



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROSYSTEM

# Press release

22 July 2022

## Payments statistics: 2021

- [Total number of non-cash payments in euro area](#) increased by 12.5% to 114.2 billion and [total value](#) increased by 18.6% to €197.0 trillion
- [Card payments](#) accounted for 49% of total number of non-cash payments, while [credit transfers](#) accounted for 22% and [direct debits](#) accounted for 20%
- [Number of payment cards issued](#) increased by 4.6% to 637.7 million, representing around 1.9 [payment cards per euro area inhabitant](#)
- Around 50 billion [transactions processed by retail payment systems in euro area](#) worth €41.1 trillion

The European Central Bank (ECB) has today published the 2021 statistics on non-cash payments. The statistics comprise indicators on access to and use of payment services and terminals by the public, as well as volumes and values of transactions processed through payment systems. This press release focuses on developments in the euro area as a whole, although statistics are also published for each EU Member State, in addition to EU and euro area aggregates and comparative data.

### Payment services<sup>1</sup>

The total number of non-cash payments in the euro area, comprising all types of payment services<sup>2</sup>, increased in 2021 by 12.5% to 114.2 billion compared with the previous year, the corresponding total value increased by 18.6% to €197.0 trillion. Card payments accounted for 49% of the total number of transactions, while credit transfers accounted for 22% and direct debits for 20%.

The number of credit transfers within the euro area increased in 2021 by 8.6% to 25.1 billion and the total value increased by 19.3% to €184.2 trillion<sup>3</sup>. The relative importance of the number of credit transfers initiated electronically continued to increase, with the ratio of transactions initiated electronically versus paper based now standing at around sixteen to one. The number of direct debits within the euro area increased in 2021 by 5.8% to 23.2 billion, the corresponding total value increased by 11.1% to €7.3 trillion. The number of card transactions rose in 2021 by 17.3% to 56.3 billion with

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<sup>1</sup> SEPA instruments are included in the respective categories. Information on the SEPA instruments can be found on the ECB's website (<http://www.ecb.europa.eu/paym/sepa/html/index.en.html>).

<sup>2</sup> Including credit transfers, direct debits, card payments with cards issued by resident payment service providers, e-money payments, cheques and other payment services.

<sup>3</sup> Widespread increase with a noticeable development in the Netherlands, the latter having been amplified by a particular rise in the value of electronic credit transfers.

the corresponding total value increasing by 14.4% to €2.3 trillion. This corresponds to an average value of around €40 per card transaction.

The number of cards in the euro area with a payment function increased in 2021 by 4.6% to 637.7 million. With a total euro area population of 343 million, this represented around 1.9 payment cards per euro area inhabitant. Chart 1 below shows the development in the use of the main payment services in the euro area from 2000 to 2021.

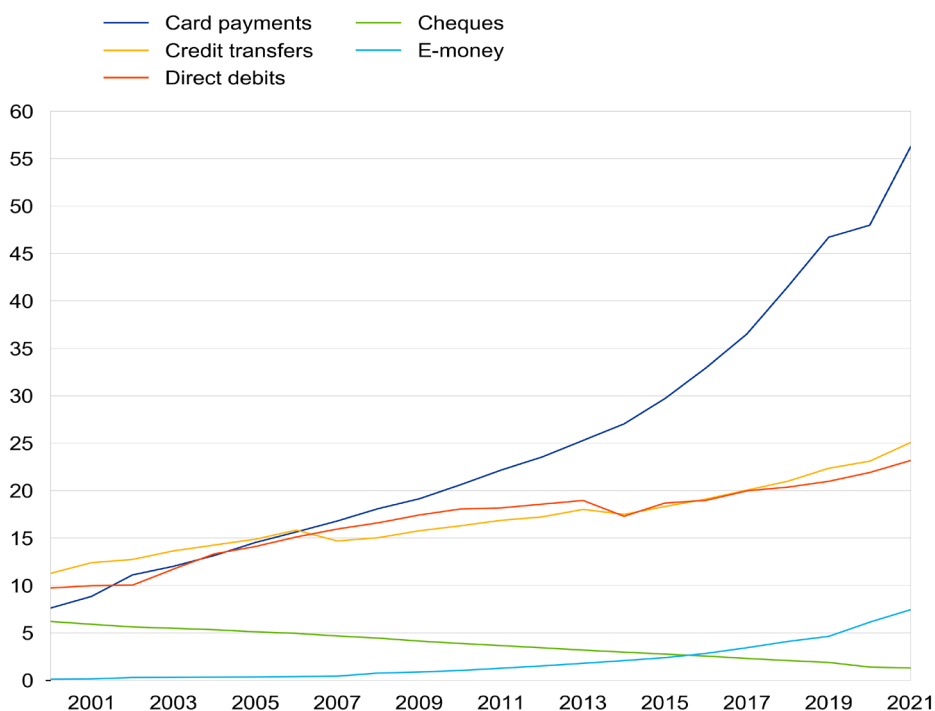
The relative importance of the main payment services continued to vary widely across euro area countries in 2021. For example, at national level, the highest share of card payments, as a percentage of the total number of non-cash payments in 2021, is observed for Portugal at around 72%. The highest share of credit transfers is found in Finland at around 38% and Germany accounts for the highest percentage of direct debits at around 43%, expressed again as percentages of the total number of non-cash payments in 2021 (see Annex).

In 2021, the total number of automated teller machines (ATMs) in the euro area decreased by 4.2% to 0.28 million, while the number of point of sale (POS) terminals increased by 9.8% to 13.5 million.

### Chart 1

#### Use of the main payment services in the euro area

(number of transactions per year in billions)



Source: ECB.

Note: Data have been partially estimated for periods prior to 2010, as methodological changes were implemented in previous years and some corresponding

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data are not available. The historical estimation done by the ECB ensures comparability of figures over the entire period. Statistics are also collected on other payment services, which accounted for 0.9% of the total number of euro area transactions in 2021.

### [Data on payment services](#)

## Retail payment systems

Retail payment systems in the euro area handle mainly payments that are made by individuals, with a relatively low value and high volume.

In 2021, data have been reported for 25 retail payment systems within the euro area as a whole. During the year, around 50 billion transactions were processed with a combined value of €41.1 trillion<sup>4</sup>.

There continues to be a high degree of concentration in euro area retail payment systems in 2021. The three largest systems in terms of number of transactions (STEP2-T<sup>5</sup>, CORE in France and RPS in Germany) processed 69% of the volume and 72% of the value of all transactions processed by euro area retail payment systems. Chart 2 shows the number and value of transactions processed by euro area retail payment systems in 2021.

### Chart 2

#### Retail payment systems in the euro area in 2021

(value of transactions in EUR trillions and number of transactions in billions)

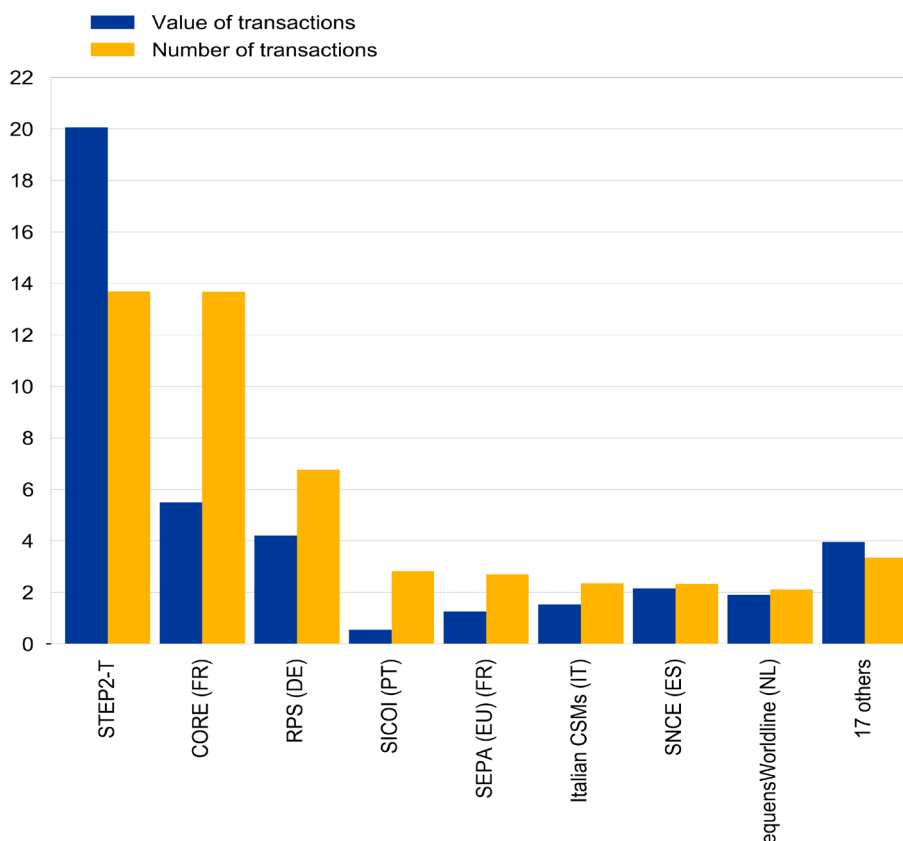
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<sup>4</sup> The figures for one Cypriot payment system are excluded from the euro area aggregates due to confidentiality.

<sup>5</sup> STEP2 is a pan-European automated clearing house for retail payments in euro operated by EBA CLEARING. The STEP2-T system is a systemically important payment system at euro area level.

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Source: ECB.

[Data on retail payment systems](#)

## Large-value payment systems

Large-value payment systems (LVPSs) are designed primarily to process large-value and/or high-priority payments made between participants in the system for their own account or on behalf of their customers. Although, as a rule, no minimum value is set for payments made in such systems, the average size of such payments is usually relatively large. During 2021, the LVPSs systems settled 140 million payments with a total value of €510 trillion in euro payments, with TARGET2 and EURO1/STEP1 being the two main LVPSs<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> TARGET2 is the second-generation Trans-European Automated Real-time Gross settlement Express Transfer system. It is operated by the Eurosystem and settles payments in euro in central bank money.  
EURO1/STEP1 is an EU-wide multilateral net large-value payment system for euro payments operated by EBA CLEARING. Payments are processed in EURO1 throughout the day and final balances are settled at the end of the day in TARGET2.

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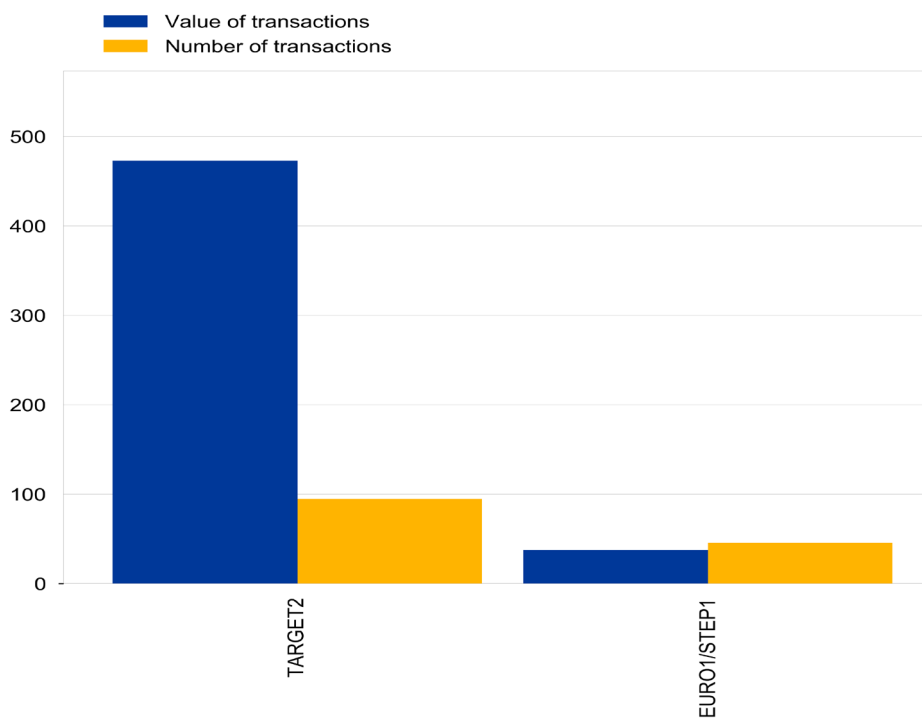
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Chart 3 below shows the number and value of transactions processed by the main LVPSs in 2021.

### Chart 3

#### Main large-value payment systems in 2021

(value of transactions in EUR trillions and number of transactions in millions)



Source: ECB.

[Data on large-value payment systems](#)

#### Notes:

- > The full set of payment statistics can be downloaded from the [Statistical Data Warehouse](#) (SDW). The "[Reports](#)" section of the SDW also contains pre-formatted tables with payment statistics for the last five years. The data are presented in the same format as in the former "Blue Book Addendum". For detailed methodological information, including a list of all data definitions, please refer to the "[Statistics](#)" section of the ECB's website.
- > As a result of the progressive implementation of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) and other developments in the payments market in Europe, the methodological and reporting framework for payments statistics has been enhanced as of the reference year 2014. The reporting requirements are laid down in the Regulation on payments statistics (ECB/2013/43)

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and in the Guideline on monetary and financial statistics (recast) (ECB/2014/15). A background note, available on the [ECB's website](#), describes the changes in more detail.

- > In addition to annual payments statistics for 2021, this press release incorporates minor revisions to data for previous periods. The hyperlinks in the press release are dynamic; thus, the data might slightly change with the next annual release due to revisions. Unless otherwise indicated, statistics referring to euro area cover the EU Member States that had adopted the euro at the time to which the data relate.
- > The annual growth rate indicators for value of transactions are HICP-adjusted.
- > Hyperlinks in the main body of the press release and in annex tables lead to data that may change with subsequent releases as a result of revisions. Figures shown in annex tables are a snapshot of the data as at the time of the current release.

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## Annex: Relative importance of the main payment instruments in the euro area countries (2021)

(percentages of total number of transactions <sup>1)</sup>)

	Cards		Credit transfers		Direct debits		E-money		Cheques	
	2021	Change from 2020 (pp)	2021	Change from 2020 (pp)	2021	Change from 2020 (pp)	2021	Change from 2020 (pp)	2021	Change from 2020 (pp)
Belgium	52.0	1.3	36.0	-0.1	10.2	-1.0	0.9	-0.3	0.0	0.0
Germany	30.3	1.2	26.1	-0.5	43.1	-0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estonia	63.9	-0.8	29.8	-0.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	62.4	-1.4	17.2	0.0	6.0	-1.0	11.7	3.2	0.8	-0.3
Greece	69.5	6.2	22.4	-4.6	1.2	0.0	2.2	0.2	0.2	-0.1
Spain	66.4	3.0	13.8	-0.3	18.0	-2.2	0.4	0.0	0.3	-0.1
France	59.3	1.9	17.9	-0.6	18.5	-0.6	0.2	0.1	4.1	-0.8
Italy	52.5	3.4	17.4	-2.4	11.5	-1.4	15.7	1.3	0.9	-0.3
Cyprus	69.5	.	18.3	-0.5	.	.	3.5	-0.2	3.1	-1.3
Latvia	62.8	-1.3	34.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	.	.	0.0	0.0
Lithuania	68.4	8.0	17.4	-9.5	1.0	-0.2	10.2	5.3	-	-
Luxembourg <sup>2)</sup>	4.9	0.1	1.4	0.0	0.4	0.0	93.3	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Malta	54.4	.	19.3	-1.3	.	.	11.6	9.6	4.7	-5.1
Netherlands	49.2	-2.5	34.2	2.4	16.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Austria	51.5	2.2	27.0	-0.5	19.4	-1.3	0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Portugal	72.2	2.5	13.4	-0.7	8.8	-0.9	2.6	-0.3	1.0	-0.4
Slovenia	51.6	.	32.3	-1.0	8.9	-0.8	0.9	0.1	0.0	0.0
Slovakia	56.5	1.8	37.2	-1.0	3.3	-0.3	.	.	0.0	0.0
Finland	61.6	-0.7	38.4	0.7	.	.	.	.	0.0	0.0

Source: ECB.

Notes:

1) Percentages may not add up to 100% as other payment services are not shown. A dash (-) indicates data are not available or not applicable, a dot (.) indicates that data are confidential.

2) In the special case of Luxembourg, a very high number of e-money payments are executed on accounts held in their vast majority by non-residents but recorded in the Luxembourg data due to the methodology applied.

Therefore, the relative importance of the payment instruments in Luxembourg, as presented in the table, appears to be lower than their actual domestic importance. When disregarding e-money, the relative importance of the main payment instruments in 2021 is as follows: credit transfers (21.3%), direct debits (6.0%), cards (72.4%) and cheques (0.0%).