



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on the Single Euro Payments Area

*28442nd ECONOMIC and FINANCIAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 22 January 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council

- EMPHASISES its support for the aim of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA): to achieve an integrated market for payment services in euro which is subject to effective competition and where there is no distinction between cross-border and national payments in euro within the EU;
- WELCOMES the substantial progress achieved by industry to achieve the SEPA;
- RECOGNISES that the SEPA project has now moved from the preparatory to the operational stage and therefore calls upon industry to redouble its efforts and complete work, in particular in relation to the outstanding standards required in the cards market and in the customer to bank and bank to customer space;

P R E S S

- ENCOURAGES industry to develop attractive SEPA payment products and market them actively so that there is a natural momentum for customers to migrate from existing payment instruments to the new SEPA payment products in a market driven process;
- CALLS for rapid and smooth SEPA migration so that dual payment processing costs are kept to the minimum; and highlights the need for timely and complete transposition and implementation of the Payment Services Directive at national level to facilitate the migration process;
- RECOGNISES the importance of finding a workable solution to ensure the continued legal validity of existing direct debit mandates, where needed;
- ACKNOWLEDGES the important catalytic role that can be played by public authorities in helping drive forward the migration process;
- ENCOURAGES public authorities to be early adopters of SEPA payment instruments subject to the principle that there should be no deterioration as compared to the existing national characteristics for product performance and price, given the positive contribution SEPA can make to the modernisation of public administration and the e-Government Action Plan as well as the substantial benefits of SEPA to the wider European economy, including through value-added-services such as e-invoicing;
- INVITES Finance Ministries of Member States in cooperation with national Central Banks to continue monitoring progress on SEPA at national level, in particular, as regards the adoption of SEPA by public authorities; and INVITES the Commission in cooperation with the ECB to provide an annual progress report on the state of migration, including where relevant the pricing of SEPA instruments and the enhancement of competition within the SEPA area as well as other SEPA related developments at the end of each year until the successful migration of a critical mass of payment instruments has been achieved and at the end 2008, 2009 and 2010 in any event."