

Press release

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ECB presents findings from digital euro innovation platform and announces second round of experimentation

- Experimentation with almost 70 market participants highlights digital euro's potential to foster innovation and financial inclusion
- ECB to launch second round of experimentation through platform next year to maximise innovation potential
- Conditional payments identified as possible key driver of innovation for consumers and businesses

A digital euro could foster innovation in the European payments system and boost financial inclusion, according to a report published today on the outcome of the first iteration of the digital euro innovation platform – an initiative launched by the European Central Bank (ECB) in October 2024 for collaboration and experimentation with digital euro project stakeholders.

This iteration of the innovation platform brought together almost 70 market participants, including merchants, fintech companies, start-ups, academia, banks and other payment service providers, to explore possible applications of the digital euro.

Participants joined one or both of two workstreams: “visionaries” and “pioneers”. The visionaries focused on gathering innovative ideas and exploring the long-term potential of the digital euro, while the pioneers concentrated on technical experimentation. Both workstreams highlighted the importance of harmonised standards, a shared infrastructure and ongoing collaboration with market participants for ensuring the scalability, reliability and usability of the digital euro across the euro area.

Today's report presents the findings of the two workstreams. It describes the innovations and applications that the digital euro platform could enable, some of which are highlighted below.

Conditional payments, i.e. payments that are triggered automatically when predefined conditions are met, were identified as a possible key driver of innovation and an example of how the digital euro could improve the day-to-day lives of European citizens. As set out in the current draft legislation, a digital euro would offer core technical capabilities, such as the reservation of funds functionality, which would allow money to be set aside while a payment in progress. Unique features such as this, in conjunction with the harmonised standards established by the digital euro rulebook, would allow payment service providers to develop the additional technical layer needed to enable conditional payments. In online shopping transactions, for example, funds could be released to the seller only after the buyer confirms that the item has been delivered, ensuring greater consumer protection. Insurance reimbursements could be automated and, in the case of delayed services, refunds could be streamlined. For shared mobility services and public transport, conditional payments could enable tap-and-go transactions and automatically calculate the best available fare. These concepts were successfully tested in a simulated digital euro environment.

Conditional payments were also tested in the context of business-to-business (B2B) payments, which typically involve larger amounts and more complex contractual agreements. It was found that a digital euro would contribute to reducing fragmentation and costs for B2B payments, while bringing increased standardisation and liquidity.

Integrated electronic receipts (e-receipts) within the digital euro ecosystem could provide consumers with structured access to their purchase records, simplifying tasks such as returns, warranty claims, expense reporting and personal budgeting. For merchants, e-receipts could significantly reduce operational costs and improve efficiency. Eliminating billions of printed receipts each year would not only simplify people's lives, but also bring clear environmental benefits such as reducing chemical waste, resource use and emissions. E-receipts would be strongly encrypted, meaning they could only be seen by the buyer and the seller.

The digital euro could also improve **inclusion and accessibility**, for example with tailored wallets for children to help them learn how to spend and save responsibly from a young age. Students could gain easier access to dedicated benefits and discounts with free digital euro wallets. To ensure accessibility, the digital euro interface could incorporate user-friendly features such as voice-controlled transactions, large-font displays, and guided onboarding processes.

Following the success of these partnerships and amid further demand from market participants, the ECB has decided to launch a second round of experimentation in order to maximise the digital euro's potential for innovation. More details will be announced during the first half of 2026.

"We asked market participants to imagine the many opportunities a digital euro could offer consumers and merchants. Their enthusiastic response shows the immense scope for the digital euro to play a

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transformative role in the European payments landscape,” said ECB Executive Board member Piero Cipollone at Bocconi University in Milan, where the report was presented on Friday at a payments conference attended by several innovation platform participants. “By fostering collaboration and providing a harmonised infrastructure, the digital euro can enhance the payment experience for Europeans, while enabling market participants to develop innovative services and business models.”

The digital euro’s extensive reach would ensure that these innovative ideas are instantly accessible to all consumers and merchants in the euro area, addressing the limitations typically associated with the closed ecosystems of other payment methods.

The ideas explored as part of the innovation platform initiative are still at the experimental stage. The Eurosystem will continue engaging with stakeholders to ensure that the digital euro’s design meets the needs of future users and the market.

The full innovation platform report is available on the [ECB’s website](#).

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