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## Note On The European Experience on the Payment System

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1. Trends in using retail payment means in selected EU Countries
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#### Retail payment means in selected EU countries

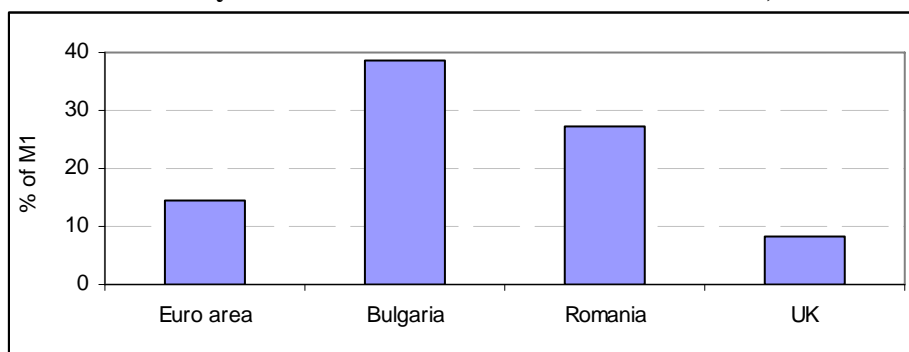
### 1. Trends in using retail payment means in selected EU Countries

The retail payments are generally grouped into cash payments and non-cash payments.

#### 2.1 Cash payments

The level of currency outside the monetary financial institutions in Euro Area in 2006 accounted for 14.43% of the narrow money (M1).

**Chart 1. Currency in circulation outside financial institutions, December 2006.**



Source: ECB, respective central banks.

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## 2.2 Non-cash payments

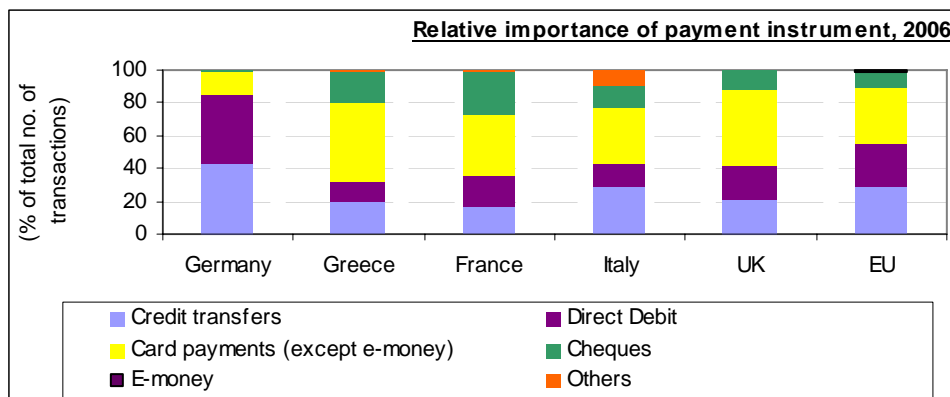
The main non-cash payment instruments are: cheques, credit transfers, direct debits and payment cards.

The cross-border use of cheques is decreasing and is expected, ultimately, to be phased out. The banking industry in the euro area has defined a strategy – The Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) for promoting the use of alternative electronic instruments for cross border payments in Europe. The launch of SEPA project will have major implications for the characteristics and use credit transfers and direct debits.

The next most common retail payment instruments are remittance transfers<sup>1</sup>, e-money<sup>2</sup> and traveler's cheques<sup>3</sup>.

In 2006 in European Union were performed more than 73 billion cashless payments with a value of EUR 243,093 billion. In average each EU citizen was involved in 158 transactions with more than 6% increase compared to 148 transactions that were performed in average in 2005.

**Chart 2. The structure of non-cash payment in EU and selected European Countries.**



Source: Blue Book 2007.

In EU for large payments, credit transfers are the most used mean of payment. In 2006 the value of credit transfers in EU was EUR 222,355 billion generated by 21,834 million transactions, with an average value per transaction of EUR 10,184. Credit transfers have traditionally been the predominant form of payment transaction in Germany. However, their share of the total volume of payment transactions has decreased slightly in recent years, as more convenient payment instruments, especially direct debits, are being used.

<sup>1</sup> Remittance transfers are cross-border person-to-person payments of relatively low value, typically recurrent payments by migrant workers.

<sup>2</sup> E-money is a store of monetary value on an electronic device that may be widely used for making payments to undertakings other than the issuer of e-money. Such transactions do not necessarily involve bank accounts, with the device instead acting as a prepaid instrument. E-money is stored either on a card or on a central computer, and the holder must pay the value to the card issuer in advance.

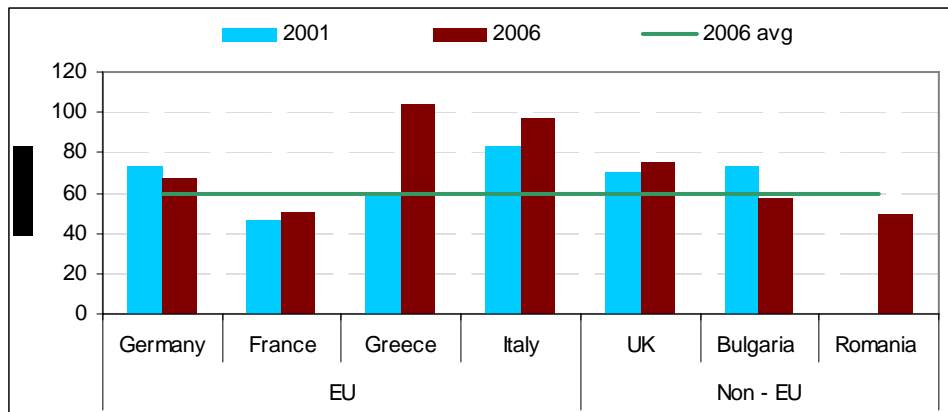
<sup>3</sup> Traveler's cheques are essentially prepaid paper-based instruments issued in specific denominations and currencies for general purpose use in business and personal travel. They do not specify any particular payee, are non-transferable once signed, can be converted into cash only by their specified owner, and are generally accepted by banks, and often by large retailers, hotels and restaurants.

For small scale payments, card payments are the most commonly used method of payment. In 2006 were recorded 25,150 million transactions with a value of EUR 1,498 billion. In all selected countries, but Germany, cards payments account for the largest number of non-cash transactions.

Among selected countries, card payments are showing the fastest increase in Greece. From 2001 to 2006 the number of cards transactions has increased by 11 % per year in average and the value has increased by 27% per year in average. The fast increases in cards payments, in addition to the low base effect, reflect the public's growing familiarity with the use of cashless payment instruments and the intensive promotion of such payment instruments by banks, the ease with which they can be used by consumers and the benefits of their automation with regard to execution times. In the rest of selected countries debit cards are the most used type of card. The number of cards transactions has increased in average by nearly 8 % per year.

In EU, during 2006, the average value of a transaction with a card was 60 euro (chart 2). Greece has the largest value of a transaction of EUR 104, with an average yearly increase of 13.6%. Italy is ranked second, the average value of a transaction is EUR 97 but the rate of increase is at 3% per year in average.

**Chart 3. Average value of all cards transactions except e-money, in euro.**

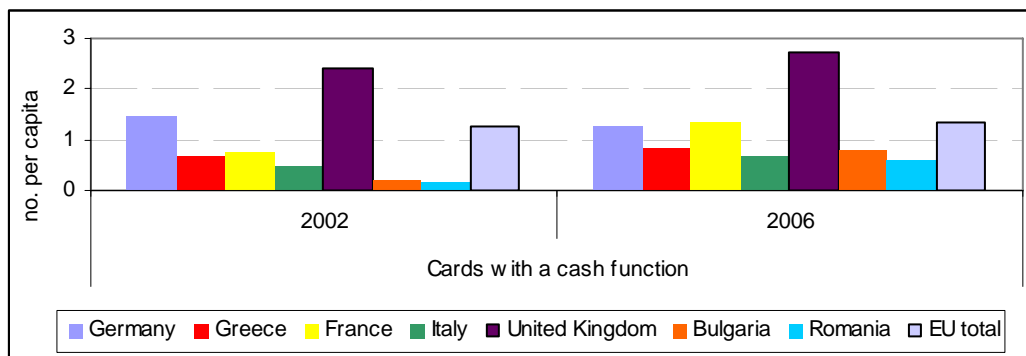


Source: Blue Book 2007.

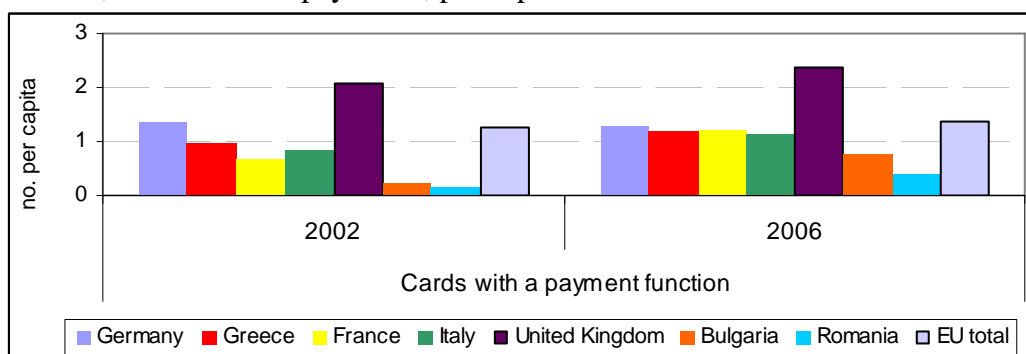
Regarding the type of card, in EU cards with a payment function are the most spread and used type of card. In 2006, for every EU inhabitant there are issued 1.38 cards with a payment function<sup>4</sup>, with almost 10 % increase to 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Payment cards consist of debit cards, debit cards with delayed debit function, credit cards, debit and/or delayed debit function and credit and/or delayed debit function

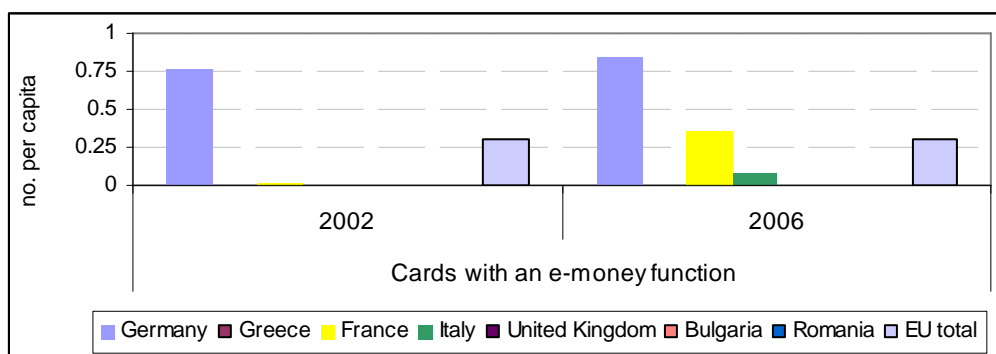
**Chart 4. Cards issued in reporting country, number per capita**



Regarding other types of cards, every EU inhabitant are issued 1.35 cards with a cash function. United Kingdom has the largest number of cards with a payment and a cash function, while Bulgaria and Romania are experiencing the fastest increase in the number of cards, both cash and payments, per capita from 2002.



Cards with an e-money function are a new type of card with limited function in developed industrial countries, Germany, France and Italy. Developments in this segment on the market are still in an early stage all across Europe, and exhibit strong fluctuations. In 2006, in average has been issued 0.3 e-money cards per inhabitant, the same as in 2002.

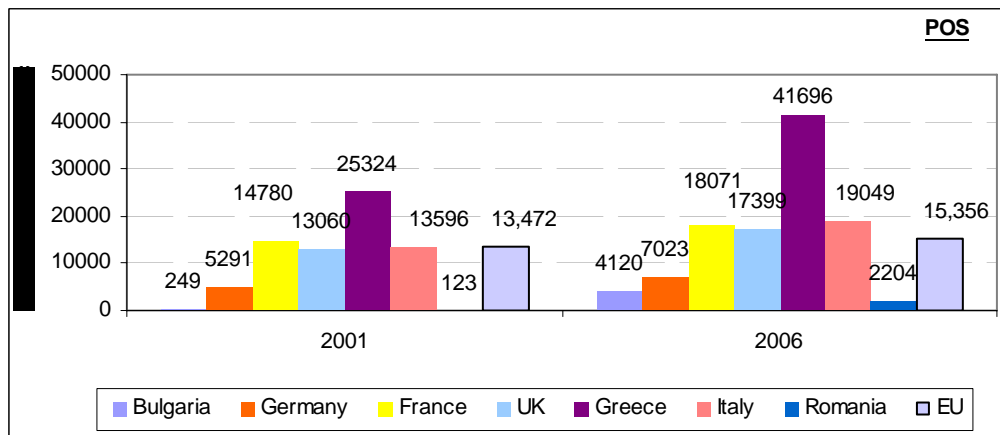
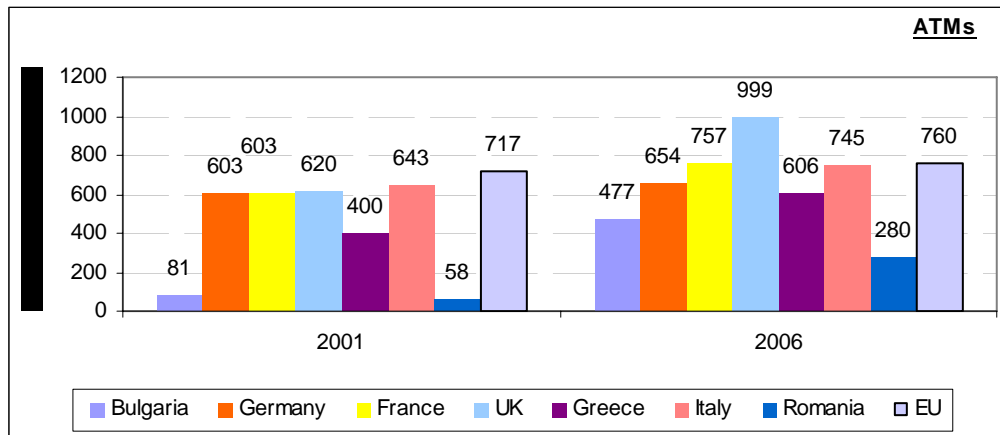


Source: Blue Book 2007.

Payment cards can be used for making payments for goods and services at point-of-sale (POS) terminals or remotely (mail order, telephone order or via the internet) and for making cash withdrawals at automated teller machines (ATMs); both functions are

usually combined on a single card. During the last years the use of terminal has significantly increased across all Europe. In 2006, there are 5% more ATMs and 13% more POS, in average per million inhabitants, in Europe compared to 2002. In the new member states the rates of increase are significantly higher (480% ATMs and 1552% POS in Bulgaria and 385% ATMs and 1697% POS in Romania, to a large extend these rates are due to the low initial base).

**Chart 5. Number of ATMs and POS per million inhabitants.**



Note: For EU, the figures are for 2002.

Source: Blue Book 2007

## 2. Benefits of using cashless to cash payments.

The resource cost of a nation's payment system can account for 3 percent of its GDP (Humphrey, Pulley, and Vesala 2000). Since most electronic payments cost only around one-third to one-half as much as a paper-based noncash payment, it is clear that the social cost of a payment system could be considerably reduced if it shifted to electronics.

During the last decade, electronic payments have experienced fast growth, surpassing the economic growth and growth in other financial sectors. These fast developments are accompanied by numerous economic and transactional benefits. Electronic payments improve economic inefficiencies, make payments more secure and convenient through expanding the consumer market, increasing banking access, improving macroeconomic efficiency, and encouraging entrepreneurial activity. The ultimate benefit of adapting an electronic payments system will depend on how competition and the evolution of the informal sector affect how widely electronic payments are adopted.

For developing countries gains would largely depend on the concurrent development of the appropriate network and payments infrastructure, government regulation, consumer education, and competition within the sector.

Despite the increase of electronic payments, it is difficult to assess whether the number of cash transaction has declined in recent years due to the difficulties in separating cash's payment function from its store of value function. The aggregate demand for cash has not fallen drastically with widespread adoption of non-cash payment instruments. Unlike other payment instruments, cash serves as a universally accessible store of value in addition to being a payment medium. Further, the use of cash is very attractive due to the unique anonymity feature, which is valued highly by those trying to avoid detection by the public authorities. Cash transactions are more difficult to trace to the transactors because it can be used multiple times without third-party intervention unlike payment cards where each transaction is converted to good funds. Consequently, cash has an enduring appeal for facilitating illicit transactions, as well as for storing ill-gotten (or, at least, untaxed) wealth.

## Retail payment means in selected EU countries

### Germany

In Germany, cashless payments are mainly effected by means of credit transfers (42.2% of the total number of cashless payment transactions in 2005) and direct debits (41.9%). The use of card payments (except for e-money cards) is steadily increasing, reaching a total share of around 15% while the use of cheques has decreased. E-money payment transactions are still insignificant (less than 1%).

Credit transfers have traditionally been the predominant form of payment transaction. However, their share of the total volume of payment transactions has decreased slightly in recent years, as more convenient payment instruments, especially direct debits, are being used. In 2005, 6.7 billion credit transfers were processed by the banking industry and 1 billion of these were submitted to banks by customers via a PC or terminal.

The direct debit, introduced by the banking industry in 1963, has considerably simplified the collection of periodically payable monetary claims. In 2005, 41.9% of all cashless payments in Germany were affected by direct debit. Its relative importance compared with other payment instruments is still increasing.

### Card payments

The use of cards at retailers is increasing steadily. In 2005 debit card payments accounted for approximately 27%, credit/delayed debit cards for 5%, while cards with an e-money function have very little importance.

**a) Debit cards.** Payment cards in the form of debit cards are usually issued by banks. The number of these cards has grown rapidly over the past decade. Nowadays, the vast majority of bank cards are equipped with a payment functionality. Recently many card issuers have extended the range of tools available on debit cards. A chip on the card makes offline authorization of guaranteed card payments possible. In addition, bank cards can be used as prepaid cards (as in the GeldKarte<sup>5</sup> system of the CCC).

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<sup>5</sup> The GeldKarte is a prepaid rechargeable electronic purse scheme operated by the CCC. By the end of 2005 there were around 64.5 million cards with the GeldKarte feature, not all of them, however, being actively used. There are cards linked to accounts, where the GeldKarte chip is integrated into a bank card, as well as cards not linked to an account ("white cards"), which have only an electronic purse function. The GeldKarte can be used nationwide. The average value per transaction has decreased to €2.38, which proves that the aim of use for low-value payments is being achieved. The range of acceptance points is diverse, including retailers, public transport ticket machines, parking ticket machines, vending machines and the

Prepaid payment services are also based on scratch cards (Paysafecard, Deutsche Telekom Micromoney, etc.) and – very recently – also on other existing debit and credit card products. These cards are offered as gift cards or as an electronic form of a formerly paper-based traveller’s cheque, etc. These cards might be available in various currencies and can be used for direct payments for purchases and services in stores and restaurants worldwide, or for cash withdrawals at ATMs worldwide and are rechargeable from all over the world by telephone or via the internet.

**b) Credit cards.** The use of credit cards has increased over the past few years, but not as significantly as the use of debit cards. The number of cards which are issued by banks and licensed by the major card organizations grew from approximately 20.4 million at the end of 2004 to 21.1 million at the end of 2005. At the same time, the number of acceptance points has increased. In 2005 German cardholders made payments by credit card with a total value of approximately €7.3 billion. But credit cards are still used far less than other payment instruments (e.g. debit cards) in Germany. Owing to the commission charges (a deduction from the credit card turnover of the acceptor, which is payable by the latter only) and the procedures for authorization and processing of these payments, credit cards are not always popular in the retail trade. Thus, their use tends to be restricted to more “upmarket” retail outlets. In addition, the debit cards issued by banks provide retailers with a less expensive payment option.

**c) Retailer cards.** Retailer cards with a payment function, which are issued by some major stores with the aim of increasing customer loyalty, are now competing with traditional credit cards. With the largest issuer in Germany, for example, the use of retailer cards is free of charge. Cardholders can usually take advantage of a payment period of between one and two months or pay in installments. At present there are around 9.3 million retailer cards with payment functions in circulation. Retailer cards provide the retail trade with exact information on customer and purchasing profiles.

**d) Cash dispensers.** In Germany, banks offer both their own customers and the customers of other banks the possibility of obtaining cash up to a certain limit from 53,361 cash dispensers nationwide (as at end-2005) using bank or other debit/credit cards in combination with a PIN. For all transactions at cash dispensers, an online connection to the authorisation centre of the bank concerned is established and a block and limit check is made in order to prevent fraudulent or other inadmissible withdrawals. Settlement of transactions at cash dispensers is effected using the technical standards and infrastructures for direct debits.

## Greece

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Deutsche Post (e.g. stamp machines and payment for express parcels), as well as acceptance points on the internet.



The number of non-cash payments has been increasing constantly, reflecting the public's growing familiarity with the use of cashless payment instruments. This development can be attributed to the promotion of such payment instruments by banks, the ease with which they can be used by consumers and the benefits of their automation with regard to execution times.

Over the last five years, the average volume of cashless transactions has increased by 55.8% per year on average, with the average value of transactions increasing by 7.8%. With regard to internet-initiated credit transfers, 6.7 million transactions were effected in 2005, accounting for 23.4% of the total volume of credit transfers, while the value of transactions amounted to €794.3 billion, accounting for 3% of the total value.

### **Direct debits**

Direct debits are offered by banks as an alternative cost-effective payment instrument. The number of enterprises, either public or private, offering their customers the possibility to make payments using the direct debit instrument has been increasing constantly. During the last five years direct debits have increased by 28.7% per year on average in terms of volume, and by 35.8% per year in terms of value.

### **Payment cards**

Payment cards have evolved into a common and widely accepted payment instrument throughout the country. The majority of card transactions are effected with credit cards. Over the last five years the number of payment cards has increased by 7.9% per year on average. The volume of transactions with payment cards has increased by 8.6% per year on average, and the respective value by 28.5% per year.

**a) Debit cards.** The number and use of debit cards has increased substantially during the last five years, owing mainly to the replacement of cash cards with cards incorporating a debit function in addition to the cash function. In the period 2001-05 the number of debit cards in circulation increased by 7.2% per year on average. The respective increase in the volume of transactions was 37%, while the increase in the value of transactions was 64.2%.

**b) Credit and delayed debit cards.** The number and usage of credit and delayed debit cards has constantly increased over the last five years. In addition to the promotion by the banks and the demand from the public, credit cards constitute the main payment instrument used in electronic commerce. Their extensive use is also closely related to incentives provided to cardholders, such as payments in interest-free installments and retailer loyalty schemes. During the period 2001-05 the number of credit and delayed debit cards in circulation increased by 8.7% per year on average. The volume of transactions increased by 7.4% on average, and the respective value by 27.2% per year.

### **Recent developments**

During these last years many credit institutions have introduced payment services based on internet technology, i.e. web/mobile banking and electronic commerce, allowing the use of cashless payment instruments. However, at the present time the number of internet payments is still low. European developments in payment technology and practices have also affected cards, POS and ATMs, which are gradually migrating to the EMV

standard<sup>6</sup>. All banks have adopted and offer their customers the IBAN and BIC standards, while the majority of credit institutions adhere to the Credeuro<sup>7</sup> and ICP (Interbank Conventions on Payment) conventions.

## **France**

The use of non-cash payment instruments is traditionally very widespread in France. In 2005 the average number of transactions was 228 transactions per person.

### **Credit transfers**

Credit transfers are mainly used for payments by companies, government agencies and local authorities, but rarely by individuals. At 2,408 million operations in 2005, accounting for 16.87% of all payment transactions, this instrument ranked fourth among the payment instruments used in France in terms of the number of transactions. The average value of credit transfers made in that year was €5,590. However, this included only credit transfers executed for clients but not credit transfers between banks. The interbank exchange of all credit transfers now takes place in paperless form.

Since their introduction in 1955, direct debits have been very successful. Over 2.5 billion direct debits were exchanged in 2005, with an average value of €360 per transaction. They accounted for 17.6% of payment transactions processed in the course of that year. They are generally used for recurrent payments such as electricity, gas, telephone, insurance and water bill payments, and for monthly income tax payments. Direct debits offer advantages to banks (in that processing costs are relatively low thanks to automation), utility companies (by simplifying their accounting administration) and individuals (by simplifying payment).

In addition to this general type of direct debit, two other instruments are available to users: interbank payment orders (Titres Interbancaires de Paiement; TIPs) and telepayments, which have grown steadily since their introduction.

### **Card payments**

There are many types of card available on the French market. First, there are payment cards issued by credit institutions or other assimilated entities that enable their holder to withdraw or transfer funds. These cards may be four-party cards if the institution that issues the cards is not the same as that acquiring the card transactions. These interbank cards are mainly represented in France by the GCB, very often co-branded with Visa or MasterCard.

There are also three-party cards where the same institution issues the cards (for the holders) and acquires the card transactions from the merchants. Such cards may be

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<sup>6</sup> EMV is derived from the first letter of the world's three main payment organizations: EUROPAY (EPI), MASTERCARD (MCI) and VISA. The objective of this group is to define a common set of standards (EMV standards) for smart card based payment applications. These standards allow the card and the acceptance device to work seamlessly and securely together.

<sup>7</sup> The Credeuro Convention establishes a standard for the execution of a "basic" bank-to-bank pan European credit transfer, which allows participating banks to give guarantees to their customers as regards information requirements, execution time and remittance information transmitted.

international (e.g. American Express, Diners Club) or national, as is the case with some credit cards (e.g. Cofinoga and Cetelem). Lastly, by derogation from the banking monopoly, a single-purpose card may be issued by an undertaking if it is accepted as means of payment by that undertaking only or by a limited number of acceptors that have financial and commercial links with the issuer. There are a large number of such “store cards” in France.

### **Recent developments**

Beyond these traditional means of payment, new developments have recently taken place on the market. Two main trends may be identified.

The first concerns cards. While the electronic money purse used to be based on solutions whereby the monetary value was stored on the device, an increasing number of products use cards only as a tool for accessing prepaid accounts held centrally with the issuer. The former type of product is still present, largely in the form of Moneo cards (generalpurpose e-purses). The electronic money used with these cards is issued by the Société Financière du Porte-monnaie Électronique Interbancaire (SFPMEI), whose role is to collect and manage the funds received in the issuing process.

In recent years, however, other cards based on accounts have developed more rapidly on the market. These reflect an important trend in France, namely that traditional paper-based products, such as traveller’s cheques or gift cheques, are increasingly tending to be offered on electronic devices, such as cards. Traveller’s cards (modelled on traveller’s cheques) and gift cards (modelled on gift vouchers) have thus been issued by banks, stores and third-party card schemes.

The second trend is towards the use of new devices for payments. The number of payments via the internet or by mobile telephone is thus increasing rapidly. The market for prepaid cards for payments on the internet also appears to be taking off, with several cards now being offered on the French market.

## **Italy**

In Italy, during 2005 an average of 60 transactions per capita were performed using instruments other than cash (compared with 45 in 1999). At the end of 2005 there were more than 38 million current accounts. The number of postal current accounts stood at 4.5 million at the end of 2005, representing a significant increase. Moreover, for every 10,000 inhabitants there were more than 5 bank branches (and around 2.4 post office branches). Bank instruments account for approximately 97% of the value and 70% of the volume of non-cash payments. Cheques and banker’s drafts are no longer the most commonly used bank instruments in Italy. Their importance is declining, while the use in transactions of direct debits, credit transfers and cards is growing, with payment cards accounting for 34.6% of the volume of non-cash payments. In recent years increases have been observed in both the number and use of payment cards, although the number of payment card transactions per inhabitant is still some way below the European average.

### **Credit transfers**

In 2005 were effected 416 million bank credit transfers, with a total value of €5,546 billion. These instruments are used widely throughout the economy, even for retail transactions (e.g. for the direct crediting of wages, salaries and pensions).

### **Collection orders (direct debits and bank receipts)**

In 2005 the number of payments made by direct debit was 463 million (compared with 277 million in 1999). This instrument is mainly used by firms to collect recurrent low-value payments (e.g. utility bills). Bank receipts are used by firms to collect trade and other credits. Bank receipts perform an economic function similar to that of bills of exchange, but do not have the same legal protection (they cannot, for example, be disputed). In 2005 approximately 309 million commercial bills and paper-based and paperless bank receipts were collected through the banking system.

### **Payment cards**

**a) Cards with a debit function.** At the end of 2005 there were over 32 million debit cards (bank and postal cards) in circulation which could be used to make cash withdrawals at ATMs. The majority of these could also be used to execute payments through a nationwide network of POS terminals.

**b) Cards with a credit function.** In recent years growing competition among suppliers of payment services and a change in consumers' habits have led to an increase in both the number of credit cards in circulation and the use of those cards. At the end of 2005, 28.8 million credit cards issued by banks or non-banking intermediaries were in circulation, compared with 12.3 million in 1999. Nevertheless, in 2005 only 49% of the credit cards in circulation were used at least once every six months. There were more than 463 million credit card operations in that year, representing an average of 16 operations per card in circulation.

### **Recent developments**

The Banca d'Italia, together with the rest of the banking and financial community, is engaged in further initiatives to improve the efficiency and reliability of payment instruments and to facilitate the transition towards the use of the most efficient instruments for each type and size of transaction. Against this background, particular attention is being paid to the need to migrate national payment instruments to European schemes and, consequently, to adjust the regulatory frameworks.

## **Bulgaria**

### **Cash payments**

The monetary unit of the Republic of Bulgaria is the lev. Cash payments are widely used in Bulgaria. At the end of 2005 banknotes and coins in circulation accounted for 47.15% of the monetary aggregate M1 and represented 13.99%

### **Non-cash payments**

#### **Credit transfers**

This is the most widely used form of non-cash payment between entities in the corporate and public sectors. It is also used for the payment of salaries, taxes, duties, subscription fees, etc.

### **Payment cards**

**a) Debit cards and credit cards.** The use of this instrument is increasing from year to year. Most widely used are debit cards issued by domestic banks. By the end of 1997 eight banks were issuing bank cards. By the end of 2006, 25 banks were issuing bank cards compared to 8 banks in 1997. Some banks offer an overdraft facility to selected customers. Bulgarian banks, which are members of the international card organizations, issue the domestic and international debit and credit cards. In recent years more customers have been paying their utility bills through ATMs using their debit cards. In 2006 were effected 582,477 transactions.

**b) Prepaid cards.** Telecommunications companies and petrol station chains issue prepaid cards. The use of these cards has increased very rapidly. The coin-operated telephone network has, to a large extent, been replaced by a large network of telephones that can be operated using prepaid chip-cards.

### **Recent developments**

There is significant interest in Bulgaria in making payments via the internet. A system called ePay.bg was developed in 1999. It allows a cardholder to pay for services or goods via the internet after registering the card. The technology for making payments via the internet is based on a third-party trusted payment server connected to the host of the BORICA card system. This enables the authorisation of each transaction via the internet in real time. Most cardholders use this system for transferring money from their card accounts to other accounts at the same or another bank. By the end of 2006 there were 268 electronic shops and companies offering goods and services connected to ePay.bg, and 1,746,102 transactions, with a total value in excess of BGN 63,074 million, were made through this system in 2006.

## **Romania**

### **Cash payments**

The monetary unit of the Republic of Romania. BNR is the only institution in Romania authorized to issue banknotes and mint coins.

Cash remained the predominant retail payment means, accounting for 47.1% of M1 (RON 11,555 million, approximately €3.2 billion). M1 amounted to RON 24,551 million (approximately €6.8 billion) at end- December 2005.

### **Non-cash payments**

The following payment instruments and means of payment are used: credit transfers, cheques, bills of exchange and promissory notes, as well as cards, direct debits and standing orders. Bills of exchange and promissory notes are both payment and financing instruments. Moreover, the postal system provides payment services using a specific instrument - the postal money order.

### **Credit transfers**

The credit transfer is the cashless payment instrument most commonly used for commercial payments by legal entities. It can also be used by individuals. Since the introduction of ReGIS and SENT, interbank credit transfers have been processed electronically only. As a result of the major infrastructure changes, the settlement period for interbank credit transfers has been considerably reduced, from 3.67 days for a funds transfer between the payer's account and the beneficiary's account to a maximum of 2 days.

### **Direct debits**

The direct debit is not regulated as a payment instrument, but rather as a means of making payments. Direct debits for intrabank payments are based only on arrangements between the customer and the bank. Their main use is to make payments for services and utilities. In 2005 there was no interbank processing of direct debits.

### **Cards payments**

At the end of 2005 there were 27 banks which issued debit and credit cards denominated in various currencies and were issued more than 7 million cards, representing an increase of 26% year on year. In terms of volume, card payments grew by 32%.

**Debit cards and Credit cards.** Debit cards and credit cards have several functions. They can be used for both cash withdrawals at ATMs and payments at POSs. They can also be used to pay telephone bills and government taxes directly at ATMs. Most debit cards also have an overdraft facility, with limits set by the issuing bank depending on the type of guarantee provided by the cardholder (i.e. bank deposits, agreement between bank and cardholder for the latter's salary to be paid into the debit card account, etc.). Debit and credit card payments are processed in a similar way.

### **Recent developments**

In order to develop a payment system in Romania in line with other EU payment systems, BNR carried out a project for the implementation of an integrated electronic payment system, including the related communication infrastructure. The Electronic Payment System (EPS) consists of: a real-time gross settlement system (ReGIS – Romanian electronic Gross Interbank Settlement), an automated clearing house (SENT – Romanian acronym for “Electronic Net Settlement System managed by TRANSFOND SA”), the government securities registration and settlement system (SaFIR – Settlement and Financial

## **United Kingdom**

### **Cash payments**

The Bank of England has the sole right to issue banknotes in England and Wales. At the end of 2006 the value of banknotes in circulation totalled GBP 41.1 billion (€1.3 billion). In 2006, cash payments accounted for 63% of all transactions by volume (down from around 67% in 1999).

## **Non-cash payments**

### **Credit transfers**

The usage of paper-based credit transfers has fallen in recent years. The total volume of interbank paper credits cleared in the United Kingdom, for example, declined from 177 million in 1999 to 111 million in 2006, while the values processed declined from GBP 95 billion (€139 billion) to GBP 61 billion (€91 billion). Paper-based credits are often used for making consumer payments to large organisations, such as utilities and mail-order companies. They can also be used for payments to individuals, but this is increasingly rare.

### **Cards payments**

**a) Debit cards.** The total volume of debit card purchases in the United Kingdom has risen markedly in recent years and reached 4,512 million payments in 2006, up from 2,062 million in 1999. The number of debit card transactions is now over double the number of credit card transactions. The average value of domestic debit card transactions (approximately GBP 43 (€64) in 2006) tends, however, to be lower than those where payment is effected with credit cards (approximately GBP 59 (€88) in 2006). A number of retailers offer “cash back” facilities operated through the EFTPOS systems in their stores. These facilities enable debit cardholders to obtain cash as well as goods. It is estimated that there were 284 million cash back transactions in 2006.

**b) Credit cards.** Credit cards issued by banks and building societies generally have a credit facility with a pre-set limit ranging from GBP 200 (€293) upwards. Customers’ credit card accounts are separate from their bank accounts, which may well be with another bank or building society, and cardholders receive a statement of the outstanding balance on their credit card account on a regular basis (usually monthly). Cardholders may either pay off the full amount of the balance, or they may choose to pay a portion (usually a minimum of 5%) of the total amount outstanding.

### **Recent developments**

**Faster payments.** In 2005 the UK payments industry and user representative groups considered the case for shortening clearing cycles for BACS payments. This work took place under the aegis of the Payment Systems Task Force, led by the OFT. The work of the Task Force identified a clear demand for a faster payments service offering same or next-day clearing for telephone and internet banking payments. In response to the Task Force’s findings, the payments industry committed itself to creating a new, faster payments service, for delivery by the end of 2007. This service is being developed on the basis of a near real-time service for users, with multiple settlement cycles occurring during the course of a processing day.

**Remote banking.** Remote banking services enable customers to view their account balances and recent transactions, move money between their accounts, pay bills, set up, amend or cancel standing orders and regular payments, and request and amend overdraft facilities. Use of remote banking services has increased rapidly. In 2005 over half of the adults in the United Kingdom (around 25 million people) used an internet or telephone banking service. Internet banking has increased most rapidly: use of internet banking

services was eight times higher in 2005 than in 1999. Similar remote banking services are being developed using the WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) technology within modern mobile phones, which would enable banks to offer wireless, mobile phonebased, personal banking facilities.

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