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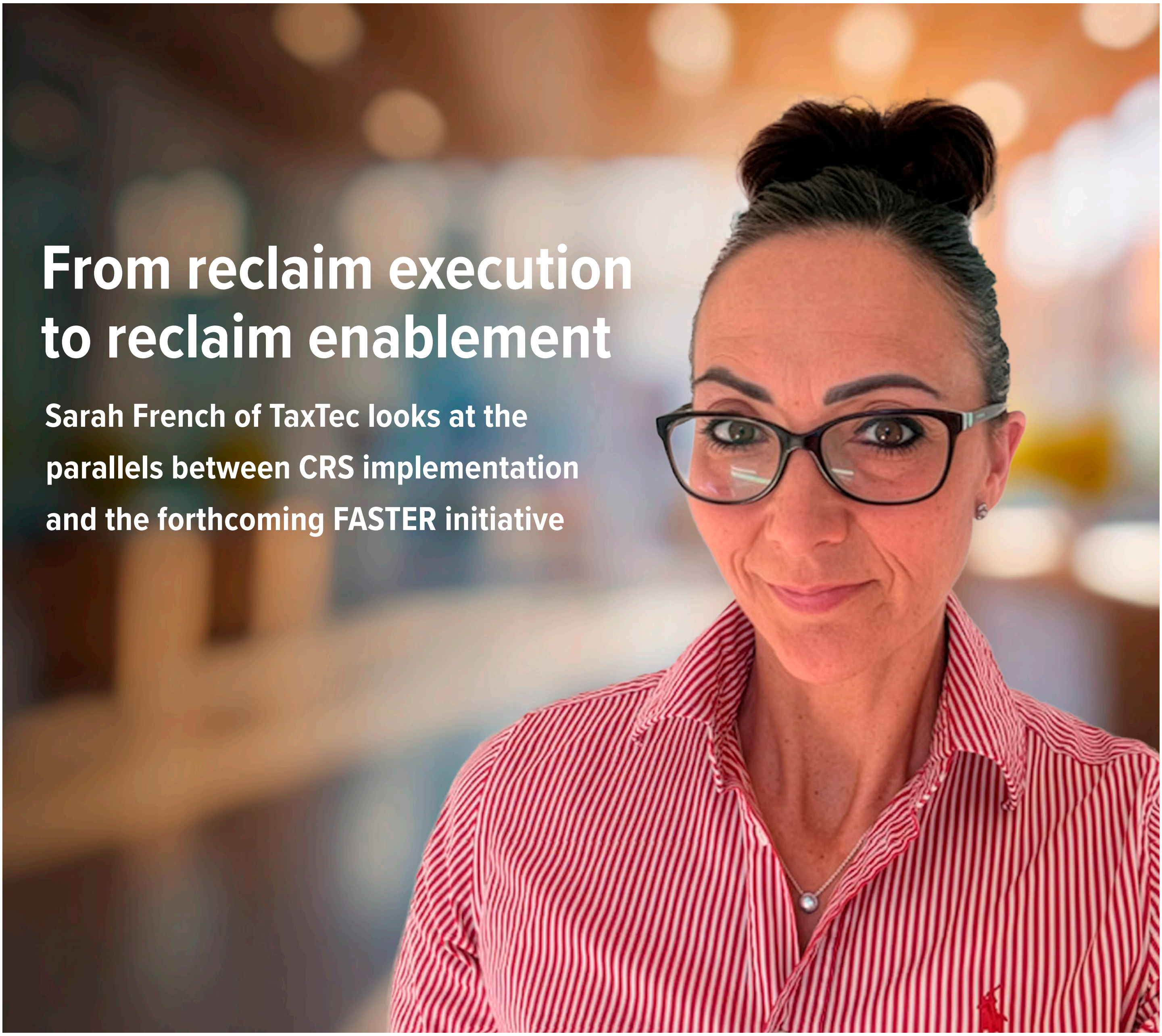

From reclaim execution to reclaim enablement

Sarah French of TaxTec looks at the parallels between CRS implementation and the forthcoming FASTER initiative

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Ready for Next

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UK Treasury drafting legislation to regulate cryptocurrency markets

Cryptocurrencies will be regulated in line with other financial products under new UK legislation that will come into effect in 2027.

The Treasury is drafting laws that will oblige crypto firms to adhere to a set of standards governed by the UK Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

The government says the changes will protect consumers through forcing crypto assets to be subject to similar rules that control conventional financial products such as stocks and shares.

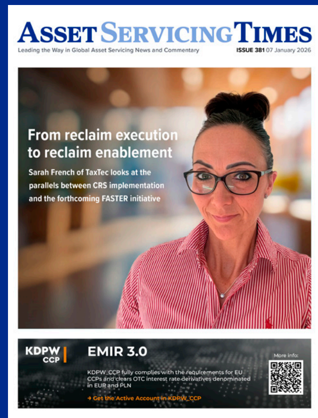
The new regulation intends to improve customer confidence and transparency across the sector by increasing accountability of firms, easing the detecting suspicious activity, and improving the ability to apply sanctions.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves MP, comments: “Bringing crypto into the regulatory perimeter is a crucial step in securing the UK’s position as a world leading financial centre in the digital age.

“By giving firms clear rules of the road, we are providing the certainty they need to invest, innovate and create high skilled jobs here in the UK, while giving millions strong consumer protections, and locking dodgy actors out of the UK market.”

Lucy Rigby, minister for the City of London, remarks: “We want the UK to be at the top of the list for cryptoassets firms looking to grow and these new rules will give firms the clarity and consistency they need to plan for the long term.”

Nick Jones, Zumo CEO and founder, adds: “By legislating to extend existing financial regulation to companies involved in crypto, rather than producing complicated rules tailored to the industry as seen with the EU’s MiCA, policymakers are sending a clear signal that they believe digital assets can successfully coexist with fiat money in a reimagined future financial system. We now have the clarity and certainty we’ve been seeking to lay firm foundations for further investment and innovation that will keep the UK at the forefront of financial services.”



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Ripple partners with AMINA Bank

Ripple, a financial technology company, has partnered with AMINA Bank, to support near real-time cross-border payments for AMINA Bank's clients using Ripple Payments. AMINA Bank, a Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA)-regulated crypto bank, has become the first European bank to use Ripple's end-to-end payments solution.

By using Ripple's infrastructure, AMINA Bank will continue to solve the challenge of integrating blockchain operations with traditional bank rails.

AMINA Bank's integration of Ripple Payments will enable the bank's clients to reduce the friction that typically arises between blockchain and traditional banking rails.

The firm says that this will enable AMINA Bank's clients to move funds seamlessly and settle transactions more efficiently without relying on traditional payment infrastructure, making transactions faster, lower cost, and with increased reliability and transparency.

Myles Harrison, chief product officer at AMINA Bank, says: "Native web3 businesses often run into friction when working with legacy banking systems.

"This is particularly the case for cross-border stablecoin transactions which traditional banks are yet to widely adopt.

"Our clients need payment infrastructure that can handle both fiat and stablecoin rails simultaneously, but traditional correspondent banking networks weren't designed to support this. With Ripple's support, we are now able to significantly increase our capability, reducing cross-border friction and helping our crypto-native clients maintain their competitive edge."

BNP Paribas appointed by Banco Mediolanum

BNP Paribas' Securities Services business has formed an agreement with Banco Mediolanum to become the new depositary bank for Banco Mediolanum in Spain, representing a total volume of over €4.7 billion assets under depositary across 10 investment funds.

This alliance is part of Securities Services' growth strategy in targeted markets across Europe and globally.

This integration reinforces BNP Paribas' existing relationship with Mediolanum Group in Europe, including a range of securities services already provided in Ireland and Italy.

Through this partnership, BNP Paribas' Securities Services business has been appointed as the depositary bank of Banco Mediolanum's Spanish investment vehicles.

A collective joint effort between both parties and their client focus approach have been factors in the success of the transaction.

Soledad Lecube, head of Spain, Securities Services, BNP Paribas, comments: "Spain is a longstanding strategic European market for our Securities Services business, and we are committed to keep developing our local expert teams and product offerings."

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Euronext streamlines bond settlement

The firm’s TARGET2-Securities based model provides users with increased settlement options and improved efficiency across borders

Euronext Securities Milan has asked LCH SA for the opening of settlement of all European government debts currently cleared by the central counterparty (CCP).

The firm says this highlights progress in Euronext’s fixed income strategy by aligning capabilities across MTS, Euronext Clearing, and Euronext Securities.

By combining trading experience, clearing services, and a settlement environment fully aligned with TARGET2-Securities (T2S), Euronext says it continues to strengthen its position as a central marketplace for European government bonds.

T2S provides real-time delivery versus payment in central bank money, a single set of functionalities, and high operational resilience, enabling seamless movement of euro-denominated securities across borders.

Users will receive balance sheet netting, optimised cash and liquidity management, lower capital consumption, and T2S features such as auto-collateralisation.

Using the platform allows government bonds to be settled in the T2S environment, promoting transparency and efficiency, while reducing operational risk across European fixed income markets.

The service is currently available for Italian, French, Dutch, Belgian, German, Spanish, and Austrian government bonds cleared at Euronext Clearing. It will be extended to all European government debts currently cleared by LCH SA, allowing settlement of this government bond activity directly in Euronext Securities.

Broadridge strengthens platform for alternative investment managers

Broadridge Financial Solutions has announced enhancements to its multi-asset portfolio and trade order management platform, introducing fully integrated general capabilities and a redesigned user interface (UI).

These upgrades are a step forward in Broadridge’s strategy to provide a unified, front-to-back investment management solution that improves operational efficiency, elevates fiduciary oversight, and supports quicker, more informed decision-making for buyside firms.

The new general ledger capabilities extend Broadridge’s portfolio management system by embedding period accounting and financial statement reporting directly into the investment platform.

Frank Cataudo, general manager of investment management solutions, Broadridge, remarks: “Across the alternatives and broader asset management landscape, firms are under tremendous pressure to modernise fragmented technology stacks, enhance controls, and differentiate in an increasingly competitive market.”

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Dinar Investment Company joins Muqassa

Dinar Investment Company has completed all regulatory and technical requirements to become a non-clearing member of Muqassa (the Securities Clearing Center Company). The firm joins other non-clearing members of Muqassa, such as Citigroup Saudi Arabia, AlRajhi Capital, Banque Saudi Fransi, and Goldman Sachs Saudi Arabia.

Dinar Investment is a Saudi-based financial technology company, providing Sharia-compliant investment and financing solutions, primarily through its digital platform, connecting companies needing funds with individual and institutional investors.

Muqassa was established in 2018 as a close joint stock company fully owned by the Saudi Tadawul Group.

Muqassa helps to reduce post-trade risks, provide a centralised counterparty risk management, and develop clearing services in accordance with best international risk management practices to align with advanced global capital markets.

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FINARCH, Simcorp, and CNID collaborate

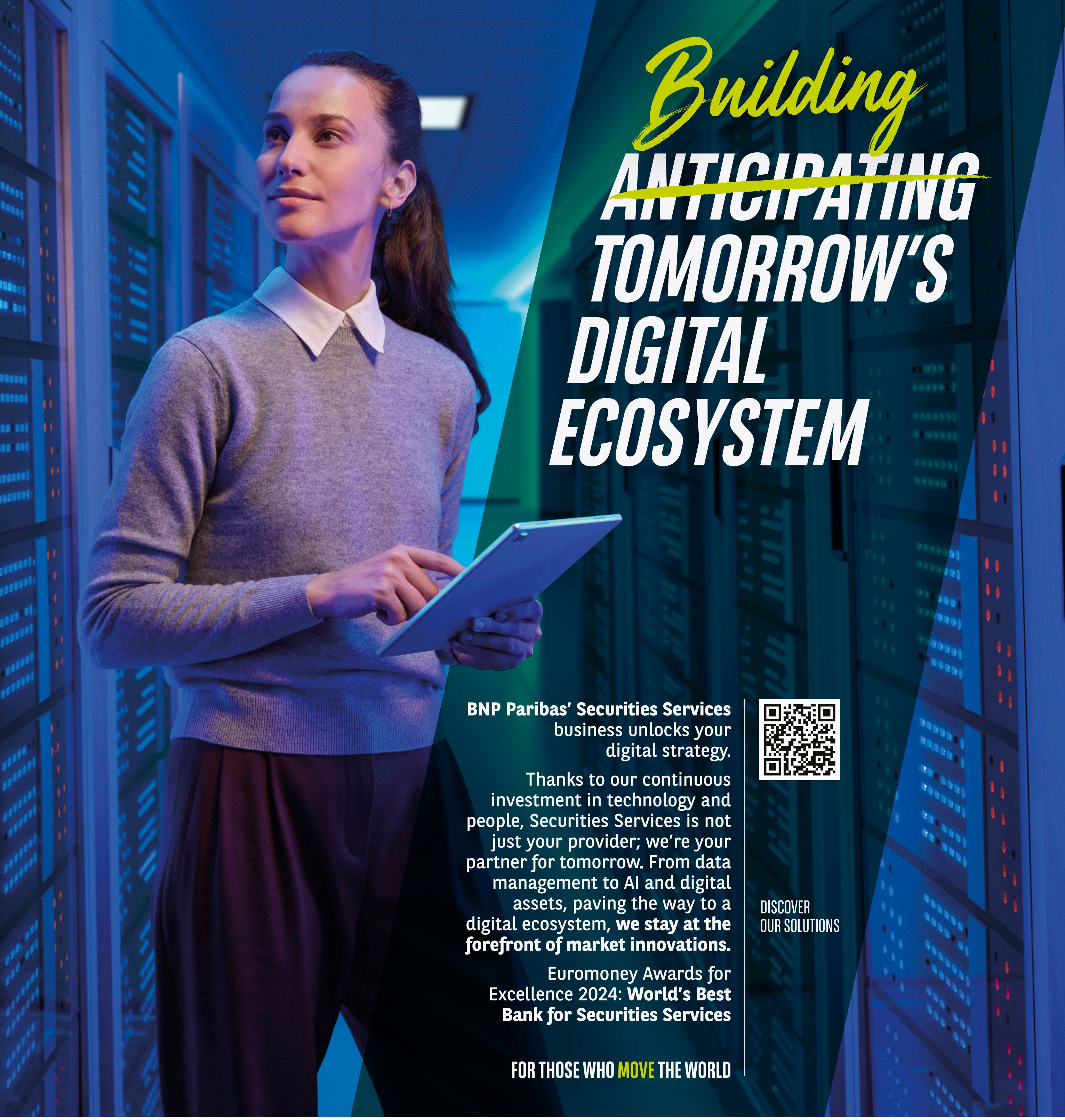
Canadian National Investment Division (CNID) has formed a strategic partnership with SimCorp and FINARCH, to upgrade its existing SimCorp investment management platform system to enhance operational efficiency and future automation.

After CNID, which manages approximately CA$18 billion for one of Canada's largest single-employer defined benefit pension funds, implemented SimCorp's investment management platform in early 2023, the firm intended to stay across the platform innovations and establish a framework for continuous improvement.

CNID utilises SimCorp as their middle and back office Investment Book of Record (IBOR) and Accounting Book of Record (ABOR), fully integrated with Snowflake for Reporting and Analytics — natively built into the platform.

The collaboration used SimCorp's Continuous Testing Service alongside FINARCH's specialised enhancement methodology.

SimCorp's automated testing toolkit validated the records and end-to-end transaction workflows, while FINARCH designed and executed user acceptance testing and cross-system integration validation.



BNP PARIBAS

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BNP Paribas is authorised and regulated by the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Autorité de Contrôle Prudentiel et de Résolution (ACPR). BNP Paribas is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and is subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and limited regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA).

Canoe Intelligence and Prime Buchholz expand partnership

Canoe Intelligence and Prime Buchholz have announced a major expansion of their partnership into a private markets intelligence solution, a move they say gives alternative investors rapid insight into their portfolios. By connecting the capabilities across document collection, validation, and analytics, the firms highlight that the partnership eliminates the manual handoffs that typically slow alternatives workflows.

The offering builds on Prime Buchholz's multi-year use of Canoe's platform to automate document collection and data processing for its institutional clients.

Zack Helgeson, head of product at Canoe Intelligence, says: "By linking Canoe's automated collection and our AI extraction with Prime Buchholz's data validation, and PrimePlus analytics, what previously took an investment team days or weeks is now effortless and available on demand — with complete audit trails from source documents to final insights.

"This combination of transparency, speed, and institutional-grade accuracy will transform how investment teams work."

Dan Ricci, head of information systems at Prime Buchholz, comments: "It's really the connection between platforms that scales investor outcomes. Building on Canoe's automation, our team layers in multi-tier validation and enrichment logic before client data hits PrimePlus.

"Together, our analysts are handling significantly more funds than before, and clients get portfolio company data in a couple days versus the industry standard of two plus weeks."

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Clearstream implements ISO 20022 standard for CBPR+

The ISO 20022 standard for Cross-Border Payments and Reporting (CBPR+) messages is now fully implemented and live on Clearstream's systems.

Driven by the adoption of the ISO 20022 standard, the global financial services industry is undergoing a significant transformation with the Swift mandate to transition from the legacy message type (MT) to the modern XML message type (MX) format for payment instructions.

This shift represents a move toward a more efficient and transparent future for financial communication.

The move away from MT messages, which are limited in their data capacity, to the XML-based MX format is designed to further standardise financial messaging globally.

The firm says the implementation of the new formats will benefit its clients through delivering enhanced data quality, improved operational efficiency, global standardisation and interoperability, and enhanced transparency and compliance.

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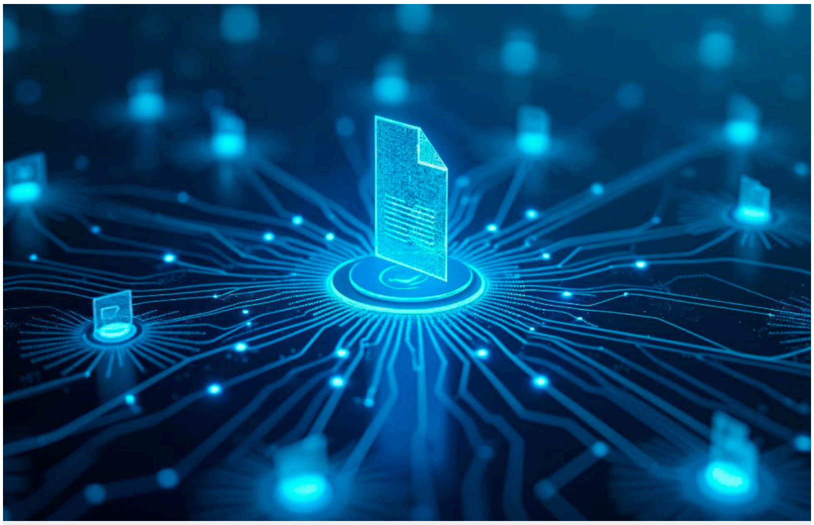

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Xceptor automates upgrade checks and transforms exceptions handling

Xceptor, a provider for data automation for capital markets, has announced AI-powered enhancements to its solution delivery operations, designed to speed up deployment, and minimise associated risk.

The new capabilities include an enhanced upgrade toolkit for on-premises environments and ai-exceptions-bot, an AI agent for SaaS updates within the Xceptor Data Automation Platform.

By streamlining solution delivery, Xceptor enables financial institutions to access innovation and reduce technical debt faster, while strengthening operational resilience, agility, and compliance across the trade lifecycle.

Built with AI, the upgrade toolkit performs a precise analysis of Xceptor configuration files and automates over 30 manual checks to identify potential breaking changes before upgrades occur.

The firm says the ai-exceptions-bot transforms exceptions handling, boosts confidence in SaaS deployments, detects software regressions and recommends fixes for an Xceptor engineer to implement.

Dan Reid, chief technology officer and founder at Xceptor, remarks: “Being able to respond rapidly to our clients’ needs enables them to transform their operations and meet new demands faster.

“This is a good example of how we apply AI only where it truly excels — solving real-world challenges today without compromising transparency or control.”

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Zodia Custody granted MiCA license by Luxembourg regulator

Zodia Custody, a crypto assets service provider, has been granted its Markets in Crypto Assets (MiCA) license by Luxembourg’s Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier (CSSF).

This authorisation enables Zodia Custody Europe to provide regulated digital asset custody services and with Europe-wide recognition will allow access across EU Member States.

Sophie Bowler, chief risk and compliance officer at Zodia Custody, shared: “Regulatory authorisation from the CSSF is a milestone accomplishment for Zodia Custody Europe, and proves our commitment to offering our institutional clients licensed and authorised digital assets custody services. Our commitment to compliance and our risk-first approach means institutions can fearlessly engage in the digital assets future without compromise.”

To further support local presence, Zodia Custody Europe has appointed Daniel Soriano as an authorised manager alongside Nagata in the Luxembourg office.

Duco collaborates with Phoenix Group

Duco has announced a collaboration with Phoenix Group to modernise reconciliation infrastructure, empower operational teams, and scale efficiently across its asset management division.

The firm says that this project will create a unified, cloud-based environment for reconciling investment and accounting records across 20 administrators and multiple asset classes.

By simplifying these critical workflows, Phoenix aims to strengthen controls, reduce manual intervention, and give its teams greater ownership of daily operations.

The initial phase will focus on automating reconciliation between Investment Book of Record (IBOR) and Accounting Book of Record (ABOR) data, ensuring consistent, auditable controls and alignment with European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR) standards.

Philip Shaw, chief operating officer of asset management at Phoenix Group, says: “Bringing our reconciliation infrastructure to the cloud is a key part of our operational strategy. With Duco, we can manage change more quickly, reduce reliance on IT support, and establish a consistent model for how data is reconciled across the business.”

“The relationship with Duco has been open and collaborative from the start. We value the team’s understanding of our environment and their commitment to helping us build a system that supports future growth.”

Michael Chin, CEO of Duco, adds: “Phoenix Group represents the kind of institution Duco was made for: complex operations, multiple data sources, and a clear drive for efficiency and control.

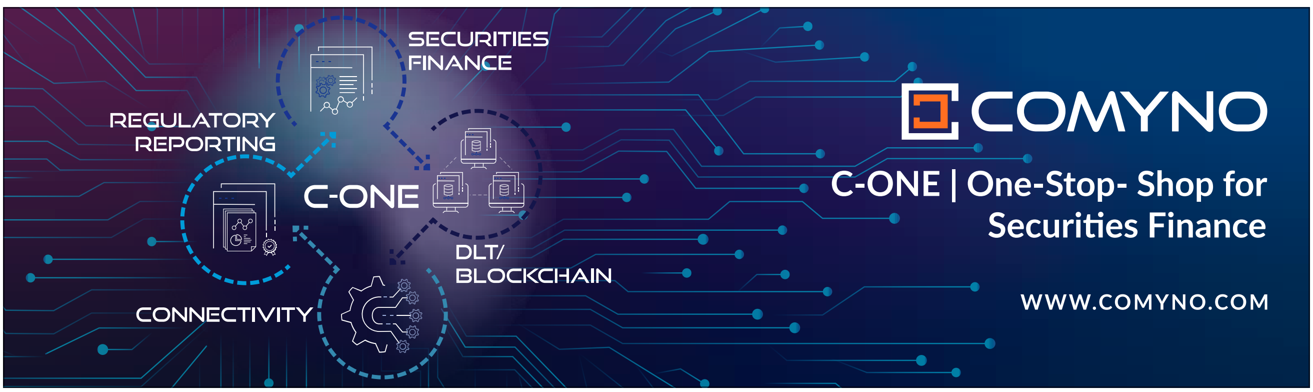
“We’re delighted to support them in building a reconciliation platform that’s fit for the next decade.”

Royal London deploys AutoRek platform

Royal London has transformed its financial operations with AutoRek to replace its data reconciliation systems and support growth plans. The firm says that as Royal London expanded, AutoRek’s platform enabled the organisation to transform its financial operations infrastructure.

AutoRek’s no-code interface has provided Royal London with automated balance sheet control and data reconciliation capabilities, allowing the organisation to scale from 80 reconciliations to more than a 100. The firm also informs that the platform has delivered a 50 to 70 per cent reduction in reconciliation workload, maintained lean, self-sufficient finance teams and integrated acquired businesses without additional resources.

Tony Shek, global sales lead at AutoRek, says: “Modern reconciliation platforms enable finance teams to scale efficiently, transforming finance operations into a strategic enabler for growth. rather than just a compliance exercise. Royal London demonstrates how the right reconciliation platform becomes an enabler for growth, transforming finance operations from a constraint into a competitive advantage, rather than just a compliance exercise.” ■



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From reclaim execution to reclaim enablement

How FASTER will transform withholding tax relief

Sarah French of TaxTec speaks with Justin Lawson about the parallels between CRS implementation and the forthcoming FASTER initiative, and what the shift towards digital-first tax relief means for financial intermediaries across Europe

The European Commission proposed the FASTER initiative in 2023. Could you outline what FASTER aims to achieve?

FASTER's ambition is quite clear — it aims to replace the fragmented, paper-heavy refund procedures we currently navigate with a faster, digital, and more transparent model for cross-border investors obtaining withholding tax relief within the EU. At its core, FASTER introduces two key mechanisms: a harmonised relief-at-source system for eligible investors, and an EU-wide Digital Tax Residency Certificate, or eTRC, to streamline documentation and authentication. If implemented successfully, we could see a significant reduction in the double taxation and administrative delays that make current withholding tax reclaim processes so complex and inefficient.

You have drawn comparisons between FASTER and the Common Reporting Standard. What lessons does CRS offer us as we look towards FASTER's implementation?

The Common Reporting Standard (CRS) provides an incredibly instructive parallel. While FASTER focuses on tax relief rather than data reporting, its success will depend on the same cross-border cooperation that shaped CRS. CRS was launched in 2014 but only became fully operational after several phased adoption waves between 2017 and 2021. The reasons were clear — varying jurisdictional readiness, data protection and legal alignment issues, and infrastructure and standardisation delays. FASTER will require similar coordination, especially given the technical dependencies between intermediaries, tax authorities, and central securities depositories (CSDs). The lesson is not that progress is slow, but that alignment takes time.

Given your first-hand experience with CRS implementation during your time at Tier 1 institutions, what specific challenges do you anticipate?

The potential for staggered implementation, or different start dates by Member State, is quite high. FASTER's digital-first design gives it a head start, but we need to be realistic about implementation. Global frameworks, even with broad consensus, face delays due to legislative ratification cycles, differing IT readiness across authorities, data privacy reconciliation, and industry adaptation timelines. While FASTER may begin with a target implementation around 2027–28, achieving full alignment across all EU Member States could take several additional years. That should not be seen as a barrier, but rather as a roadmap for gradual integration, testing, and cooperation.

How does FASTER address the current pain points in withholding tax reclamation?

Today's withholding tax reclaim processes vary by market and remain heavily dependent on manual documentation, local language forms, and extended refund cycles. FASTER aims to

> ***"FASTER represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of cross-border withholding tax relief"***

standardise these processes by aligning eligibility rules, digitising investor documentation, and promoting relief at source. This alignment will impact every stage of the current reclaim lifecycle. For investor identification, we move from manual validation of residence and eligibility to eTRC-enabled real-time verification. For documentation handling, we replace paper forms and local formats with a standardised digital format across Member States. For relief versus refund processing, inconsistent procedures between markets give way to a unified relief-at-source and refund framework. Data exchange improves from limited automation to structured, secure electronic data transmission. And for timing and transparency, we shift from months or years for refund visibility to real-time traceability through digital workflows.

What does this mean for the role of reclaim providers like TaxTec?

For providers like us at TaxTec, this marks a shift from reclaim execution to reclaim enablement — integrating with upstream data flows and digital certificates to ensure correct, validated, and timely relief or refund. If FASTER delivers on its goals, we will see relief at source becoming standard, reducing the need for retrospective reclaims. Digital residency validation through eTRC will replace paper-based certification.

End-to-end visibility will improve investor experience and auditability. Data will become centralised, meaning reclaim providers and intermediaries will rely on structured data exchange rather than document uploads. Technology-led processing will be essential, with automation, integration, and validation logic underpinning compliance and speed.

Some might view FASTER as a threat to existing reclaim service providers. How do you see it?

I see it as an opportunity. FASTER directly addresses the same friction points that withholding tax reclaim providers have been solving for years, but on a broader, EU-wide scale. For reclaim specialists and operational tax providers, this is not disruption — it is an opportunity to align solutions with the next generation of frameworks. At TaxTec, we see FASTER as both a challenge and an enabler. It is a challenge because readiness, data alignment, and jurisdictional variation will take time. But it is an enabler because it validates the direction our technology already supports, with automation, transparency, and data-driven reclaim processes.

What should custodians, asset servicers, and fund administrators be doing now to prepare?

The key is not to wait for full implementation but to begin building the infrastructure and processes that will be required. That means investing in technology that can handle structured data exchange, ensuring systems can integrate with digital certificates like the eTRC, and developing the validation logic needed for real-time verification. Organisations should also be mapping out their current processes against what FASTER will require, identifying gaps, and planning for gradual transition. The phased implementation we saw with CRS means there will be time to adapt, but those who begin preparing now will be in a much stronger position.

What is your overall perspective on where this takes the industry?

FASTER represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of cross-border withholding tax relief. Its digital-first design, focus on real-time verification, and push for standardisation align perfectly with the direction tax technology has already been moving. Just as CRS reshaped transparency standards, FASTER will redefine reclaim efficiency. The journey may take time, but the destination — a unified, digital withholding tax framework — is worth pursuing. We are moving towards a future where tax relief is faster, more transparent, and far less administratively burdensome for all parties involved.

That is good news for investors, for intermediaries, and for the efficiency of European capital markets as a whole. ■

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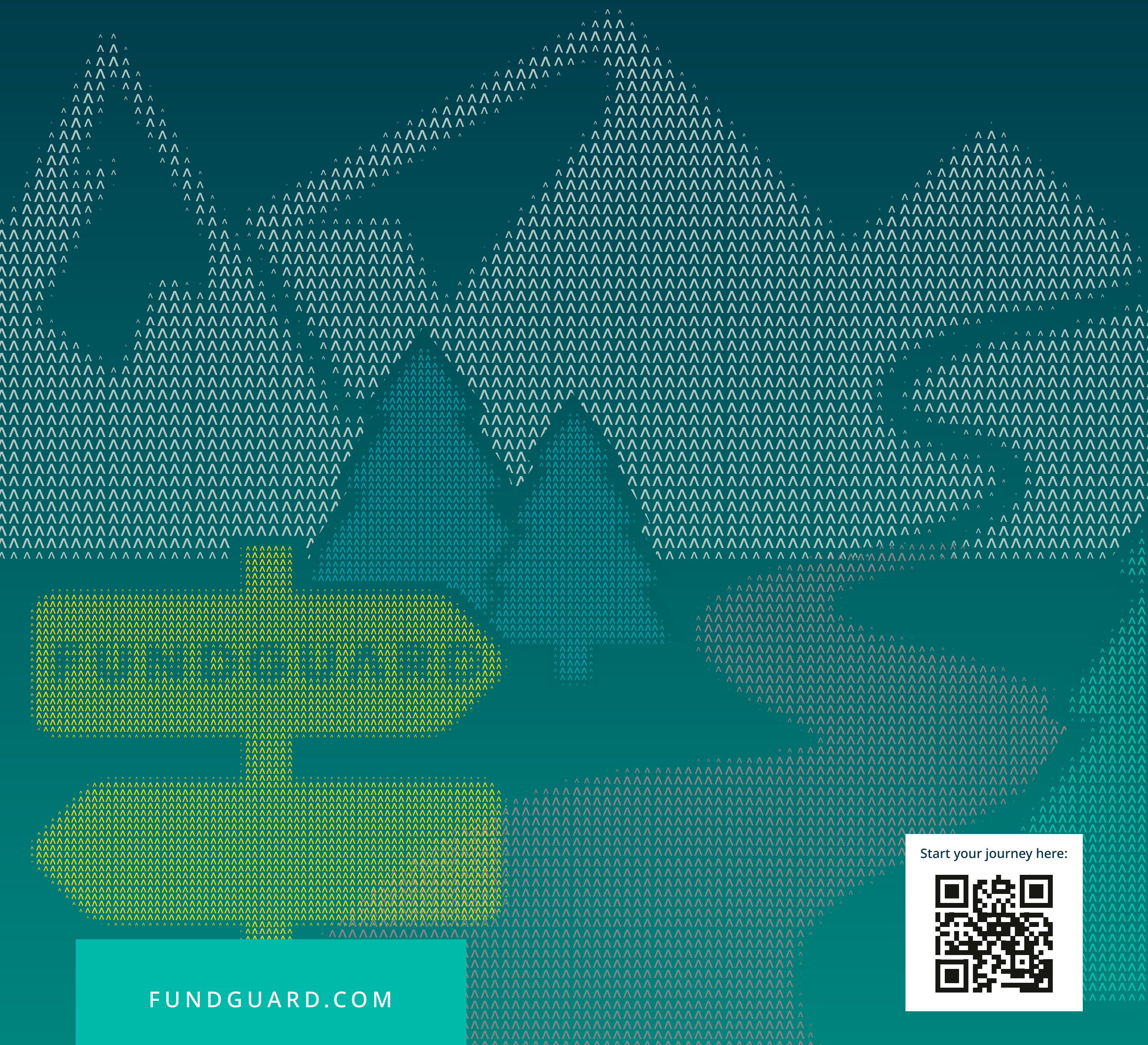

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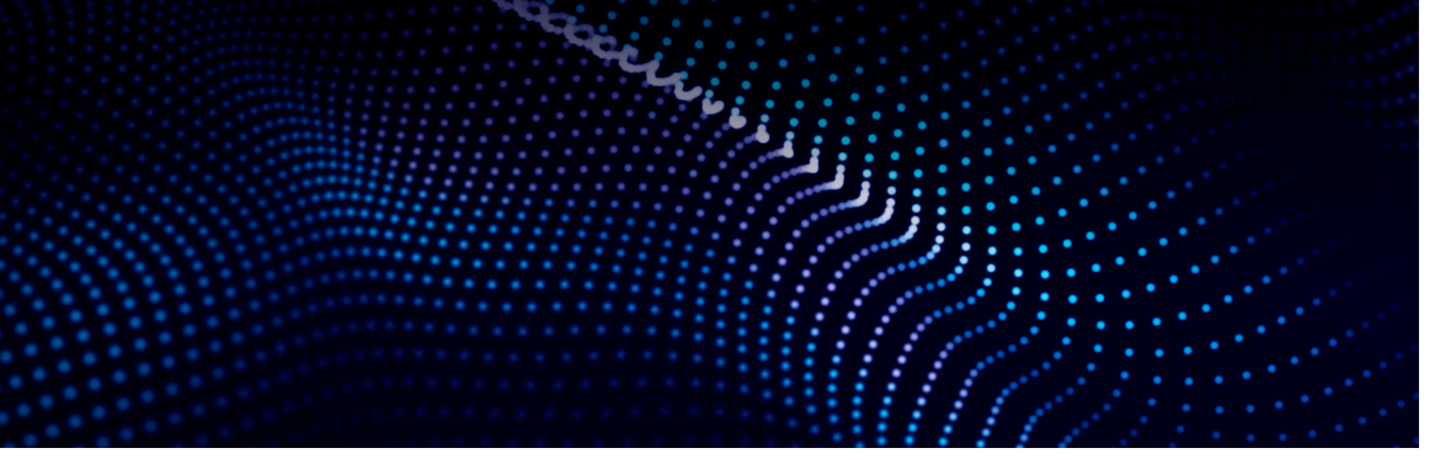
A stroke of GENIUS for stablecoins as post-trade faces change

The United States' GENIUS Act has been hailed as a breakthrough for stablecoins, but its impact stretches well beyond digital assets. As regulatory clarity brings stablecoins closer to the financial mainstream, asset servicers are assessing what the new framework means for settlement, custody, and post-trade infrastructure

Zarah Choudhary reports



The Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for US Stablecoins Act, commonly referred to as the GENIUS Act, was signed into law in July 2025, marking the United States' first comprehensive federal framework for the issuance of payment stablecoins.

Designed to bring regulatory clarity to a market that has long operated in uncertainty, the legislation sets out who can issue stablecoins, how they must be backed by high-quality reserve assets, and the standards required to safeguard the integrity of those reserves, protect users, and support the wider financial system.

When the Act was passed, it was widely positioned as a milestone for digital assets. For the first time, stablecoin issuers were offered a clear legal pathway to operate in the United States, replacing years of legal uncertainty with defined rules and supervisory oversight. Yet for asset servicers, custodians and post-trade infrastructure providers, the significance of the GENIUS Act runs deeper than cryptocurrency markets alone

Although not a settlement reform bill, the legislation arrives at a moment when global markets are already grappling with accelerated settlement cycles, increased automation and growing interest in tokenised infrastructure.

In that context, the GENIUS Act represents something more structural: the formal recognition of regulated digital cash, and with it, the potential reshaping of settlement, liquidity management and operational workflows across capital markets.

A legal framework for digital cash

At its core, the GENIUS Act establishes a new category of regulated issuer known as the permitted payment stablecoin issuer. The issuers are authorised to issue and redeem payment stablecoins, which the Act deems must be backed on a one-to-one basis by high-quality liquid assets (HQLA), subject to strict reserve, disclosure, and risk-management requirements.

The legislation creates three regulatory pathways. Issuers may operate as subsidiaries of insured depository institutions, as federally qualified non-bank issuers supervised by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, or as state qualified issuers operating below a defined issuance threshold. From July 2028, only permitted payment stablecoin issuers will be allowed to issue payment stablecoins in the US.

Crucially, the Act explicitly excludes payment stablecoins from the definitions of securities and commodities under existing US financial legislation. This distinction positions stablecoins not as investment products, but as regulated settlement instruments.

For Richard Baker, founder and CEO of Tokenovate, that clarity is foundational. "The GENIUS Act, together with the newly published guidance by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission on tokenised settlement for digital assets, reinforces the wider shift towards market modernisation," he says.

"By removing structural uncertainty and providing regulatory clarity, they signal that automation, interoperability and clear synchronisation between onchain and off-chain records are essential for safe and resilient markets."

Baker argues that this framework pushes the industry towards interoperable and automated post-trade infrastructure, laying the groundwork for a move from traditional settlement cycles towards same-day or real-time settlement.

Stablecoins move into the real economy

Over the past few years, stablecoins have evolved rapidly. Once used primarily as settlement instruments within cryptocurrency markets, enabling traders to move value between exchanges, they are increasingly being explored for cross-border payments, treasury operations and enterprise settlement.

Global stablecoin supply has grown sharply, and major payment networks and financial institutions have begun integrating stablecoins into selected payment flows.

Laurent Descout, CEO and co-founder of cross-border payments fintech Neo, says stablecoins are already reshaping how value moves across borders. "Stablecoins are currently shaking up the cross-border payments landscape," he explains. "Thanks to their ability to facilitate near-instantaneous transactions with lower fees compared to different payment processes."

By pegging their value to fiat currencies such as the US dollar or euro, stablecoins aim to offer security, transparency, and predictability, while reducing friction inherent in legacy payment rails. Regulatory developments such as the GENIUS Act, Descout adds, suggest that adoption is accelerating, particularly as treasurers monitor evolving regulatory frameworks and reassess their payment options.

> ***“Blockchain payments are designed to settle in seconds, and carry the information in the message to assist with reconciliations”***
>
> **Chris Ostrowski, FinScan**

For post-trade operations, however, speed introduces new demands. Chris Ostrowski, product management leader at FinScan, an Innovative Systems solution, notes that blockchain-based payments fundamentally alter how settlement and reconciliation are managed.

“Blockchain payments are designed to settle in seconds, and carry the information in the message to assist with reconciliations,” Ostrowski says. “Because of that instant availability, you can no longer have pending payments while everything clears. The reconciliation will be instant, which then requires close monitoring of your liquidity position to stay aligned to the one-to-one requirements the Act enforces.”

In a real-time environment, batch processing gives way to continuous monitoring, and liquidity management becomes an ongoing operational discipline rather than an end-of-day exercise.

Custody, reserves, and investor confidence

For asset servicers, some of the most immediate implications of the GENIUS Act sit in custody and reporting. The legislation requires permitted payment stablecoin issuers to hold reserve assets on a one-to-one basis using high-quality, short-dated instruments. These reserves must be safeguarded with qualified custodians, may not be rehypothecated, and must be disclosed publicly through monthly reserve composition reports examined by independent auditors.

Germán Soto Sanchez, chief product and strategy officer at Broadridge Financial Solutions, says these measures are central to building trust in the stablecoin ecosystem. “The GENIUS Act requires payment stablecoin issuers to hold high-quality reserve assets, safeguard them with qualified custodians, provide monthly reserve disclosures, and publish redemption policies,” Soto Sanchez says.

“Given the importance of investor confidence in the underlying reserve assets, it is reasonable that the composition of the reserve assets would be affirmatively provided to investors on a periodic basis.”

While the Act allows certain forms of commingling within omnibus accounts under defined conditions, it significantly tightens expectations around segregation, transparency and auditability.

For custodians and fund administrators, these principles are familiar, but the challenge lies in applying them to a digital asset class that operates continuously rather than within traditional market hours.

Data, compliance and the limits of legacy systems

Despite assumptions that the GENIUS Act introduces sweeping new data-handling requirements, its impact on data governance is more nuanced. The legislation primarily extends existing Bank Secrecy Act and sanctions compliance frameworks to stablecoin issuers, with a particular focus on detecting illicit activity.

Steve Marshall, director of advisory services for FinScan, notes that permitted payment stablecoin issuers will need to carefully assess their operational partners. “Regulatory guidance around third-party risk management will be an important cornerstone to managing the operational and regulatory risk associated with these offerings,” says Marshall.

Ostrowski adds that many existing reporting frameworks are unlikely to scale effectively in a native blockchain environment. “Over the long term, the data management and reporting frameworks of today will prove to be insufficient,” he says. “Core competencies will still exist, but the framework will need to be enhanced to support cross-blockchain use cases.”

Marshall cautions that the industry risks repeating historical data-quality issues if incentives are not aligned. While stablecoins present an opportunity to improve data standards from the outset, he warns that poor habits have a tendency to persist unless enforcement and accountability are clear.

Artificial intelligence under regulatory scrutiny

The GENIUS Act also signals regulatory expectations around the use of advanced technologies, particularly artificial intelligence in financial crime prevention. While the legislation does not address artificial intelligence-driven investor advice directly, it explicitly references the use of artificial intelligence, application programming interfaces (APIs), and blockchain monitoring tools to detect illicit activity.

Soto Sanchez notes that this creates a clear signal for firms to modernise their compliance tooling. Many financial institutions already operate mature know-your-customer (KYC) and anti-money laundering (AML) frameworks, but operationalising artificial intelligence in a way that meets regulatory expectations for explainability and auditability remains uneven across the industry.

"Currently, the industry is not prepared for the level of reporting and oversight that will come with today's technology," Ostrowski says. "Until there is better regulatory guidance and expectations, companies are hesitant to adopt and hand off critical parts of the process to artificial intelligence."

Marshall adds that accountability will remain firmly with firms themselves. "If artificial intelligence models used in financial crimes prevention overlook customers or activity associated with terrorism, the responsibility will fall on those who developed and use the model," he says. Compliance leaders, he warns, should be wary of assuming that automation reduces regulatory exposure.

Cross-border implications and fragmentation risk

Beyond the US, the GENIUS Act carries significant cross-border implications. Foreign stablecoin issuers may only access US users if their home regulatory regimes are deemed comparable by the US Treasury and if they meet strict reserve and supervision requirements.

Marshall notes that this effectively pressures foreign jurisdictions to align with US standards if they wish to participate in the US market. At the same time, divergent regulatory approaches in Europe and Asia risk fragmenting the global stablecoin landscape.

Ostrowski points to Europe's Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation (MiCA), under which US-issued stablecoins may be treated as non-European tokens, triggering additional restrictions. In Asia, jurisdictions such as Singapore and Hong Kong apply heightened due diligence to foreign-issued stablecoins.

"Regulatory guidance around third-party risk management will be an important cornerstone to managing operational and regulatory risk"

Steve Marshall, FinScan

"If similar standards do not exist, you will encounter more complex due diligence, reporting and documentation," Ostrowski says.

"This will slow down payment speed. Long term, this risks freezing the US out of the market if it tries to set its own standards."

For Soto Sanchez, interoperability remains the most overlooked issue. Without common standards, he warns, the market could end up with hundreds of stablecoins, each requiring bespoke on and off ramps, ultimately undermining usability and scale.

A foundation rather than a finish line

The GENIUS Act does not resolve every challenge associated with digital assets or post-trade transformation. Implementation will stretch into 2028, and much will depend on forthcoming rulemaking by federal and state regulators.

Compliance costs, operational change and technology investment remain significant hurdles.

Yet for asset servicers, the direction of travel is clear. By establishing a regulated form of digital cash, the GENIUS Act lays the foundation for real-time settlement, continuous liquidity management and deeper integration between traditional and tokenised infrastructure.

As Baker observes, the legislation pushes the industry towards interoperable and automated post-trade systems. Whether firms are ready to meet that challenge will shape the next phase of market modernisation. ■

The year asset servicing's evolution becomes ingrained into workflows

Industry leaders anticipate the key drivers of change and forces that will mould the asset servicing industry in the new year

Clearing and Settlement

Dirk Loscher, CEO of Clearstream Europe and Head of Custody and Investor Solutions

Gearing Up For The Road Ahead

If 2025 was for planning, 2026 will be the year of gearing up for execution. The transition to T+1 is no longer a distant concept but an immediate strategic priority. Firms must now evaluate their most critical pain points and take proactive steps to mitigate the impending challenges. For this transition to succeed, we must concurrently focus on building stable, deep liquidity pools for European capital markets. Initiatives such as extending trading hours and aligning market standards — without sacrificing the stability of netting facilities — are crucial to enhancing the attractiveness of our connected marketplace.

This evolution will be supported by the boosted adoption of digital technologies and assets, including distributed ledger technology (DLT), crypto assets, and stablecoins, which promise enhanced efficiency and cross-border flexibility. Furthermore, the FASTER initiative, which aims to simplify Europe's complex tax landscape, will be a key focus, not only for us. While complete harmonisation may remain elusive, our role will be to manage these local complexities, shielding clients from operational burdens. Ultimately, in a world of constant change, the drive towards greater market harmonisation is more critical than ever. We must adjust to this new reality.

Val Wotton, Managing Director and Global Head of Equities Solutions, DTCC

2026 will be a critical year for Europe's transition to T+1 settlement. The European Union, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and the UK have all set October 11, 2027, as their go-live date. The 2024 move to T+1 in the US provides insights for a successful transition, but Europe's fragmented market structure creates unique challenges for market participants. Successful T+1 preparation across the region demands automation. Manual interventions and bottlenecks in post-trade processes need to be addressed to enable same-day trade allocation and confirmation.

2026 will also be a crucial year in readiness for T+1. Firms that invest in straight-through processing (STP), modernised architecture, and testing with infrastructure providers will emerge not only as regulatory compliant but will also benefit from the capabilities and efficiencies that automation provides. While preparations should now be well under way, it's not too late for market participants to ensure readiness for Europe's move to T+1.

Global markets are also undergoing huge transformations in the front office, with major exchanges actively exploring 24/5 trading. DTCC continues to work closely with exchanges, regulators, and industry partners to ensure a smooth, phased transition to 24/5 trading. These efforts not only address today's needs but also lay the foundation for a future transition to 24/7 trading as industry infrastructure and regulatory frameworks evolve. While continuous trading rests with the exchanges, DTCC stands ready in 2026 to support overnight trading windows. From Q2 2026, DTCC's equities clearing subsidiary will increase clearing hours, subject to regulatory review and approval.

Marco Kessler, Head of Product and Business Development for Digital Assets, SIX

The strongest driver this year has certainly been the shift from digital assets as an experiment to digital assets as everyday financial tools. When global systematically important banks start accepting Bitcoin and Ether as collateral, supported by regulated custodians, you know the direction of travel is moving towards these assets working inside the nuts and bolts of institutional finance. This momentum is reinforced by demand for stablecoins, new custody services from major banks and asset managers, as well as the broader push toward faster settlement and round-the-clock markets.

The greatest hindrance is that post-trade systems were never built for this world. They struggle with assets that move instantly, markets that never close, and workflows that need automated checks rather than costly reconciliation. Pressure points in post-trade appear not because the ambition is wrong, but because the foundations need to evolve. The industry will only unlock the full value of digital assets in 2026 when custody, settlement, and reporting systems become as modern as the assets they now support.

Technology

Gareth Evans, Chief Product Officer, FINBOURNE

Confronting The Technology Spend Paradox

For a more productive 2026, the priority shouldn't be spending more on technology but rather spending more strategically. In the last five years, tech budgets have ballooned with very little to show for it. Next year, asset managers must confront an uncomfortable truth: recent McKinsey research shows the majority of technology spending - often 60-80 per cent - goes toward maintaining legacy systems rather than genuine transformation. This 'complexity tax' isn't just expensive; it actively prevents firms from capturing the substantial efficiency gains – potentially 25-40 per cent of the cost base – that AI and modern platforms can deliver.

The path forward isn't about spending less – it's about spending differently. Firms need to shift investment away from keeping fragile systems alive and toward building modern, unified data platforms that can actually support AI-driven workflows. That's not just bold thinking for 2026. It's the only sustainable path to competitive advantage.

Dean McIntyre, Chief Commercial Officer, SimCorp

We expect that AI-powered tools will advance, enabling faster insights and intuitive, code-free interaction with data. Firms must ensure their data is 'AI-ready' to avoid poor outcomes.

What's particularly interesting is that firms are taking a very practical approach – they're focusing on areas like helping portfolio managers become more efficient with their existing processes, rather than trying to completely reinvent their investment approach.

For new tools adoption using natural language to ask for what you need rather than building tables or data structures seems the natural next step for user experience.

Total Portfolio Approach (TPA) adoption will continue to be a key theme for the largest asset owners, as institutional investors seek unified risk and performance views across asset classes.

Technology platforms that integrate public and private markets seamlessly will be a key differentiator.

“2025 made one thing clear; skilled people are drawn to modern, well-built systems”

Theo Wasserberg, Head of UK and Ireland, Embat

Why 2026 Will Expose The reason Your AI projects Keep Stalling

The most important shift in 2026 won’t come from AI vendors, regulators, or new technology. It’ll come from chief financial officers finally admitting something that 2025 made painfully clear: people were never the barrier, the architecture was.

The Silent Blocker: Architecture, Not People

Last year, finance teams reached a breaking point. Not because they feared AI, but because they were stuck inside systems that freeze whenever real life doesn’t follow the rules. Two invoices in one payment? Error. A reference number typed backwards? Manual intervention. Teams weren’t “resistant to change”; they were tired of holding together workflows that collapse under real-world complexity. And the moment leaders saw that clearly, adoption patterns changed.

Talent Gravity Becomes the Modernisation Forcing Function

2025 made one thing clear; skilled people are drawn to modern, well-built systems. Graduates and mid-career specialists are increasingly selective about the technology environments they’ll work in. This year, I’ve begun hearing treasurers acknowledge, with notable candour, that recruitment challenges are directly linked to perceptions of their technology infrastructure. As we move into 2026, talent attraction and retention may emerge as one compelling driver for modernisation initiatives.

The Architecture Paradox Emerges

And that leads to the third prediction: the architecture paradox. The louder the AI conversation became in 2025, the more obvious it was that the real blocker was data plumbing built for another era. The companies that move fastest in 2026 won’t be the ones adding tools; they’ll be the ones removing the ones that choke flow. 2025 tested ambition. 2026 rewards teams willing to fix the plumbing.

Rory Doyle, Head of Financial Crime Policy, Fenergo

2025 has been a landmark year for anti-money laundering (AML) progress in Europe, no less in digital assets, with 2026 shaping up to be no different. This year saw a mammoth evolution for regulation in Europe, as the EU’s Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA) officially began. In addition, the FCA announced a new body for AML and counter-terrorist financing, and the UK-US potential digital assets passporting schemes took great strides at the discussion stage – possibly the most exciting innovation of all.

As the UK and US differ greatly in their approaches to AML frameworks, the concept of introducing a passporting scheme doesn’t come without its challenges. The substantial crime risks as a result of regulatory arbitrage are not to be ignored. As we head into the new year, the UK needs to continue driving innovation in digital assets, but not at the expense of effective oversight. Only then can it accelerate greater adoption for markets, without creating new opportunities to commit financial crimes.

Fund Services

EJ Liotta, Head of Prime Finance and Equity Derivatives, TS Imagine

2026 will be the year that prime brokers and hedge funds start to take control of corporate actions. Inefficiencies generated by corporate actions processing are the most persistent and structurally dangerous source of recurring losses in modern markets. The problem is particularly acute in prime brokers, and spills over into the hedge funds they service. A prime broker holding US$150 billion faces more than US$13 million in annual corporate actions exposures. In the next 12 months, prime brokers and hedge funds will leverage technology to address the architectural weaknesses that have historically triggered losses linked to corporate actions. This means addressing the point at which stock loans, financing, synthetics, rehypothecation, margin, and multi-client entitlements converge.

Currently, one mis-tagged event, missed election, or late adjustment can cascade instantly into buy-ins, mismatched financing flows, and direct hits to profit and loss. By implementing real-time corporate actions intelligence, automating election and entitlement processing, and cross-product lifecycle integration, the industry can end the unnecessary absorption of tens of millions in silent, structural losses.

David Everson, Head of Fixed Income Trading, EMEA, Liquidnet

The year that will re-engineer the fixed income market for the next decade. As we look ahead to 2026, the fixed income market will continue to grapple with the challenge of electronifying the block side of trading, a theme that surfaced in early 2025 and gained momentum throughout the year.

As I discussed on my panel at the FILS (Fixed Income Leaders) conference this year, this isn't just about technology, it's about designing workflows that preserve liquidity and trust at scale. I think achieving this will require a fundamental shift in behaviour from both buy and sell-side participants, as existing protocols like RFQ are simply not fit for purpose in this segment of the market.

At the same time, I think pressure on incumbent trading venues to justify their economics will no doubt intensify, with fee compression remaining a dominant theme, venues will need to prove their value beyond connectivity. Regulatory developments will also reshape the landscape, particularly the rollout of the consolidated tape in the UK and Europe, which promises to improve price discovery but will require significant adaptation from market participants.

And finally, we can't look forward without mentioning the rise of AI and in particular AI-driven analytics. I believe these will begin to move from concept to reality, enabling smarter liquidity sourcing and predictive execution strategies. Those who harness these tools effectively will gain a genuine competitive edge.

Pervaiz Panjwani, Chief Product Officer, Waystone

In 2026, fund administration and fund governance will become even more central as the investment management industry continues to consolidate, leveraging mergers and acquisitions (M&A). The trend of outsourcing in both fund administration and governance in the private and public markets will accelerate. Managers will prioritise partners that offer platform solutions with consistent reporting, cross-border governance, and capital-markets expertise - particularly as active ETFs proliferate, semi-transparent models evolve, and more global issuers enter Europe through Ireland and Luxembourg.

Fund Governance will remain a critical differentiator as sustainable finance disclosure regulation [SFDR], alternative investment fund managers directive [AIFMD II], and US reporting cycles tighten, while technology-driven scalability becomes essential for handling complex, multi-domicile product ranges. The winners next year will be those who eliminate operational friction by embracing AI and tech integration to create capacity and free up talent, which can be redeployed towards enhancing service consistency and broader client experience to foster growth.

Steve Walsh, Managing Director of Reconciliation, Duco

Preparing for T+1 in Europe

Heading into 2026, European firms will be preparing for T+1, which will be much more complex than the US given the currency and regulatory patchwork. US firms increased headcount by up to 18 per cent to support the move to T+1, and they were working within a landscape of only a few, mostly centralised infrastructures. Europe is much, much more complex with over 30 Central Securities Depositories (CSDs) all with different technologies and rules. While not all the specifics for the transition have been finalised, firms will need the next year to get ready.

We believe they will be heavily focused on adopting a T+0 reconciliation mindset to meet the 80 per cent reduction in post-trade processing time and the challenges that come with it. Ultimately, we see automation as the only realistic way to achieve this, enabling firms to process more data, with greater accuracy, at higher speed and with shorter investigation times."

AI adoption

With AI, it's imperative to avoid the 'slap'. That is 'slapping' AI on top of a legacy system or process. A full reconsideration of the operating model is imperative. What tasks can be done by humans? Where can AI plug in? Ensuring governance, explainability and seamless integration comes from this deep strategic work. This work is already in progress with a major focus on explainability. Humans need to stay 'in the loop' but ensure their presence doesn't wipe away the benefits of automation. Legacy technology stacks present roadblocks, as cumbersome, byzantine back ends impact timelines. To make the most of the opportunity, organisations will need to reassess how their operating models are aligned across middle- and back-office functions, ensuring product and process flows support rather than hinder transformation.

And the process can't be left solely with technologists. Business expertise helps ensure development focuses on higher-value tasks and navigate ongoing regulatory developments and market headwinds, leading to the best result.

"Firms still relying on manual reporting, siloed data or outdated valuation models will find fundraising slower and competition tougher"

Rosemary McCollin, Executive Vice President, Fund Solutions EU and ME, Vistra

2026 will be the year when efficiency gaps in real estate investment operational management become more visible than ever before. Volatility will remain a concern, but the real differentiator will be operational strength. Managers who have invested in integrated systems, clean data, and advanced technology will stand out, because the market will favour those who can prove their decisions, not just justify them after the fact. Limited Partners (LPs) are already shifting towards managers who offer transparent, data-backed insights into performance, valuations and risk.

That pressure will intensify in 2026. Firms still relying on manual reporting, siloed data or outdated valuation models will find fundraising slower and competition tougher. The expectation next year will be consistent, timely, auditable data that shows how valuations are derived, how risk is monitored and how performance compares across regions and asset types. Those who modernise early will be far better positioned as capital becomes more selective.

Data Quality and Standardisation

In 2026, data quality will become a defining operational priority in private markets. Managers are already feeling the pressure, and the consequences of poor data will only become more visible, from slower transactions to tougher valuations and increased scrutiny from LPs. Standardisation will drive this shift. Without shared definitions, structures, and reporting frameworks, firms will keep wasting time reconciling information rather than analysing it. The focus must be on breaking down data silos, adopting common standards, and strengthening governance so teams can finally work from a single source of truth.

This change will also level the field between smaller managers and larger players. With modern tools and better data, firms of any size can turn accuracy and consistency into a genuine advantage.

Those willing to invest now will operate with greater confidence and adopt advanced technologies with far less friction. In 2026, scrutiny, precision and speed will define the winners.

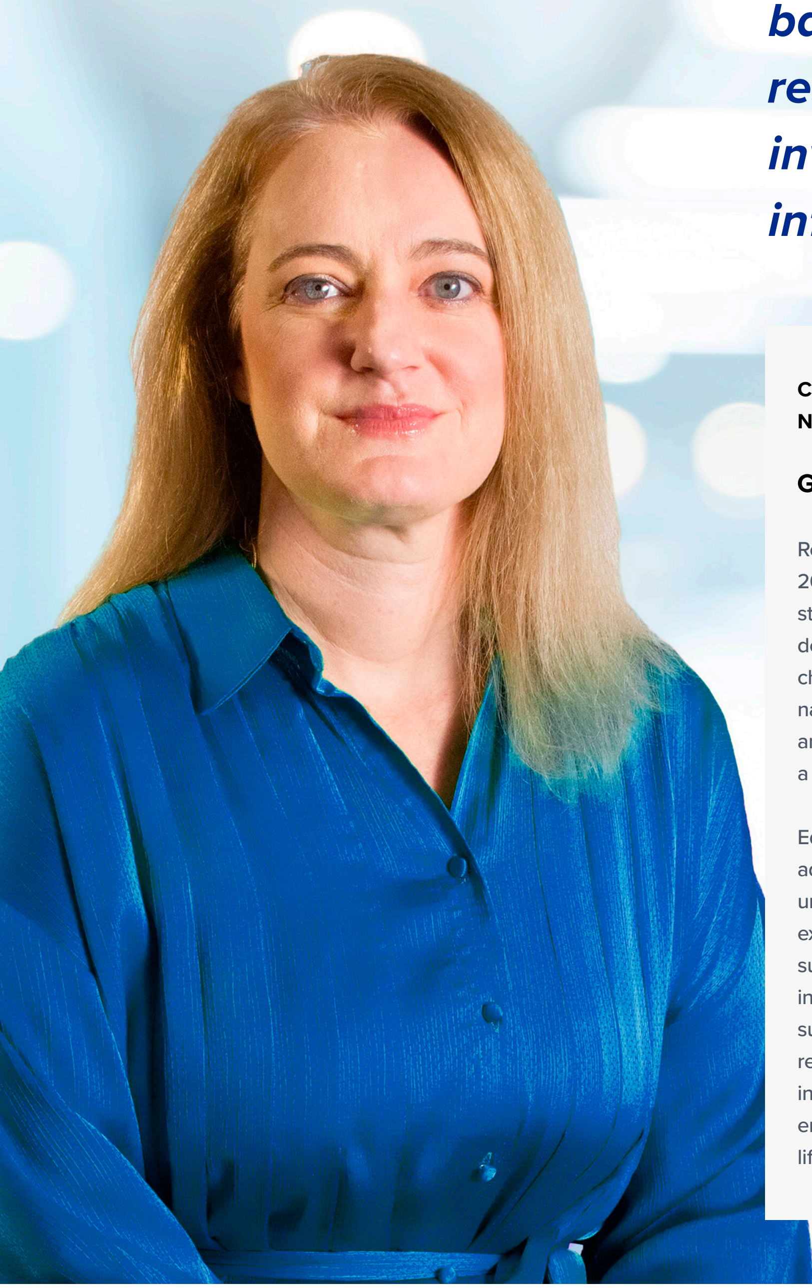
AI and Automation

AI will become part of everyday operations across private markets in 2026. Early adopters have already shown the value through faster diligence, better forecasting, stronger valuations and lower operational costs. More firms will follow as they look for greater efficiency in a difficult market.

The firms that will benefit most are those with clean, well-structured data and strong governance. This foundation is essential. With it, managers can automate with confidence, make faster decisions and deliver deeper insights to investors. Without it, AI becomes slow, costly and unreliable, and the gap between prepared firms and those still catching up will only grow.

In 2026, AI becomes a core capability. Firms that combine strong data with disciplined adoption will move faster, improve accuracy and build investor confidence. Those that delay will struggle to keep pace with a market that expects more efficiency. While many tasks will become automated, the human touch will remain just as important, especially when interpreting results, managing relationships and guiding investors through uncertainty.

Retail investment



“Managers will need to balance innovation with responsibility, ensuring investors are engaged, informed and supported”

Caroline Baker, Country Managing Director (CMD) for North America, Vistra

Gearing Up For The Road Ahead

Retail interest in private markets will continue to rise in 2026 as investors seek diversification and access to strategies once limited to institutions. While growing demand will increase liquidity, it brings real operational challenges. Managers and distributors will need to navigate liquidity constraints, maintain appropriate buffers and handle the added complexity that comes with serving a much broader investor base.

Education will be critical. Private wealth banks, financial advisers and platforms must help retail investors understand structures, risks and time horizons so expectations are set early and clearly. The firms that succeed will be those that invest in strong client support, intuitive investor-facing technology and human customer support teams who can respond when issues arise. As retail access expands, managers will need to balance innovation with responsibility, ensuring investors are engaged, informed and supported throughout the entire lifecycle of their investment.

Custody

“The digitisation and automation of ETF servicing is and will continue to become an indispensable necessity”

Peggy Vena, Head of ETF Services, Citi Investor Services

2026 marks a pivotal year for the exchange-traded fund (ETF) industry, primarily driven by the anticipated launch of ETF Share Classes for all and the escalating adoption of actively managed ETFs. This confluence will significantly accelerate ETF growth, extending the streak of consecutive monthly inflows well into 2027 and compelling market holdouts to embrace the ETF structure.

This unprecedented expansion necessitates a profound digital evolution across the entire ETF ecosystem.

The digitisation and automation of ETF servicing is and will continue to become an indispensable necessity.

API connectivity will be key to enabling workflows that can support increased transaction volume and complexity.

This need for greater automation, efficiency and increasing real-time transmission of information will accelerate the adoption of technology and development of resilient digital infrastructures. 2026 will be recognised as another landmark year for ETFs.

Laurent Marochini, CEO, Standard Chartered Luxembourg

After laying the foundations in 2025, institutions will shift into full-scale action, unlocking a new era for tokenised finance. 2026 is shaping up to be a pivotal year as financial institutions begin to execute on the groundwork laid throughout 2025. With regulatory frameworks in place (such as Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation, MiCA, in Europe), early moving companies will start to reap the rewards. At the centre of this shift, digital custody emerges as the cornerstone of the institutional crypto ecosystem, delivering the security and compliance needed for large-scale adoption.

Tokenisation is entering a phase of rapid expansion, especially across money market funds, private equity, and bonds, as on-chain settlement becomes increasingly common. The ability to offer real-time collateral, robust stablecoin, efficient distribution channels and network interoperability, will be key differentiators. Mergers and acquisitions will accelerate as others race to catch up. Several banks, including Standard Chartered, are already positioning themselves to lead the next wave of institutional crypto growth. ■

The role of the Nordics in the global asset servicing ecosystem

Ann Magnusson, Head of Investor Services at SEB, discusses with Tahlia Kraefft what sets the Nordic markets apart, and examines their reputation for efficiency and digital maturity

What are the core infrastructure strengths that differentiate the region from the rest of Europe?

The Nordic region has built an environment that attracts a broad range of investors. Strong investor protection, innovative financial products, and a well-developed pension system encourage both private individuals and professional investors to take a long-term view. This approach could serve as a model for other European countries, particularly in how investment opportunities are structured and presented. Sweden, for example, consistently ranks among the top European markets for initial public offerings (IPOs), with Stockholm leading in the number of IPOs.

This reflects a climate that supports entrepreneurship and provides accessible routes to market for new businesses.

What makes the Nordic market infrastructure more resilient or predictable compared to other regions?

The Nordic markets benefit from a transparent and stable legal and tax framework. Investors know what to expect, which reduces uncertainty — a key concern for anyone allocating capital. The region's financial infrastructure has evolved over many years through close collaboration between banks, central securities depositories (CSDs), and exchanges. SEB, for instance, played a foundational role in establishing Värdepapperscentralen (now Euroclear Sweden) and has long worked with the Nordic stock exchange, now part of Nasdaq.

How will upcoming EU regulations, such as the revised AML framework, DORA, and sustainability reporting, impact asset servicing?

The most significant changes are likely to come from the Savings Investment Union (SIU) and ongoing harmonisation initiatives. Although only Finland uses the euro, there is a clear trend towards integrating Nordic market infrastructure with eurozone systems. Harmonisation can bring benefits, but it also involves significant costs and operational changes. It is important to ensure that these efforts ultimately benefit end investors.

New regulations, such as the Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA), provide much-needed clarity for digital assets. However, in some areas, further regulation may not be necessary; allowing markets to adapt to existing rules could be more effective. These views reflect my personal perspective, not an official SEB position.

In what ways do the Nordics serve as a testing ground for wider European regulatory developments?

The Nordics are known for their transparent tax systems and focus on efficiency. While the region, similar to the rest of Europe, is not yet as advanced as the US or China in use of AI, Nordic companies are actively exploring emerging technologies and developing new financial products.

The challenge is to retain growing companies within the region, as some, like Klarna, have chosen to list in the US. Ensuring sufficient liquidity in Europe is an area that requires further attention.

How is early adoption of climate reporting and sustainability integration shaping custodian service models?

Sustainability is now integrated into core services, moving custodians from simply safeguarding assets to providing sustainability intelligence. This shift requires extensive data sharing and analytics. While explicit focus on sustainability and inclusion may have decreased, these principles remain embedded in the strategies of Nordic institutions and corporates.

Are there changes in the service models custodians must provide?

Data provision and analytics are increasingly important. Clients often work in partnership with specialists across the value chain, and custodians must support them with relevant data and insights.

Much of the current drive for sustainability comes from the corporate side, with custodians helping investors and clients remain compliant by being asked to provide data and reporting.

Although sustainability may receive less explicit attention, it is now expected to be more deeply integrated into business processes.

As custody shifts from processing to insight, what capabilities are becoming critical for Nordic asset servicing?

Insight, driven by data and advanced technologies such as AI and distributed ledger technology, is becoming central. Communication, trust, and compliance remain core values. The pace of technological change is accelerating, and custodians must adapt by enhancing data access, communication, and analytics.

> ***"Global clients expect Nordic institutions to be in control and compliant, governed by regulators following rules and regulations"***

How has the Nordic region's geopolitical stability influenced international investor expectations?

The Nordics have long been seen as a stable and reliable part of the global financial system. As Europe adapts to new geopolitical realities, the region must continue to align with European solutions while preserving the efficiency and openness that make it attractive to investors.

How is regulation being used as a geopolitical tool, and what does this mean for custodians and asset services?

Regulation is increasingly used to achieve political aims. For custodians, this means integrating and automating compliance processes to keep pace with regulatory demands. The upcoming move to T+1 settlement in 2027 will require clients to rethink their investment operations and adapt to a faster environment.

What role can Nordic financial institutions play as Europe repositions itself in a more polarised world?

Nordic institutions can act as a trusted bridge for Europe — remaining green, connected, and innovative.

The region's tradition of clear communication, transparency, and active investor and issuer communities will be essential for maintaining its role as a regional hub.

What is the long-term opportunity for the Nordics in the global asset servicing ecosystem?

The Nordics' history of creativity and technological advancement positions the region to offer unique alternatives to global banks. By leveraging local expertise and embracing harmonisation with Europe, Nordic institutions can continue to provide distinctive value to clients.

How does regulatory maturity in the Nordics affect global client expectations?

Global clients expect Nordic institutions to be in control and compliant, governed by regulators following rules and regulations. For Nordic clients, regulatory maturity and sustainability remain high priorities. Defence, resilience, and the energy transition are also increasingly important, with new investment opportunities emerging in areas such as nuclear power.

How does standardisation and digital identity adoption benefit asset servicing clients, especially cross-border investors?

High levels of standardisation and digital identity adoption support harmonisation and make cross-border servicing more efficient. However, true harmonisation requires careful consideration of costs and business relevance. Collaboration and targeted investment are key to maintaining relevance for diverse client needs.

What other key issues are top of mind?

Maintaining a vibrant Nordic capital market is essential. SEB continues to help shape the region's infrastructure, including adapting to digital developments such as stablecoins and ETFs. Upcoming changes to settlement cycles and CSD infrastructure will create both challenges and opportunities.

Ensuring resilience and supporting clients through these transitions will be a major focus in the coming years. ■

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Building skills before titles

Yazz Butt, business development at Ultumus, discusses entering asset services straight from university, the value of learning on the job, and how combining data analysis with relationship-building has shaped her early career

Can you give us an insight into your personal journey into the asset services industry, why did you decide this was the career for you?

I work in business development at Ultumus, where we provide the industry with three core solutions: exchange traded fund (ETF) and index data aggregation, portfolio composition file (PCF) calculation, and our creation/redemption platform — Cosmos. Getting here was not necessarily straightforward.

I started university in 2021, just as the world was emerging from the Covid pandemic. I studied geography, which gave me a strong foundation in data analysis and interpretation — skills that proved far more transferable than I initially realised. Leaving university without a clear career plan meant I had to take a step back and assess what I was actually good at.

Two things kept surfacing: I am naturally drawn to people — I like building relationships and understanding how to communicate effectively; I had also developed an interest in data analysis during my degree — working through complex information and finding insights.

I needed to find a role where those two skills could work together. That is what made working in business development at Ultumus appeal to me when I found it.

What drew me to Ultumus was not just the role itself — it was the company culture. From the very first conversations, it was clear that people here genuinely believe in the solution we are providing. On top of that, I was attracted to the opportunity to work in a smaller company where I could learn from people who have built something from the ground up.

How did your experience differ amongst your peers? Were there benefits or disadvantages to starting your career early-on?

What has struck me most since joining is how little university actually prepares you for the realities of working in financial services (or the realities of professional life).

You learn far more by doing — by being in the moment and asking questions.

Working closely with our founders and senior management on a daily basis has given me insights into the industry, its challenges, and its opportunities that I simply could not have gained in a classroom. That proximity to decision-making and strategic thinking has been invaluable, and it has shaped how I understand not just what we do, but why it matters.

Starting at 21 in financial services, I definitely felt behind at first. The learning curve was steep. I had to pick up industry knowledge, understand our products, learn how to speak to clients, and figure out how everything connected — all at the same time. It meant a lot of asking questions and getting comfortable with not knowing everything immediately.

What aspects of your job do you enjoy the most?

I really enjoy the variety of working with different people. Every person comes with a different challenge or need, and I like being able to help them figure out solutions. It keeps things interesting and there is real satisfaction in being able to solve a problem that makes a tangible difference for a client.

"At some point, I would like to be leading a team, bringing together the technical knowledge and relationship skills I am building now"

The role keeps me challenged in a good way. There is always something new to learn or a different angle to consider, which keeps me motivated and prevents things from feeling repetitive. I appreciate that I am constantly picking up new knowledge, whether it is understanding different parts of the business or learning new approaches to problems I have not encountered before.

What is the training process of a new employee?

The first three to six months are really about learning the products inside out and understanding the why behind what we are doing. There is no formal classroom-style training program — it is very much learn-as-you-go. From day one, you are shadowing senior members of the team, sitting in on client calls, and absorbing as much as you can in real time.

I started at the same time as two other graduates, which was incredibly helpful. We relied on each other a lot for peer learning — asking each other questions and figuring things out together. That support system made the steep learning curve more manageable for us all.

Industry knowledge comes through doing. You pick it up gradually through client conversations, understanding the problems they are facing, and seeing how our solutions fit into the broader ecosystem.

Looking back after 18 months, the learning curve was intense at the start, but I feel like I understand things at a much deeper level now. The advantage of this approach is that you are learning in context — you are not just memorising concepts, you are seeing them applied in real client situations from the beginning.

Which speaks to the value of getting this kind of exposure at 21, rather than years down the line.

In terms of your career, where do you see yourself in a decade?

In 10 years, I want to still be learning and pushing myself in the same way I am now. I am particularly interested in building deeper expertise within the ETF space and contributing to how innovative solutions are brought to market, but I am keeping my options open on whether that is through client-facing work, operations, or strategy.

Financial success matters to me — I am in the process of buying my first house at the moment, and I want to build financial security as my career progresses. At some point, I would like to be leading a team as well, bringing together the technical knowledge and relationship skills I am building now. The industry is moving quickly, and I want to be actively part of that growth.

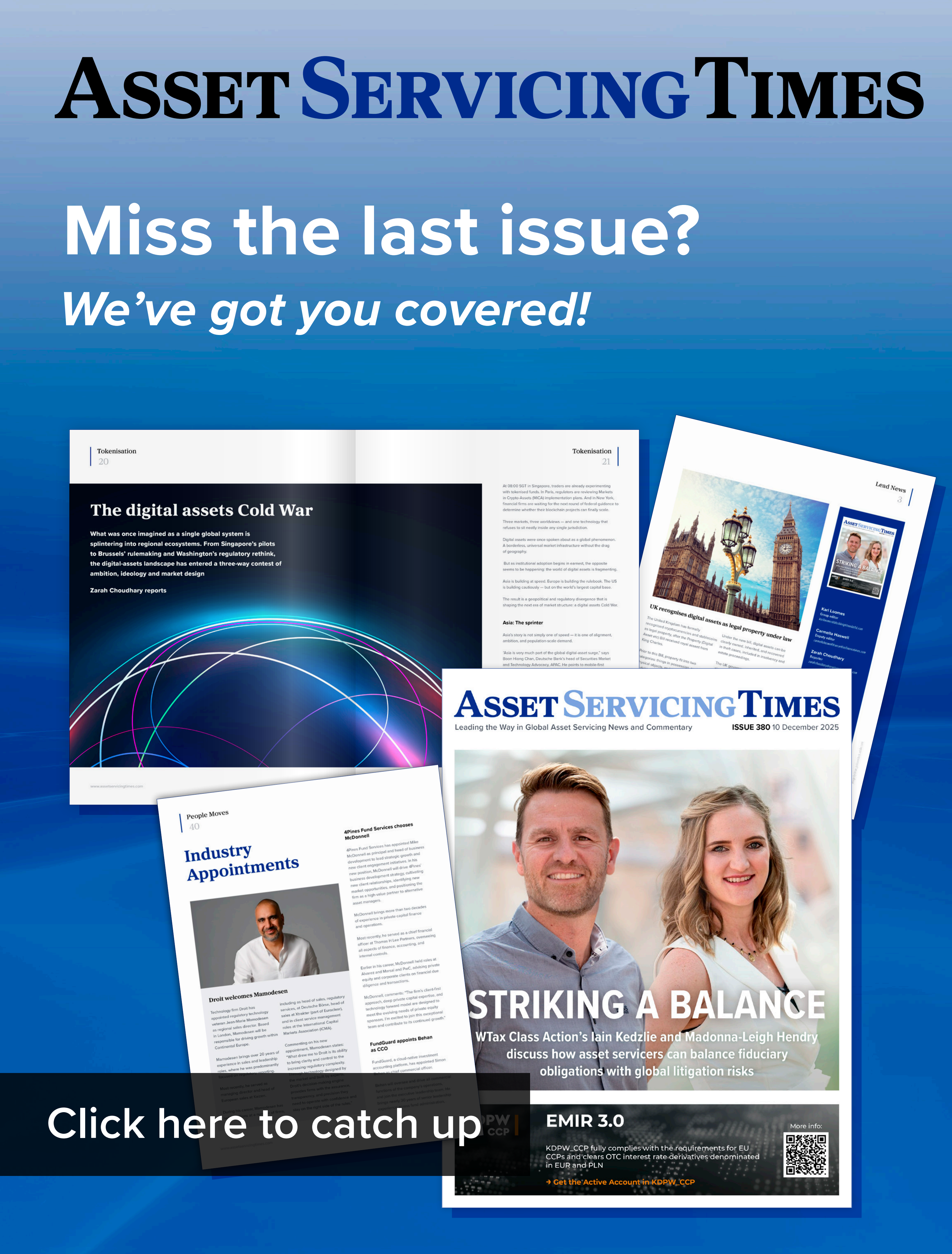
What advice would you give to anyone considering a role in financial services?

Be willing to learn and be honest when you do not know something. You are not going to know everything from day one, and that is completely fine.

What is important is how you respond — asking questions, admitting mistakes, and being upfront about what you do not understand builds far more credibility than trying to appear like you have all the answers.

Do not assume you need a finance degree to succeed in the industry either. Take the time to recognise what transferable skills you actually have, whether that is analytical thinking from another discipline, communication skills, or problem-solving ability.

Your attitude and willingness to learn will take you much further than any qualification — the industry values people who bring fresh perspectives and are not afraid to ask questions. ■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Industry Appointments

Flanagan leaves BNY

Alan Flanagan is set to leave BNY after an 18-year tenure at the bank.

During his career at BNY, he held a number of senior leadership roles across its asset servicing business, most recently serving as global head of client coverage for BNY's Asset Servicing division, overseeing relationship management for the firm.

In this role, he was responsible for leading client engagement across asset managers, asset owners, alternative investment managers, insurance companies, banks and broker-dealers.

Over the course of his tenure at BNY, Flanagan held several senior positions across fund and alternative investment services.

He previously led the firm's fund services business, encompassing accounting solutions, alternative investment services, ETF services and investor solutions.

Prior to that, he served as head of alternatives, supporting alternative asset managers and asset owners investing across private markets.

Flanagan joined BNY from UBS Fund Services, where he was Americas head of business development. He also holds a number of industry board positions, including serving on the board of directors of CIBC Mellon, the joint venture between CIBC and BNY, and on the board of Innocap Investment Management, an alternative investment platform provider.

fundcraft makes two senior appointments

fundcraft, a European digital-native fund operations platform, has appointed Jan Lazar as head of digital transformation, and Benjamin Epstein as head of sales of institutional clients.

The firm says that Lazar joins fundcraft with more than 20 years of senior global experience in private markets, product development, structuring, and operating-model engineering.

His career spans leadership roles at Credit Suisse and Stableton, and advisory mandates across private equity and private debt.

He will spearhead fundcraft's Digital Transformation Advisory Practice, supporting established managers undertaking operational change.

Commenting on his appointment, Lazar says: "fundcraft was designed to solve complexity and support institutional scale. It replaces legacy processes with one integrated solution that allows managers to scale across strategies, structures and investor channels while reducing operational costs and total expense ratios.

"I experienced the platform's capabilities first-hand as a client, and it is exciting to join at a moment when the industry is finally ready to redesign its operating model for the next decades."

Epstein brings more than 15 years of experience across capital markets, private markets, portfolio management, as well as enterprise sales.

His background includes Goldman Sachs and Citi, while most recently he served as director of Scale-up Venture Debt and Innovation Banking at Raiffeisen Bank International.

Epstein will lead fundcraft's commercial efforts with asset managers, with a particular focus on expanding the firm's footprint in private equity and private debt, says the firm.

Commenting on his appointment, Epstein adds: "Luxembourg is Europe's largest fund centre and one of the world's most sophisticated hubs for alternative investments, with more than €2.6 trillion in alternative assets.

"Demand for digital operating models is accelerating across private equity and private debt, with strong momentum from structures like ELTIF 2.0 attracting global sponsors. fundcraft has established itself as the digital-native partner capable of meeting this demand at institutional scale. I'm excited to help drive the next phase of growth."

Julien De Mayer, co-founder and CEO at fundcraft, comments: "fundcraft is at a defining moment in the industry. We are seeing unprecedented demand from institutional managers who are rethinking their operational infrastructure and moving away from legacy systems toward fully integrated digital operating models. Bringing Jan and Benjamin into fundcraft adds exactly the commercial depth and operating-model engineering we need for this next phase. We now have a battle-tested institutional foundation, and we're ready to help leading managers modernise their fund operations for the decades ahead."

SimCorp promotes Chabanis

SimCorp has appointed Hugues Chabanis to the newly-created role of head of SimCorp Alternatives, as the company focuses on the growing importance of innovative solutions within private markets. Chabanis, who has been with SimCorp for 10 years, will also become chief operating officer of Domos by SimCorp, the organisation SimCorp acquired

SimCorp appoints Adewuya

SimCorp has appointed Iyan Adewuya to the newly-created role of chief product officer, based in New York.

Adewuya has more than two decades experience in product strategy and innovation, across both public and private markets.

Most recently, he served as head of product for enterprise and private markets solutions within S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Prior to joining S&P Global, Adewuya was head of product for Aladdin portfolio management and compliance at BlackRock, where he also led the Aladdin private markets strategic initiative. He also held a 12 year tenure at Bloomberg, where he held both research and product leadership roles.

Peter Sanderson, CEO, SimCorp, says: "Iyan will play a crucial role ensuring that SimCorp continues to innovate strongly and deliver world class technology for our clients.

"His expertise across public and private markets will help us to anticipate client needs and take full advantage of AI in order to deliver industry leading solutions for our clients."

Speaking on his appointment, Adewuya adds: "I'm thrilled to be joining SimCorp at such an exciting time in the company's history. Our clients face growing complexity, and I believe AI and intelligent automation can be transformative — simplifying workflows, streamlining operations, and enhancing investment decision-making."

in September while launching SimCorp Alternatives. Based in Copenhagen, he will report to chief revenue officer Oliver Johnson.

Johnson states: “We are thrilled that Hugues will lead SimCorp Alternatives, providing support to our clients as investor demand accelerates within the private markets.Since acquiring Domos, we’ve made a lot of progress as we begin to roll out some exceptional offerings.”

During his tenure with SimCorp, Chabanis has led the development of the company’s native alternative investment features and spearheaded front office transformation initiatives.

Most recently, he served as SimCorp’s head of product management for the investment product line. He has spent more than 20 years driving innovation across the asset class, as well as serving on the board of Domos for the past four years.

SimCorp Alternatives extends the existing alternatives offering of SimCorp to also allow general partners (GPs), fund administrators, alternative investment fund managers (AIFMs), management companies (ManCos), and depositories to automate operational processes, regulatory reporting and consolidate data for the entire lifecycle of their private equity, private debt, real estate, and infrastructure investments on a fully integrated solution.

Behan joins CACEIS as company Director

Antoinette Behan has joined CACEIS as the company director. At CACEIS, Behan would be reporting to Cyril Schopfer, country managing director, USA at CACEIS.

With 30 years of experience in the financial services industry across London, Dublin, and New York, the firm highlights that Behan brings a depth of cross-border experience to CACEIS.

She was most recently chief revenue officer of Edgar Agents, and held senior positions with NASDAQ, NetSuite Oracle, and Donnelley Financial. ■

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