EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROSYSTEM

Press release

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ECB selects 36 payment service providers to join digital euro pilot

- Pilot to take place at the ECB and several Eurosystem national central banks to test digital euro functionalities
- Over 50 applications received, reflecting strong market interest and engagement
- Selected participants span a broad range of business models and sizes and offer broad geographical coverage

The European Central Bank (ECB) has selected 36 payment service providers (PSP) from across the euro area to participate in the digital euro pilot. The pilot exercise is crucial for testing the digital euro's technical functionality and operational processes, as well as for refining user experience. The pilot aims to support the ongoing preparatory work for the potential issuance of a digital euro, and is due to start during the second half of 2027 for a period of 12 months.

Following a call for expression of interest in March 2026, the Eurosystem received more than 50 applications from PSPs, reflecting strong interest and engagement from the market. Applicants were evaluated based on a set of pre-defined eligibility criteria. The selected participants, including banks and non-bank service providers, span a broad range of business models and sizes and offer broad geographical coverage, ensuring a diverse and representative testing and learning environment for the digital euro.

“The strong market interest in the pilot shows the private sector's readiness to engage actively and quickly advance with the digital euro project to strengthen the European payments landscape,” said ECB Executive Board member Piero Cipollone, who chairs the High-Level Task Force on a digital euro. “We look forward to deeper engagement as we work with and learn alongside European payment service providers in developing a secure, efficient and inclusive digital euro.”

The pilot will use a beta version of the digital euro. It will be functionally and technically close to the digital euro as foreseen in the draft legislation but will not have legal tender status.

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Some of the selected providers – known as distributing PSPs – will give Eurosystem staff access to beta digital euro services, such as setting up their beta digital euro account and paying, and others – known as acquiring PSPs – will serve selected merchants and enable them to receive beta digital euro payments. Some providers will play a dual acquiring and distributing role.

The pilot will take place at the ECB and 19 national central banks across the euro area, namely in Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland. The pilot takes into account that selected PSPs may provide pilot services in countries other than the one in which they are established.

The pilot will involve staff from the ECB and participating national central banks, as well as e-commerce merchants, and merchants offering everyday services on their premises (e.g. cafeterias and restaurants). Staff at participating central banks will have the opportunity to make beta digital euro payments from person to person (both online and offline) and from person to business (both at the physical point of sale, including Software Point of Sale, and via e-commerce, including mobile payments).

The pilot will also help refine the digital euro design and user experience. Updates on progress will be regularly published on the ECB's dedicated digital euro pilot webpage. As next steps, the selected payment service providers will work closely with their respective national central banks and the ECB to make the necessary preparations for the pilot exercise.

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