholders	4'455	
Number of employees	80	
Proportion of women in management positions	52 %	

Clients

- Private individuals, organisations and companies (mostly domiciled in Switzerland) who share the values and ideals of ABS.

Banking activities

- A savings and loan bank.
- A range of traditional accounts and basic services for making payments.
- Issuing loans, principally in the areas of social or ecological housing (ABS Property Rating), organic agriculture, renewable energies, small and medium-size companies, etc.
- Investment advice and sale of a selection of sustainable investment funds.

Offices

- Olten (headquarters), Lausanne (for French-speaking Switzerland), Zurich (advisory center) and Geneva (information office)

A short history

- 1985 –89 Developing the project for an alternative bank.
- 1990 Obtaining the authorization of the Federal Banking Commission and assembling the share capital of 9.5 million francs.
29 October: opening of the bank in Olten (midway between Berne and Zurich).
- 1992 Creation of the Swiss Romande Association for the Promotion of the Alternative Bank with a view to eventually setting up a branch in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.
- 1996 The ABS joins the SIC (Swiss Interbank Clearing) which enables it to improve its payments processing.
The Innovation Fund Association is set up by the bank. The fund's objective is to support projects that are unable to obtain financing through traditional bank loans.
- 1997 The Maestro card is introduced for withdrawals from Automatic Teller Machines in Switzerland and abroad.
The ABS office in Lausanne is opened to represent the bank in French-speaking Switzerland.
- 2002 The bank begins the sale of sustainable investment funds with the Sarasin Bank's two funds: "Oekosar" and "Sustainable Equity - Global".
- 2003 A sustainability service is set up within the bank and an innovative analytical tool, the ABS Property Rating, is launched to assess the sustainability of buildings financed by the ABS.
- 2004 As part of its "Money Debates" ABS organizes a public meeting on the theme "Sustainable Investments – how to choose?" The event is a success.
- 2005 The Annual General Meeting decides to increase the importance of ethics in the bank by creating an external authority to verify its ethics.
ABS is awarded the "prix Egalité" for its determination and strategy aimed at ensuring and maintaining equality of opportunity for women.
A Ticino information office opens in Bellinzona to meet the needs of Italian-speaking clients.
- 2006 The Alternative Bank ABS, is celebrates its fifteenth anniversary. The bank is a member of FEBEA, the European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks and Financiers. ABS has decided to change its banking information system and join a group of regional banks, while remaining fully independent.
- 2007 The ABS acquires a beautiful property in Olten that we intend to transform to meet the criteria of bio-construction. We will be moving into our new headquarters in 2009. Meanwhile, we will develop our consulting activities, change our banking software, and offer on-line banking services (e-banking) from 2008.
- 2008 The ABS recorded an evident increase of new customers.
The employees' participation is placed on a broader institutional basis. As the first bank in Switzerland, it measures precisely the impact of CO2 on certain sectors of its credit business.
- 2009 BAS moves into its new headquarters in Olten. This the first building constructed with the Minergie-P label in the canton of Solothurn. The registered name, Alternative Bank ABS, is changed to Alternative Bank Switzerland SA.
- 2010 The ABS celebrated its 20th anniversary. In March, it opened a new banking office in Zurich. By the end of the year, the ABS had broken two records: the balance sheet total surmounted a billion Swiss Francs and the bank welcomed its 25 000th client.

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