

Press release

31 January 2025

ECB selects motifs for future euro banknotes

- ECB shortlisted motifs based on the two possible themes for new banknotes: “European culture: shared cultural spaces” and “Rivers and birds: resilience in diversity”
- The decision builds on an inclusive process involving feedback from public surveys and groups of experts
- ECB to launch design contest in 2025 allowing Governing Council to select final designs in 2026
- First new banknotes will go into circulation several years after final decision on designs and following production process

The Governing Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) has selected motifs to illustrate the two possible themes for future euro banknotes. “European culture” focuses on shared cultural spaces and prominent Europeans. “Rivers and birds” focuses on the resilience and diversity of the natural world, complemented by the European institutions.

The decision benefited from the suggestions provided by two multidisciplinary advisory groups from across the euro area and is consistent with the preferences on the themes expressed by more than 365,000 Europeans in [public surveys](#) held in summer 2023 and in focus groups conducted between December 2021 and March 2022.

“We are excited to present these real-life motifs that reflect our commitment to Europe and celebrate its cultural heritage and natural environment,” said ECB President Christine Lagarde. “The new banknotes will symbolise our shared European identity and the diversity that makes us strong.”

European culture: shared cultural spaces

“European culture” celebrates the shared cultural spaces that have shaped European identity over the centuries. The motifs for this theme depict various cultural activities and spaces, and iconic European personalities who have contributed to building Europe’s cultural heritage. Their lives span six centuries, during which they lived, travelled and worked across our continent, and their accomplishments have resonated around the world.

The motifs selected are:

Table 1

European culture		
	Front	Reverse
€5 Performing arts	Maria Callas	Street performers (music/dance/theatre) entertaining passersby
€10 Music	Ludwig van Beethoven	A song festival with a choir of children and young adults singing
€20 Universities and schools	Marie Curie	A school or university with a female teacher with young students. There are notebooks and books on the tables
€50 Libraries	Miguel de Cervantes	A library with some adults reading paper and digital books. A little boy and girl in front of a bookcase trying to get a book
€100 Museums and exhibitions	Leonardo da Vinci	Adults and children admiring some examples of street art, contemporary art, etc.
€200 Public squares	Bertha von Suttner	A tree-covered square allowing people to come together, with adults and children talking, walking, playing, etc.

Rivers and birds: resilience in diversity

“Rivers and birds” highlights the resilience and diversity of Europe’s natural ecosystems by showcasing different stages of rivers and various bird species, emphasising the importance of nature and environmental protection. The European institutions featured on the banknotes remind us of the fundamental values of the European project, which also embraces environmental protection.

The motifs selected are:

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Table 2

Rivers and birds

	Front	Reverse
€5	Mountain spring Wallcreeper next to a mountain landscape	European Parliament
€10	Waterfall Kingfisher in a waterfall or run pool	European Commission
€20	Confined river valley Bee-eater colony in a sand wall on the side of a large, confined river valley along a riverbank	European Central Bank
€50	Meandering river White stork flying over a meandering river in an unconfined river valley	Court of Justice of the European Union
€100	River mouth Avocet sweeping over the surface of a mud flat	European Council and Council of the European Union
€200	Seascape Northern gannet flying over big ocean waves	European Court of Auditors

Next steps

In 2025 the ECB will establish a jury and launch a design contest, which will be open to designers from across the European Union. The ECB will continue to involve the public and experts to ensure the designs selected are relatable for Europeans of all ages. In 2026 the ECB will ask the public which designs they prefer based on a shortlist.

“We are developing new banknotes because we are committed to cash now and in the future. Banknotes are a symbol of our European unity and with the new motifs, we celebrate our shared history and commitment to a sustainable future,” said ECB Executive Board member Piero Cipollone.

The Governing Council is expected to make the final decision on the designs in 2026. The new banknotes will be ready to enter circulation some years after this decision and following the production process.

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Notes

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1. It is the duty of the ECB and the euro area national central banks to ensure that euro banknotes remain an innovative, secure and efficient means of payment. Developing new series of banknotes regularly is standard practice for all central banks. In a world where banknote reproduction technologies are rapidly evolving and counterfeiters can easily access information and materials, it is necessary to issue new banknotes on a regular basis. Beyond security considerations, the ECB is committed to reducing the environmental impact of euro banknotes throughout their life cycle, while also making them more relatable and inclusive for Europeans of all ages and backgrounds, including vulnerable groups such as the visually impaired. For more information, see [the future banknotes page](#).
2. The current theme of the euro banknotes is “Ages and styles” and the main motifs on each banknote are windows, doorways and bridges based on architectural styles from various periods in Europe’s history. For more information, see [the banknotes design elements page](#).

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