Second progress report on the migration towards SEPA in Belgium

Steering Committee on the future of means of payment

SEPA Working Group

March 2009
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1 INTRODUCTION

The operational launch of SEPA, the “Single Euro Payments Area”, happened a year ago and, since 28 January 2008, it has been possible to use European credit transfers to make payments throughout the SEPA area. This report describes the progress made since then, and follows on from the first progress report, published in December 2007, under the auspices of the “Steering Committee on the future of means of payment”.

The first progress report describes SEPA’s aims and its main players in detail. The purpose of SEPA is for all economic players (enterprises, consumers and public administrations) to be able to make payments throughout the SEPA area, with the same ease, security and efficiency as if they were national payments. Moreover, it must be possible to make these payments in accordance with a single regulatory framework in which all players have identical rights and obligations. To this end, the European Parliament and European Council adopted a European Directive on payment services in the internal market (the Directive), which must be transposed into national legislations by 1 November 2009.

The migration towards SEPA is a process by which the current national payment instruments are gradually replaced by standardised European instruments.

European instruments have been developed for credit transfers and direct debits whilst a general framework has been established for payment cards. The development of standards for these payment instruments and the organisation of the migration towards SEPA have been largely decided by the banking sector. To this end, interbank consultation bodies have been set up at national and European level whilst specific structures have been created to promote social dialogue in relation to SEPA and its implementation. The organisational structures underlying migration towards SEPA in Belgium are the “Steering Committee on the future of means of payment” and the interbank SEPA Forum.

The Steering Committee brings together all the economic players (banking sector, enterprises, consumer associations and public administrations). Chaired by the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium, its purpose is to organise the changeover to SEPA in Belgium in the best way possible. This progress report forms part of this mission. The interbank SEPA Forum, on the other hand, organises the transition towards SEPA in the banking sector, which plays a leading role in the establishment of new payment instruments.

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2 The countries of the European Union (EU) belong to the SEPA area plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. A number of territories are considered to form part of the EU (by virtue of Article 299 of the Treaty of Rome). These are French overseas departments (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana and Réunion), Gibraltar (United Kingdom), the Azores and Madeira (Portugal), the Canary Islands (Spain) and the Aland Islands (Finland). Five of these territories have their own ISO country codes. Therefore, a total of thirty-six ISO country codes are possible in the SEPA area. A transaction is only considered a SEPA transaction if it takes place between two banks whose Bank Identifier Codes (BIC) contain one of these thirty-six ISO country codes.

The introduction of the European credit transfer, initiated last year, has taken place very gradually. It was deliberately decided to proceed in this way to ensure, amongst other things, a smooth, technical migration.

The economic players are not yet obliged to use the new credit transfers and end-users are barely aware of this first phase. In 2009, this process of migration towards SEPA will be further developed, as shown in this report.

The first chapter describes the launch of SEPA and the expected timetable with regard to the different European payment instruments in Belgium. The second chapter covers the implementation of SEPA at interbank level whilst the following chapters set out the situation with respect to the other major players. Progress in the public sector is described first of all. The public services played a leading role in the introduction of the European credit transfer. Next the position and timetable relating to enterprises are examined. Finally, the situation of consumers is highlighted in the last chapters and an overview of SEPA-related communication provided.

2 THE OPERATIONAL LAUNCH OF SEPA IN BELGIUM

2.1 Introduction of the European credit transfer (SEPA Credit Transfer or SCT)

SEPA has got off to a good start in Belgium, with no operational hitches.

As planned, SEPA was introduced on 28 January 2008 in SEPA countries: the 27 European Union (EU) countries plus Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The first payment instrument complying with SEPA standards is the credit transfer: the SEPA Credit Transfer, simply referred to as the “European credit transfer” in Belgium. Since that time, customers in Belgium have been able to have European credit transfers carried out by their banks using various traditional channels to effect their remittances. As a result, there is no longer any difference between a national credit transfer (between a person residing in Antwerp and a person in Liège, for example), and a cross-border credit transfer in euro in the SEPA area (between a Belgian resident and a resident of one of the other 30 countries in the SEPA area).

This also means that, since 28 January 2008, the name “international credit transfer” has been reserved solely for credit transfers made by a Belgian resident to a country outside the SEPA area (outside the 31 countries).

No problems were encountered in the introductory phase; the European credit transfers presented were processed correctly by the banks and the interbank systems.
The migration plan provides for a three-year transition period during which the current national credit transfers must be replaced, as far as possible, by European credit transfers. With this aim in mind, the current national credit transfer paper form will no longer be issued as from the start of 2010 and it will disappear completely by the end of that year.

It has been agreed that all customers must have adopted the European variant of the credit transfer over a period of three years from the launch of SEPA, that is by 31 December 2010 at the latest (see illustration). For paper credit transfers, a shorter transition period is envisaged; the new forms must be in general use by the end of 2009. Banks will stop supplying Belgian credit transfer forms to their customers as from January 2010 but these forms will still be accepted and processed by banks during this last year.

The difference between the Belgian credit transfer forms used nationally and the European credit transfer forms consists mainly of the following points:

- The data of the payer and the payee no longer appear alongside each other but one above the other;
- The obligation to provide the international bank account number (IBAN) of the payer and the payee;
- The obligation to indicate the name of the payee;
- The colour of the form is a darker red than the current Belgian form.

For citizens, the essential difference between the European and Belgian credit transfers relates to the use of the IBAN.

In most cases, citizens will notice that the credit transfer form has already been completed by the creditor and that, as a result, the name of the payee (as it is already entered on the credit transfer - an additional mandatory requirement) is no longer an issue for the payer. The main innovation for citizens is that they must provide their own bank account numbers using the IBAN format in the area reserved for the payer. With regard to Internet (Home) Banking, the indication of the payer’s account number is superfluous, only the payee’s account number in IBAN format has to be entered.

4 The “International Bank Account Number” comprises a BE code (country code) followed by a 2-digit control key and completed by the traditional bank account number in Belgium. Therefore, the IBAN has four additional digits and is provided on all bank account or postal account statements. It is expressed in the structured form of 4 x 4 positions. For any question relating to the IBAN, citizens may contact their banks or post offices directly.
The changeover from the national credit transfer to the single European standard started gradually.

In January 2008, the volume of European credit transfers was very small, increasing slowly over the following months. In one year, the volume of European credit transfers processed in Belgium rose from 0.4 p.c. to 2.3 p.c. of total credit transfers. This trend corresponds to that observed in other countries. The introduction was deliberately effected slowly and gradually enabling bank customers to choose for themselves when to opt for a European credit transfer. Low starting volumes actually limit the risk of disruptions to the banking systems and enable enterprises and public services to adapt their systems to the new SEPA standards gradually.

The chart below compares the volumes of European credit transfers processed by the Belgian retail payment system (Centre for Exchange and Clearing - CEC) with those processed by the main European retail payment systems within the euro area.

In Belgium as in the rest of Europe, the introduction of the European credit transfer started slowly and picked up pace only very gradually over the following months. The relatively sharp increase observed in Belgium in December 2008 follows on from the launch of the European credit transfer by the public administrations in the last quarter of 2008 (see Chapter 4).

Chart 1: Transactions in SEPA format (2008)
(percentages of the total volume of credit transfers)

Source: European Central Bank (ECB) and Centre for Exchange and Clearing (CEC)
As from 2 February 2009, a slightly modified version of the European credit transfer applies but should have no impact on the volumes processed.

The differences in relation to the first version of the SCT are limited and relate to the addition of a new optional field for the payer and payee, when they are not the holders of the accounts entered on the credit transfer. A citizen, as payer, and companies or public administrations, as payees, will now be able to complete these additional fields. These optional fields will only be available on certain electronic versions of the European credit transfer. The credit transfer paper form will therefore not be adapted.

2.2 Introduction of the European direct debit (SEPA Direct Debit or SDD)

Unlike the credit transfer, the European direct debit (SEPA Direct Debit or SDD) is not yet available.

The scheduled launch date for the European direct debit has been set by the banking sector at European level and will coincide with the date on which the Payment Services Directive must be transposed into national legislations, i.e. on 1 November 2009. This Directive creates a unified legal framework within Europe. It has major consequences for direct debits since this means of payment differs fundamentally from credit transfers for example, regarding in particular the rights and obligations of the different parties involved (banks, creditors and debtors). The European Directive was approved on 24 April 2007 by the European Parliament and must be transposed into each Member State’s national legislation by 1 November 2009 at the latest.

The success of the launch of the European direct debit on 1 November 2009 will depend essentially on a number of legal aspects, market acceptance and the time required for the implementation phase with respect to banks and enterprises.

2.2.1 Legal aspects

2.2.1.1 The Payment Services Directive

At the time of publication of this report, there are still some legal uncertainties concerning the migration towards the European direct debit.

The process of transposition of the Directive into national law is in progress, (see also point 4.5) and the European direct debit can only be launched when the Directive has been transposed into the national legislations of all European Union (and EEA) countries, that is as from 1 November 2009. According to the latest information available, the transposition of the Directive into Belgian law will be carried out by this date. In terms of content, the Directive provides for a range of options for the Member States enabling some adaptations according to the national framework. For example, it is for each Member State to decide whether or not micro-enterprises will come under the category of “consumer”. If “micro-enterprises” were included as “enterprises”, they would be able to participate in the "business-to-business" scheme (see point 2.2.3) offered to enterprises to carry out the collection and payment of their invoices efficiently. Consumers benefit from greater protection, by virtue of the Directive, since they can contest a direct debit more easily. Consumers are able to request a refund during the eight weeks following a payment made by direct debit (unless otherwise stipulated in the framework contract between the consumer and his payment services provider). Enterprises, however, have less need for this protection, depending on their contractual relationship with their payment service provider.
Therefore, it is important to decide on a precise definition of the notion of “consumer”. If, for example, self-employed persons or other small businesses were defined as enterprises rather than consumers, they could make payments among themselves via direct debit without having to take into account refund periods of eight weeks.

A second example relates to the mandates linked to direct debits. A direct debit mandate is an authorisation given, in the Belgian direct debit system, by a debtor to his bank to debit his account on the basis of a payment instruction presented by the creditor, via the latter’s bank. The question of how and to whom the mandate must be submitted is still to be examined, as is the procedure for revoking or cancelling a direct debit.

A number of countries are unsure about the continuation of the legal validity of local direct debit mandates within the framework of the migration towards the future SEPA Direct Debit (SDD) scheme. This relates to countries such as Belgium, in particular, where the national direct debit system provides for the mandate being held at the debtor’s bank. This system might come up against legal restrictions as a result of the mandate having to be held by the creditor after migration towards the SDD scheme. In Belgium, the establishment of the principle of continued validity of the direct debit mandates is set to be provided for by law. This will make it possible to avoid a large-scale technical and administrative operation involving the obligation to replace all existing Belgian direct debit mandates (some 30 million) with SDD mandates and asking individuals to sign these SDD mandates without any additional gain being produced for any of the parties.  

**One of the aims of the Directive is to harmonise the rules applicable to all payment instruments.**

Only certain paper based payment instruments, which are becoming obsolete, such as cheques, bills of exchange and traveller’s cheques, are outside the scope of the Directive. In Belgium, the most important consequences of the Directive will relate to direct debits. The main change lies in increased consumer/payer protection (see above) since he will be able to claim a refund of a payment already made, within eight weeks. To do so, two conditions must be met: the amount may not be fixed and it must exceed that which the payer could reasonably expect. It is for the banks to decide to take account of these conditions or not. In fact, the Directive enables banks to stipulate in the framework contract concluded with the payer that the latter has the right to the refund even if the two conditions in question are not met. The payer’s bank will have to refund the money within ten days following the request for a refund.

Conversely, banks can provide for refunds to be impossible in the framework contract concluded with their customers, unless two other conditions are met. On the one hand, the direct debit mandate must have been given directly to the payer’s bank and, on the other, the information relating to the future payment operation (including the amount) must have been communicated to the payer at least four weeks before the due date.

The Directive also provides for clauses on the execution time and value date. The debtor’s bank must ensure that the payee’s bank will be credited with the amount owing on the next working day. This deadline may be three working days until 31 December 2011. However, since existing Belgian legislation already takes account of a deadline of just one day, this right will not apply to credit transfers except with regard to cross-border payments. As from 1 January 2012, all payment instructions (in euro), which are effected by credit transfer, direct debit or card, will be carried out within a maximum of one day. Transactions carried out on paper may take an extra day. The payee’s bank must apply the value date and make the amount available in the payee’s account (the creditor) as soon as it receives it. The payer’s bank may not apply a value date prior to the day of debiting the customer’s account.

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5 Given that the B2B scheme is a completely new method of collection, it does require the signature of new mandates.
2.2.1.2 Revision or replacement of (EC) Regulation No. 2560/2001 of the European Parliament and Council of 19 December 2001 on cross-border payments in euro (the Regulation)

The Regulation aims to align the charges applied for cross-border payments in euro within the EU with those prevailing for national payments.

Banks cannot, except under certain conditions, charge additional fees for cross-border transactions (credit transfers and payments by card) made in euro within the European Union (with a limit of 50,000 euro) in relation to those charged for national transactions. Work to revise the Regulation is currently in progress at European level. The most important amendment proposal concerns the extension to direct debits of the basic principle of equal charges for national and cross-border payments. This means that banks cannot apply higher tariffs to cross-border direct debits than those applied to national direct debits.

Within this context, the Multilateral Balancing Payment (MBP) or Multilateral Interchange Fee (MIF) is very important. It is an interbank commission charged as compensation to allow access and debiting bank customer accounts. If these interchange fees did not exist, banks (and certainly banks which have no creditors as customers and do not collect direct debits from customers of other banks) would be more reluctant to participate in the direct debit schemes which, thanks to the direct debit, enable the banks of creditors to execute debits directly on the accounts of their own customers. A compromise is currently being studied at European level in order to be able to charge this MIF/MBP to cross-border direct debits and facilitate the launch of this new European payment instrument. At the end of a transition period, the MIFs/MBPs should disappear, both at national and international levels.

2.2.2 Adoption by the market

In view of the legal and other uncertainties, enterprises are hesitating to adopt the new direct debit.

As long as all the factors which may impact on their production processes are not known, they will want to delay taking the steps necessary for the changeover to the European direct debit. It follows from the legal projects, mentioned above, that the discussion on the right to a refund is the main stumbling block for a number of enterprises. In concrete terms, the consequence of this rule is that enterprises are still unsure of the incoming cash flow in the eight weeks during which a request for a refund may be made.

Enterprises must also prepare themselves at a technical level. The new business model for direct debits was defined by the "European Payments Council" (EPC) and, for Belgium, is fundamentally different from the national DOM80 scheme. As creditors, enterprises must now themselves store and manage the data of the direct debit mandates of their customers in order to send them to their bank whenever they request to carry out a direct debit transaction. To date, these data were managed and stored by the debtor’s bank. Therefore, the way in which enterprises are going to react to this new European direct debit is still uncertain.

2.2.3 Timetable for the implementation phase

The SEPA Direct Debit product will be made available by the banks on 1 November 2009 in two versions: the basic scheme and the Business-to-Business (B2B) scheme.

The basic scheme is a variant of the national direct debit scheme used for the collection of invoices issued by companies to individuals. Practically all banks will participate in this scheme. The B2B scheme is intended for automated collections of business-to-business invoices and will be offered as an option by the banks.
In order to implement the SEPA Direct Debit effectively, these two schemes will be completed by an electronic circuit. The mandate by which a debtor first gives authorisation to its bank to debit its account on the instruction of the creditor, at each presentation of an invoice, will be organised electronically ("e-mandate"). For this purpose, a debtor must be able to sign and transmit an electronic mandate from the creditor’s website.

**All adaptations to be made by banks and enterprises must be operational by 1 November 2009, which represents a relatively short deadline given the extent of these changes.**

As a result, there are doubts about the entry into force of the European direct debit on 1 November 2009. Even if banks put everything in place in order to be operational on this date, they must await the final text of the Belgian law to be able to start the final implementation phase (see above). Thereafter, enterprises must still make the changes necessary for automating the collection of invoices.

It was initially planned that the end date of the Belgian DOM80 system would be put on the same date as the one set for credit transfers, i.e. 31 December 2010. This would mean a much shorter transition period for direct debits (13 months) than for European credit transfers. This period is thought to be insufficient to organise the changeover of Belgian direct debits to European direct debits. Consequently, it has been decided, in line with the European credit transfers, that it will also be possible to benefit from a transition period of three years (see illustration below). However, it should be noted that there is still no official decision from the banking sector on this matter.

![Timeline diagram](image)

### 2.3 The European Payment Card (SEPA Card)

**The SEPA Card Framework is ready and applicable since 1 January 2008 but there has been little if any impact on the Belgian payment card market.**

The initial plan involving the replacement of the “Bancontact/Mister Cash” Belgian payment cards scheme with Maestro (a MasterCard product) in one go was not carried out. This plan received not enough support from the different market players, mainly merchants, the distribution sector and consumer associations. Merchants, among others, objected strongly owing to the sharp increase in costs this would possibly entail.

Although the initial plan of a changeover to a new payment card scheme in a big-bang operation was abandoned, the market is technically ready for the introduction of new payment card schemes.

The technical adaptations have been made to the card payment and cash withdrawal terminals, and they can now accept payment card schemes other than Bancontact/Mister Cash for national transactions. Before 2008, schemes such as Maestro were only suitable for Belgians using them abroad or foreigners using Belgian terminals. As a result of these adaptations, the Belgian payment cards market is considered to be ready for SEPA.
At present there are no new payment card schemes offering more advantages for banks and merchants. In concrete terms, the current situation is unchanged (use of Bancontact/Mister Cash) but it is now possible to use Maestro for national payments. In fact, this additional option is rarely used as it is of no interest to merchants\(^6\).

The main sticking points relating to payment cards are: the shortcomings of the standardisation processes, new initiatives for a European payment card which are still in the embryonic stage and the uncertainty relating to interchange fees.

In future, changes will undoubtedly be made to payment cards but it is not yet clear when any concrete effects will feed through to Belgian merchants. The most important developments are set out below.

- Discussions currently relate to the functional and technical standards and requirements which all the terminals and cards in the SEPA area must meet, in future. The parties concerned (merchants, terminal vendors and issuers, etc.) have yet to agree on these matters. It is impossible to say yet when this will affect merchants.

- The European authorities (European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission) are insisting on the establishment of at least one European payment card scheme in order to ensure an alternative which will be competitive in terms of the solution offered by the only two institutions currently proposing debit card schemes in Europe, i.e. MasterCard and Visa. With this in mind, a number of initiatives have emerged but it is difficult to know at this stage whether they will finally lead to new payment card schemes coming on stream. Among other things, an initiative has been started in Belgium to launch a new European payment card scheme specifically with regard to merchants and the distribution sector (PayFair)\(^7\). This project is evolving and a first test will begin in early May 2009 in cooperation with a major Belgian distributor.

- There are still doubts with respect to interchange fees (fixed costs applied to compensate for costs existing in the relationship between the merchant’s payment services provider and the card holder’s bank). The European competition authorities have condemned the system applied by MasterCard in this area and a case against VISA is still ongoing. Uncertainty as to what can or cannot be done in this area is preventing the players in the market from developing new initiatives, as it is still not possible for them to determine whether a real opportunity exists in the card market.

\(^6\) This involves approximately 1 million transactions out of some 900 million in 2008.

\(^7\) The other initiatives are Euro Alliance of Payment Schemes (EAPS) and the “Monnet Group”. EAPS is a cooperative company whose aim is to create a European payment card scheme linking all the existing debit card systems. Its participants are Multibanco (Portugal), PAGO/BANCOMAT (Italy), Vocalink (United Kingdom), EURO 6000 (Spain), EC Electronic Cash (Germany) and EUFISERV (European saving bank group). The “Monnet Group” is a group of leading German and French banks whose aim it is to create a new European payment card scheme.
### 3 THE LAUNCH OF SEPA IN THE BANKING COMMUNITY

#### 3.1 The "Customer-to-bank" leg

*Since January 2008, every customer of a bank in Belgium has been able to remit a European credit transfer to his bank.*

In terms of the migration of the banking community, banks operating in Belgium have undertaken to provide their customers with at least one channel by which European credit transfers can be initiated. In fact, since the launch, the customers of most banks have several initiation channels to remit their credit transfers in European format.

**Chart 2: Bank channels available for the remittance of European credit transfers by customers**

(as at the end of September 2008; in numbers; survey carried out among 56 banks operating in Belgium)

![Chart 2: Bank channels available for the remittance of European credit transfers by customers](image)

*n.a. = not applicable*

Chart 2 shows the total number of channels provided by 56 banks operating in Belgium. This sample represents more than 95 p.c. of the volumes in terms of capital and number of transactions in the area of payments business. Individuals can choose between four channels to initiate the remittance of their European credit transfers to their bank: the European credit transfer paper form, the bank counter, Internet banking and “self-banking” on bank premises.

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8 The results of the survey must be interpreted with caution, given that a negative response could equally be a "not applicable" response. This is the case, in particular, for banks which responded that European credit transfers could not be remitted at their counters as these are often banks with few or no counters, such as Internet banks.
All banks in Belgium comply with SEPA as at least one channel has been made available to customers so that the latter can initiate European credit transfers. Most banks in fact offer several channels.

The "self-bank" networks of two major banks were adapted late. Likewise, the Isabel channel\(^9\) (for enterprises) was not ready on time at certain banks. All the parties concerned are currently working to open these channels as rapidly as possible.

**Banks have not adapted the traditional telephone banking service as more and more customers are abandoning it in favour of an Internet banking service.**

In addition, it is technically complicated to enter letters (required to enter the IBAN account number which begins with two letters, "BE" for example) with a traditional telephone keypad.

**Business users of payment services (public administrations, enterprises, etc.) increasingly have the opportunity to use Isabel 6 (i.e. the new SEPA version of Isabel services).**

The widespread distribution of the Isabel platform is essential for multibank institutions as it is the only channel which allows the remittance of credit transfers (and other information) to different banks. Isabel is a very important player in the payment services market for enterprises and public administrations but it is only just beginning to open its new platform on a wider scale.

According to Isabel, approximately half of the companies operating in the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) market are ready for the introduction of new XML standards for European credit transfers. The others will follow in 2009. At the time of the launch of the European direct debit, on 1 November 2009, just over half the ERP companies will be ready.

### 3.2 The interbank space

#### 3.2.1 Interbank processing of European credit transfers

**Belgian banks process the large majority of interbank European credit transfers via the Centre for Exchange and Clearance (CEC), the retail payment system in Belgium and via the European payment system of the Euro Banking Association (EBA), STEP2.**

The CEC processes Belgian credit transfers for national use between two holders of bank accounts established in Belgium. The CEC has been adapted to be able to process European credit transfers between holders of bank accounts established in Belgium. For European credit transfers, banks can also use other systems, in particular the European system EBA/STEP2. A number of Belgian branches of foreign banks send and receive European credit transfers, which they exchange with other Belgian banks, via EBA/STEP2. Cross-border credit transfers, one of the parties of which is a customer at a bank established in another SEPA area country, are always processed by EBA/STEP2.

**The migration of the current formats towards SEPA formats has happened very rapidly as regards cross-border credit transfers.**

Unlike the particularly slow migration of “national” European credit transfers, that of cross-border credit transfers towards the SEPA format has taken place extremely rapidly. Table 1 shows the number of cross-border credit transfers processed by banks in Belgium via EBA/STEP2, highlighting this rapid migration. Out of a total of approximately one million credit transfers processed per month, most were already processed as European credit transfers after just three months.

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\(^9\) Isabel is an electronic invoicing and banking telematics service provider. It offers a multibank platform to users of payment services.
Table 1: Migration of European cross-border credit transfers towards the SEPA format
(credit transfers processed in Belgium via EBA/STEP2 by banks established in Belgium)
(number of transactions recorded for 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total transactions</th>
<th>Proportion as a percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEPA</td>
<td>not SEPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,005,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>170,449</td>
<td>811,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>430,344</td>
<td>551,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>590,790</td>
<td>480,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>551,993</td>
<td>446,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>522,550</td>
<td>516,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>481,331</td>
<td>608,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>407,404</td>
<td>497,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>506,629</td>
<td>535,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>576,263</td>
<td>563,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>505,671</td>
<td>474,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>689,072</td>
<td>507,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EBA.

n.a. = not available

Migration towards “national” European credit transfers is much more slowly than migration for cross border payments.

During the first few months after the launch of SEPA (March-June), Belgian banks processed two thirds of European credit transfers via EBA/STEP2 and one third via the CEC. This proportion changed after a few months and, since July 2008, the number of European credit transfers processed via the CEC is higher than that of credit transfers processed by EBA/STEP2.

In December 2008, approximately 2.3 p.c. of the total number of credit transfers processed via the CEC related to credit transfers in the SEPA format, which corresponds to 55,000 European credit transfers per day from a total of 2.4 million credit transfers. In recent months, daily peaks of 87,000 European credit transfers have been recorded. The proportion of SEPA transactions varies considerably from one bank to another. For example, one medium-sized bank and two small ones have achieved significant figures of 36 p.c., 17 p.c. and 13 p.c. European credit transfers in their total traffic, respectively.

Table 2 shows the SEPA credit transfers processed by the two payment systems. The European credit transfers processed by EBA/STEP2 are cross-border (between an account holder in Belgium and a second one in another SEPA area country) or national (between two account holders of banks in Belgium), whilst the European credit transfers processed by the “CEC” relate only to “national” European credit transfers.
Table 2: Processing of European credit transfers by banks in Belgium
(number of transactions recorded for 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>via EBA/STEP2</th>
<th>via CEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>170,449</td>
<td>181,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>430,344</td>
<td>192,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>590,790</td>
<td>230,816</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>551,993</td>
<td>207,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>522,550</td>
<td>321,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>481,331</td>
<td>552,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>407,404</td>
<td>513,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>506,629</td>
<td>574,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>576,263</td>
<td>796,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>505,671</td>
<td>777,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>689,072</td>
<td>1,157,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: EBA and CEC.

In 2007, the CEC prepared the changes which were required by 28 January 2008 in order to process the exchange and clearing of SEPA European credit transfers between Belgian banks.

European credit transfers are processed in parallel with the “old” Belgian standards for credit transfers, cheques, payment cards and direct debits. As already stated, the aim is to replace almost all “Belgian” credit transfers intended for national use with European credit transfers by the end of 2010.

With regard to intrabank transactions, few statistical data are available as the banks process intrabank European credit transfers using internal applications. However, on the basis of partial data, it is possible to estimate that the proportion of intrabank transactions in the European format of the total number of intrabank transactions corresponds to the proportion of credit transfers in the European format in interbank traffic.

3.2.2 Consultation in the SEPA Forum: the Belgian banking community migration plan

The Belgian banking community migration plan (see Annex 1) is updated on a regular basis. Some important changes have been made in the latest version, including those relating to the end date for Belgian standards and to the European direct debit.

Meanwhile, the Belgian banking sector is preparing for the introduction of other European payment instruments and the adaptation of the Belgian payment infrastructure. In October 2008, a new version (4.0) of the Belgian migration plan was published. Compared with the previous version, enclosed with the first progress report, the following changes have been made:

- A change of end dates for Belgian payment instruments;
- The decision to extend the Belgian direct debit scheme (DOM80) beyond 1 November 2009 and to adapt it to satisfy the requirements of the new European rules (the Directive);
- The decision not to implement the European direct debit (SEPA Direct Debit) in the Belgian payment system (CEC).
3.2.2.1 **End dates of Belgian credit transfers**

The aim is no longer to eliminate the “Belgian” credit transfers entirely by the end of 2010, at least as far as electronic credit transfers are concerned. Nevertheless, the end of 2010 remains a final date for reaching a critical mass of electronic European credit transfers. Belgian paper credit transfers, however, must have disappeared completely by the end of 2010.

Whilst previously, 31 December 2010 was targeted as the final deadline for the end of Belgian credit transfers with national use, this is now qualified in the new migration plan. As far as paper credit transfers are concerned, however, the end of 2010 remains the date for ending their processing by the banks. No bank will issue paper forms beyond 2009. Those remaining in the market will still be accepted by banks during 2010. This should enable the reserves of old forms to be used up.

In order to determine a cut-off date for the other Belgian standards, the banking sector promises that the banks will make every effort to ensure that a critical mass of credit transfers in the European format is reached by the end of 2010. The definition of “critical mass” in terms of volume of transactions has not yet been decided. In practice, it may be difficult for the banks to reach a unilateral decision on the end date for the “old” products; what is more, the context for this will have to be a European one.

3.2.2.2 **Maintenance of the Belgian direct debit scheme (DOM80) as at 1 November 2009, in accordance with the terms of the new Directive**

The current Belgian direct debit scheme DOM80 will not be discontinued as at 1 November 2009.

As far as the current national direct debit scheme - DOM80 – is concerned, the banking community has decided to adapt it so that it can continue to be used after 1 November 2009 (the date of the transposition of the Directive into Belgian legislation). The adaptations required are currently being examined and relate to the addition of a channel in the DOM80 for refunds, for example. They will enable a gradual transition towards the European direct debit to be organised, in parallel with the maintenance of the DOM80.

In fact, a very gradual transition towards the European direct debit is expected, as already stated in point 2.2. The consequence will probably be a 2 to 3-year migration period, during which the DOM80 product will exist alongside the SDD product.
3.2.2.3 Processing of European direct debits on a European platform

In Belgium, most banks intend to participate in the European direct debit schemes without them being installed on the CEC’s technical platform.

Banks will offer the European version of the direct debit in Belgium as from 1 November 2009. They have undertaken to participate, at least passively, in the basic SEPA direct debit scheme of the European Payments Council (EPC). This means that they will be reachable and will process collections presented by other banks. In order to check that this obligation required for the European scheme is being observed, a survey was conducted regarding the state of play at banks (see Chart 3). The large majority of them (47 out of 56) said that they were willing to participate in this basic scheme. Among these banks, 32 will participate actively, which means that they will offer European direct debits to enterprises so that the latter can collect their invoices in an automated manner. The other 15 banks will participate passively, confining themselves to preparing customers’ accounts for the incoming direct debits. Most of the banks (9) which do not intend to participate are those which do not currently offer direct debit products to their customers and, therefore, do not have to migrate towards a European variant.

Chart 3: Intentions of banks in Belgium in terms of participation in SEPA direct debit schemes
(numbers; survey conducted among 56 banks operating in Belgium)

Apart from the basic scheme, the EPC has also developed an optional direct debit scheme intended for enterprises for use amongst themselves. This is the Business-to-Business (B2B) model. According to the survey, approximately half the banks currently intend to participate in this optional scheme.

To meet the requirements of the EPC, the banks have to connect at least passively (that is, as addressees of transactions) to a Pan-European Automated Clearing House (PE-ACH) for the European direct debits of the basic scheme. In the Belgian migration plan towards SEPA, it has been established that the CEC would not be used as a channel for the interbank exchange of European direct debits.
4 MIGRATION TOWARDS SEPA BY THE ADMINISTRATIONS

In Belgium, the public administrations are migrating towards SEPA; they are leading by example, perfectly in line with their remit.

4.1 Introduction of European payment instruments by the federal authorities

The Belgian federal authority started up the operational phase of migration in September 2008, virtually completing the migration by 1 January 2009.

On 27 June 2008, the Council of Ministers approved the proposal providing for the gradual introduction of the new European credit transfer forms at the level of the public services in order that the latter are ready to use the new SEPA standard as at 1 January 2009 (see Annex 2). This is the most important target date for the public services since, as from this date, all Federal Public Services (FPS) and Public Programming Services (SPP) will only use the new credit transfer form. In principle, all electronic credit transfers (incoming and outgoing) will also be carried out in the European format.

Since the calendar year does not coincide with the financial year, a second target date, 1 September 2008, was set. From this date, the tax calculation relating to motor vehicle tax and the final tax calculations for personal income tax are transmitted with a European credit transfer form. Approximately, 500,000 motor vehicle tax advices have been sent per month since September 2008. At the end of 2008, new European credit transfer forms were enclosed with 3,350,000 payment requests.

In the context of this initiative by the public administrations, taxpayers were invited, de facto, to make a payment using the new European format. In concrete terms, citizens who have to pay a certain amount, following the final calculation of their income tax, may do so using the new European credit transfer form enclosed with the final tax calculation. Citizens who are entitled to a refund will have their accounts credited using a European credit transfer sent by the administration. The Federal Public Service Finance (FPS Finance) was the first to migrate towards SEPA and was fully prepared for the transition on 1 January 2009. Many other Federal Public Services also migrated on that date.

4.2 Organisation within the federal authorities

The Federal Government has taken the initiative in the context of the migration towards SEPA and created a “Steering Committee” comprising a representative sample of Federal Public Services directly involved in the changeover to SEPA.

In the first progress report an overview of the organisational structure of this Steering Committee was presented. Account being taken of its promotional and support tasks, in the establishment of management systems in the public services and as a horizontal Federal Public Service, the FPS Budget and Controlling played a key role in this respect.

All the federal public services are basically ready to migrate towards SEPA.

On the initiative of the European Commission (EC), a survey of public services was conducted in the EU countries in order to draft a progress report on the migration towards SEPA. In Belgium, this survey was conducted in October 2008 among 37 Federal Public Services (FPS) and Public Programming Services (SPP). The survey highlighted that the Federal Government is achieving a rapid and timely migration. Approximately 10 p.c. of all the public services have already begun the processing or dispatch of European credit transfers in 2008.
This relates not only to the use of paper credit transfers but also the employment of new XML standards for the processing of electronic credit transfers. All other public services started on 1 January 2009 or soon thereafter. Practically all the public services have developed or are in the process of developing a communication strategy. A flyer describing all the new items on the credit transfer form is one of the most frequently used means of communication (see Annex 3). Approximately half the public services will send this standardised SEPA flyer at the time of the dispatch of the first invoice with which the European credit transfer will be enclosed.

**The total number of SEPA transactions is not known for 2008 but the public services with the largest transaction volumes were migrated towards SEPA on 1 January 2009.**

One of the most visible stages of the process of migration of public administrations towards SEPA is the changeover of FPS Finance. The latter’s target group comprises all citizens and most of the credit transfers issued and received by the Government are executed by the FPS Finance. The latter drafted a detailed work schedule within the framework of its migration scenario. A central management committee, responsible for the introduction of SEPA and communication was set up in June 2007. In addition, separate working groups were introduced to the different working entities by the members of the management committee. The public services have not encountered any significant operating problems during the changeover.

### 4.3 Communication by the Federal Government

**The FPS Finance has played a pioneering role in the area of communication and is the only service to have conducted a national campaign, sending a SEPA flyer to every citizen.**

As a Public Service, in contact with all citizens, the FPS Finance had to give priority to communication. The communication strategy was established both internally and externally.

With regard to the internal strategy, middle management was targeted with a first awareness campaign, as a result of which all members of staff were provided with information, in particular by the addition of a SEPA section on the Intranet site. More specific training was then organised for call-centre staff, responsible for answering questions from enterprises and citizens, and a list of frequently asked questions drawn up.

A considerable effort was also made in terms of external communication. At the start of 2008, the Government launched the first and most important communication campaign relating to SEPA. Approximately 8 million SEPA flyers were distributed: since April 2008, a SEPA flyer has been enclosed with each tax return sent to citizens. Posters have also been printed and put up in the premises of the public services. Finally, a SEPA section has been included on the FPS Finance website with all the useful information on SEPA, links to other sites dealing with SEPA, a substantial list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) as well as a procedure for converting a national bank account number to its IBAN number ([http://minfin.fgov.be/portail2/en/sepa/index.htm](http://minfin.fgov.be/portail2/en/sepa/index.htm)). This site is routinely visited.

**The experience of the federal authority shows us that the use of the European credit transfer causes no major problems, except in a limited number of cases where citizens have encountered difficulties with the IBAN.**

After the dispatch of the initial credit transfer forms, the FPS Finance call-centre recorded high call volumes regarding SEPA for a few days. However, the rush soon passed and the number of calls is limited at present, considering the number of forms sent out.
Questions from citizens mainly relate to the following points:

- poor knowledge of the IBAN format by citizens;
- failure to deal with European credit transfers by means of "self-banking" at certain banks;
- in a limited number of cases, the tariffs applied by the banks and the lack of information provided by bank counter staff.

These problems have been discussed by the SEPA working group, and the banking sector has announced a set of measures to resolve these issues.

4.4 Introduction of the European credit transfer by the other public administrations

The other public services are preparing for or commencing the introduction of the SEPA credit transfer as well, and, at regional level, some of them are operational and have already been processing European credit transfers for several months. Administrations of the French and Flemish Communities have been ready since 1 January 2009 and the Brussels–Capital Region since 1 February 2009. The administration of the Walloon Region continues the implementation of SEPA and has included a SEPA item on its intranet. The Ministry of Finance and Budget of the Flemish Region and that of the French Community have incorporated a section relating to SEPA in their respective websites (http://fin.vlaanderen.be/sepa and http://www.sepa.cfwb.be).

4.5 Legislative work

*The timetable for the transposition of the Payment Services Directive is set and the public administrations are to create a new legal framework which will include the current provisions of the laws on payment services within a global structure.*

The transposition of Sections I, III and IV of the Payment Services Directive into Belgian law is prepared by the FPS Economy, SMEs, Self-Employed and Energy (FPS ECO), within the framework of its mission to create the conditions for the competitive, sustainable and balanced functioning of the goods and services market in Belgium. The transposition of Section II of the Directive, relating to access to the activity and to prudential supervision of payment institutions, is ensured by the Banking, Finance and Insurance Commission (CBFA). Therefore, two different bills will be submitted to the legislator.

The bill originating from the FPS Economy will integrate the provisions of the current legislation as far as possible (electronic payments, value dates, etc.). The banking sector and the European Commission have already been consulted regarding this bill, and it is now generally ready. An explanatory memorandum is still being prepared. In the next phase, the proposed texts will be submitted to the political organs of the government. A transposition timetable has been set and the two Belgian laws transposing the Directive will enter into force on 1 November 2009.
5 ENTERPRISES

With regard to the introduction of the European credit transfer form by enterprises, attention, in the initial phase, has been focused mainly on enterprises with a large volume of credit transfers. A timetable has been set for the launch of the dispatch of invoices with a European credit transfer form.

After the public sector, it is now up to the large enterprises to send their invoices with the European credit transfer form. The SEPA working group concentrated initially on enterprises with large payment volumes. Although only a small proportion of citizens fill in this credit transfer form and remit it to their bank, the majority of the payers use it as the input datamodel when initiating the credit transfer by means of the computer channels provided by the banks. A coordinated approach guarantees a transparent and smooth migration will benefit from the early experiences of the public administrations. The following timetable shows the launch dates for the use of the European credit transfer by large enterprises issuing invoices.

Chart 4: Migration schedule of large enterprises issuing invoices in Belgium

Following the initiative taken by the public administrations, large Belgian enterprises will begin sending high volumes of invoices with which European credit transfer forms are enclosed.

The timetable shows that most major issuers of invoices (big billers) will respond to the request and begin using the SEPA format soon after the public administrations. At the end of 2008, a number of large companies had already begun sending European credit transfers. Most of them will be ready by mid-2009. This migration, which is happening quite quickly compared with other countries and which coincides with the end of the migration of outgoing payments of the public administrations, will in principle lead to a considerable increase in the relative proportion of SEPA payments during the first six months of 2009.
The standard flyer explaining the European credit transfer (see Annex 3) will be used by at least half of the large enterprises to help their customers to use the European credit transfer.

This means that each citizen is bound to receive this flyer several times and, as a result, the changeover to the European credit transfer should take place without too many problems.

After the big billers, the other enterprises will also migrate towards the European credit transfer.

After the large enterprises, several tens of thousands of other businesses have to migrate. In order to proceed in a structured and standardised way, the distribution of a standard brochure will form part of a phased migration plan. The experiences made by the public administrations and large enterprises during their launch phase will be very useful in this respect (see Annex 4).

6 CONSUMERS

As users of payment instruments, consumers have had little or no information on SEPA.

As users of payment services, consumers will automatically notice the changes made by SEPA. They will use European cashless payment instruments in parallel with the euro, the cash-based European payment means.

In general, consumer associations support the vision of the SEPA project although they consider themselves not sufficiently involved in it to date. They also believe that they currently have too little information, not only on the current situation but also on the changes to come.

Insofar as the advantages of SEPA manifest themselves, above all, at macroeconomic level and the positive effects will only really be felt by consumers in the medium and long term, consumer representatives will want to ensure that the migration towards SEPA is effected smoothly given that SEPA changes their citizens' banking routines without providing them with an immediate benefit.

Whilst consumer representatives expected a general information campaign at national level regarding SEPA and the changes arising for the consumer, they note that each bank disseminates its own information which does not stimulate clarity and understanding by consumers of SEPA and its practical consequences.

The way to proceed to make a European credit transfer is not always clear to consumers.

Consumer associations are mainly wondering about the changes expected regarding banking channels. It would be useful, for example, for them to know banks’ intentions not to adapt the telephone banking services for SEPA transactions. Likewise, uncertainty persists concerning the situation of “self-banking”. Consumers do not know whether or not a bank has already made the necessary changes. Another concern frequently encountered relates to the lack of clarity and transparency when initiating a European credit transfer online. In some banks, customers’ attention is not immediately drawn to the European credit transfer, and they may have the impression that the “European credit transfer” is only to be used for cross-border transactions. The optional nature of the BIC code is also not always clearly indicated or explained. Therefore, citizens tend to regard a European credit transfer as a cross-border transfer. Consumer associations believe that the general introduction of the European credit transfer form by large enterprises must be coupled with effective communication so that citizens can easily switch to using European credit transfers.

Likewise, consumers have not been sufficiently informed about the European direct debit. Consumer representatives are speculating about the changes with which they will be faced and how the transition towards the SDD will happen, and they restate their wish for a transparent migration.
With regard to the debit card, consumer organisations note that the Belgian payment card is a combination of a national debit card (Bancontact/Mister Cash) and an international debit card (Maestro), actually offering significant European coverage. The Belgian card is still in use without any other European card seeming to loom on the horizon. With regard to this future card, they hope that at least the IBAN code will appear on it.

In Belgium, payment cards also combine the functions of a debit card with those of the electronic purse (Proton). Consumer organisations are also querying the future of this electronic money given that, although its use is down year-on-year, regular users of Proton are very satisfied with it.

In general, consumer associations are wondering about the timetable of the SEPA project, which has never been changed officially. Finally, they are questioning the way in which the old payment instruments will be brought to an end.

7 COMMUNICATION

In Belgium, communication relating to SEPA is disseminated based on a top-down approach: the important players in the payment services market begin by providing information to their users who, in turn, spread this information among other smaller users.

Table 3 shows that communication originated from the banking federation from where it was disseminated to individual banks which then transmitted it to the most important customers, such as the public administrations and large enterprises. In turn, the administrative entities and, later, large enterprises disseminated the information to citizens and other enterprises.

Table 3: SEPA communication activities by communicator and target group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>Communicator</th>
<th>Banks, individually</th>
<th>Public administrations</th>
<th>Enterprises</th>
<th>Consumers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banks, individually</td>
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<td>brochures targeting the customer</td>
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<td>“on-the-spot”</td>
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<td>Press release Steering Committee, SEPA WG Bilateral contacts with the “big billers”</td>
<td>Press release</td>
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<td>Press release</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second progress report on the migration towards SEPA in Belgium
March 2009

The communication strategy is based on a diversified approach by target audience with a different emphasis, as appropriate, in terms of content.

Table 3 above gives an overview of the most important communication activities. It shows the different communication channels used by the players transmitting information to the different target audiences.

One of the most frequently used methods of communication to date is the flyer presenting the new European credit transfer (see Annex 3).

For communication purposes, a standardised flyer, developed by the banking sector, may be freely personalised by each party. This flyer has been used by the public services and banking sector and is available free of charge at www.sepabelgium.be. At the time of their first communication to citizens, the public administrations sent this flyer to them together with the individual tax returns, in order to provide them with information relating to the new credit transfer form. Some 8 million copies of this flyer were distributed. In the weeks that followed the first mass dispatch of European credit transfer forms, it appeared that all citizens had not been sufficiently well informed of the European initiative relating to payment instruments. It is mainly the use of the IBAN replacing the Belgian bank account number which raised the most questions at the FPS Finance call centre. However, it is expected that citizens will become increasingly well informed about and familiar with using this new form in the European format when enterprises begin the dispatch of theirs.

Most large enterprises issuing credit transfers announced that they will use this flyer when they send a European credit transfer enclosed with an invoice for the first time. Therefore, citizens will receive this flyer a number of times and from several enterprises. This repetitive process should enable citizens to readily familiarise themselves with the European credit transfer.

The banks devise their own communication policies individually taking account of their customers and staff. This communication may take multiple forms (publications, brochures, websites) adapted to their different target groups. There are no plans to develop a general, coordinated communication campaign at banking sector level as a whole, in particular because it was decided that consumers will be informed when they make their first payment. Any communication provided at times other than this actual “moment of transition” is considered to be less effective.

In Belgium, no general national communication campaign has been organised by the different players to accompany the introduction of the European credit transfer.

Communication and consultation are crucial in an important migration process such as SEPA. On a number of occasions, the launch of a large-scale communication campaign, targeting the general public and financed by all the players involved, was envisaged. Such a campaign, based on radio or television announcements, for example, would explain to people how to deal with a European credit transfer. However, in the end, this large-scale approach has not been adopted, essentially because the banking sector doubted its effectiveness, as already explained above.

In the communication towards the general public, the SEPA payment instruments are denominated “European” payment instruments.

One of the most significant communications, although indirect, was to rename the “SEPA” payment instruments as “European” payment instruments. The SEPA Credit Transfer was presented to Belgian citizens under the name of “European credit transfer” and later, the SEPA Direct Debit will be announced as the “European direct debit”. By using the adjective “European”, it is expected that citizens will accept and understand the change more easily. Other general items of communication were disseminated to the general public by means of press releases drafted by the Federal State and the National Bank of Belgium, among others.

http://www.sepabelgium.be/fr/node/135
8 CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION PLAN

8.1 The European credit transfer

The introduction of the European credit transfer can be considered as a real success in Belgium.

The introduction of the first European credit transfers was achieved over a very short period of time and without any operational problems. As far as volumes are concerned, the conversion took place very rapidly in the case of cross-border payments for which, needless to say, the European standard contributed most advantages, whilst the conversion of national payments was much slower.

All banks comply with the SEPA standard and every customer has at least one channel to make remittances of European credit transfers to his bank. It should be noted that most banks offer several remittance channels.

By the end of 2010, a critical mass of European electronic credit transfers is set to exist in Belgium and paper credit transfers will only continue to be processed in accordance with the European format.

By way of example and as one of the very first in Belgium, the Government has introduced the European credit transfer.

Since September 2008, public administrations have been sending citizens a European credit transfer enclosed with their payment request and, since 1 January 2009, the Federal Government also uses the European standard in its credit transfers to make outgoing payments. Therefore, the Government is leading by example, perfectly in line with its remit.

Large enterprises, mainly public utilities, will quickly follow in early 2009 with the introduction of the new paper credit transfer form which will be enclosed with each payment request sent.

Next it is up to all other enterprises to plan their migration towards the European credit transfer so that their contribution as issuers of payment instructions, in addition to those of the public administrations and large enterprises, serves to ensure that the volume of European credit transfers reaches a critical mass.

Actions:
A standardised stage-by-stage plan has been presented (see Annex 4) on the basis of experiences made. This plan will be used to facilitate the migration towards the European credit transfer of all enterprises and institutions, following the Government’s example.
In a next stage, the extent to which the payment processes and services of the Government could be improved further will be examined with the public administrations.
In addition, a set of measures is still to be reviewed to encourage consumers to adopt the European credit transfer.

8.2 The European direct debit

The launch of the European direct debit is planned for 1 November 2009. Its success will depend on a range of factors such as the transposition into the national legislations of all European countries, the adoption by the market and the time needed for implementation.

Most Belgian banks intend to participate in the European direct debit schemes of the EPC, but these schemes will not be implemented on the CEC’s technical platform, the Belgian payment system.
**Actions:**
In order to be able to start on 1 November 2009, it is necessary to accelerate not only the process of transposition into national law but also the preparations within banks and enterprises. A period of reflection is required to identify in good time the difficulties which might delay the launch of the European direct debit.

The rules of the new European direct debit and their integration in Belgian law will be followed and a consultation must be arranged. The way in which the direct debit will be implemented in Belgium and the possibility of setting a migration timetable, as was the case for the European credit transfer, will be examined in cooperation with banks and enterprises.

8.3 **The European payment card**

Given the factors that are still to be settled with respect to payment cards, namely the ongoing standardisation process, new initiatives for a European payment card and uncertainty regarding the multilateral interchange fees, no fundamental change is expected.

SEPA has also been launched in Belgium for payment cards but only at a technical level. Regarding business economics, there is no valid alternative so far and, therefore, in practice, no change has taken place in respect of payment cards.

**Actions:**
Developments relating to payment cards will be followed closely. Especially the development of the European alternative, PayFair, set to be operational in Belgium in the next few months and subsequently in the other Member States, will be followed with particular interest.

8.4 **Communication**

*In Belgium, no concerted national communication campaign has been organised for the introduction of European payment instruments.*

Given that no clear-cut strategy had previously existed, structured communication was brought to bear in a variety of ways. Communication was specifically geared to target groups, stressing a different aspect of the content as appropriate. One of the most important means of communication to date is the distribution of a flyer describing the new European credit transfer. The Federal Government has carried out the most important communication actions, including by means of this flyer, which has been distributed to all Belgian citizens. Subsequently, enterprises will also send this flyer when dispatching their invoices with which a European credit transfer form will be enclosed.

The banks have taken a number of communication measures depending on the type of customer. For the general public, they have decided that communication should take place individually, at the time when the customer decides to migrate.

As a means of communication intended for the general public, the SEPA payment instruments have been renamed into "European payment instruments".

**Actions:**
The best way of informing consumers of changes or uncertainties that may affect them is yet to be examined.
ANNEXES

Annex 1: The interbank SEPA migration plan 4.0

Annex 2: Press release of 27 June 2008, "The launch of SEPA by the federal authorities"

Annex 3: The European credit transfer flyer

Annex 4: The standardised stage-by-stage migration plan towards the European credit transfer

Annex 5: List of participants in the working groups (Enterprises – Public Administrations - Consumers - Banks)
Belgian Migration Plan
to the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA)

VERSION 4.0

October 2008

The SEPA concept in this document is the SEPA concept as defined by the European Payments Council (EPC) in its Charter. The definition of SEPA is part of the EPC Roadmap as approved by the December 2004 EPC Plenary:

“SEPA will be the area where citizens, companies and other economic actors will be able to make and receive payments in Euro, within Europe (currently defined as consisting of the 25 European Union ("EU") member states plus Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland), whether between or within national boundaries under the same basic conditions, rights and obligations, regardless of their location.”

The Belgian financial community is represented by FEBELFIN and supported by the National Bank of Belgium (NBB). The purpose of this document is to describe the Belgian banking community’s migration path towards the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA). Compared to the previous version 3.2 and due to a changing EPC Strategy some objectives and decisions formerly set up by the Belgian banking sector have been revised. After the successful launch of the SEPA Credit Transfer by the Belgian banks on January 28th, 2008, it became clear that formerly defined milestones, decisions and points of view need to be adapted. This has led to the publication of the Belgian migration plan version 4.0. The most important updates in the version 4.0 are:

- all formerly defined end dates related to legacy products have been abandoned, except for the end date related to the use of the non-SEPA Credit Transfer paper form. Instead of indicating fixed end dates related to all other legacy products, the banking community expects to have reached the migration of a critical mass of SEPA Credit Transfers as well as SEPA Direct Debits by the end of 2010. The evolution of the migration towards SEPA products will be monitored closely within the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means (please refer to page 5 for information about this Committee)
- update of the Belgian Direct Debit scheme (DOM80) to become PSD compliant
- the decision of the banking community not to operate the SEPA Direct Debit product on the local clearing system CEC from the start of the product on November 1st, 2009.

1 in the meantime, the number of EU member states has increased to 27.
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10. **Communication** .......................................................................... 31
The Belgian banking community decided to set up a specific governance framework for the conduct of the migration towards SEPA, which broadly mirrors the European set-up (see graph on page 6). At the highest level, the National Bank of Belgium Governor meets board members, responsible for the payments area at the commercial banks in the SEPA Forum. This is the highest level in the Belgian SEPA organisational structure and comparable to the Contact Group on Euro Payment Systems (COGEP) at the European level. It is presided over by the Governor of the NBB. The SEPA Forum is informed on the progress of the Belgian migration plan towards SEPA, and validates decisions as proposed by FEBELFIN's Payment Systems Committee (Paysys) and FEBELFIN's Board. Once these decisions have been approved, they are considered to be mandatory for the whole of the Belgian banking community.

The Payment Systems Committee (Paysys) is the highest consultative body, responsible for the definition of the policy and strategy for all issues related to payments for the Belgian banking community. This Committee already existed before the Belgian SEPA organizational structure was established, and deals not only with SEPA issues but with all other matters relating to the banks’ payments activities. Before Paysys’ proposals are discussed in the SEPA Forum, they are validated by the Board of FEBELFIN, the highest decision-making body for Belgian banks.

Proposals to be approved by Paysys are prepared by the Co-ordination Committee. All proposals made by the Working Groups are centralized and issued for approval by the Co-ordination Committee, which ensures their overall logic and conformity. In Belgium, this committee has a role comparable to that of the European Payments Council’s Co-ordination Committee namely, the co-ordination of the work of the different Working Groups, and it is responsible for the preparation of the Paysys Committee meetings.

The composition of the Co-ordination Committee is based on the chairmanship of the different Working Groups which were established to deliver the input for the elaboration of the migration plan. They are also the representatives of the Belgian banking sector in the different EPC Working Groups. This ensures coherence and direct communication from the European EPC level to the Belgian working structure.

Although the Belgian SEPA organizational structure was set up as a copy of the EPC structure, not all EPC bodies were copied in the Belgian context, either for efficiency reasons or because other procedures are being put in place. For example, the Belgian structure does not hold a Legal Supporting Group. Instead, the chairs of Working Groups rely on their own legal experts following the discussions as members of the specific Working Groups. On each issue considered by a legal expert, a second opinion is offered by a legal expert from another Belgian bank, and one from the NBB, when required.
Another difference with the European set-up is the addition of other Working Groups and Task Forces for specific issues, such as communication issues, the delivery of website information and the organization of the migration of the existing Belgian C2B and B2C standards to European ones.

As the SEPA design phase has come to an end by the publication of final versions of the Rule Books and the Implementation Guidelines the end-to-end implementation phase (for SEPA Direct Debit) and the full migration phase (for SEPA Credit Transfers) are the current steps in the process. This phase also includes actors outside the banking sector, and is therefore conducted in a broadly-based societal platform. The "Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means"\(^2\) was considered to be the most convenient platform to plan the implementation and monitor the SEPA process in Belgium. Installed in 2003, this Steering Committee, chaired by the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium, was mandated to promote the discussions between banks and all other stakeholders on the efficiency of payment means and instruments. A new Working Group was set up under this governance for the conduct and monitoring of the implementation of SEPA in Belgium. The work is currently being prepared by three separate subgroups composed on the basis of the type of stakeholder: corporates, public administrations and consumers. They are investigating all possible practical implementation actions and follow up on progress within their specific sectors. The deliverables and decisions presented in this interbank migration plan are communicated through the National Bank of Belgium, as SEPA Program Manager, to this broadly-based societal platform. A first progress report was published in December 2007\(^3\).

Linked to the above mentioned next step towards implementation and full migration, a Program Management Office (PMO) has been set up to safe-guard the process of implementation and migration. Specific tasks have been assigned to the PMO, such as setting up a global plan for all stakeholders, the elaboration of a risk analysis listing all dependencies for the SEPA implementation, definition and follow-up of testing strategies and watch over an efficient link between the interbank SEPA activities and those on the societal level with all stakeholders under the governance of the above mentioned Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means.

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\(^2\) The "Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means" was established in 2003 by the Minister for Economic Affairs and Consumer Protection and is chaired, at the request of the Minister of Finance, by the Governor of the Central Bank.

\(^3\) available on the SEPA section of [www.nbb.be](http://www.nbb.be)
1. INTRODUCTION

The Belgian banking community fully endorses the migration of Belgian payments processing towards SEPA.

All Belgian banks have been able to receive and process SEPA Credit Transfers from the launch date on. The large majority is also offering payment service users access to SEPA Credit Transfer on the sending side to be used both locally\(^4\) and within the SEPA area\(^5\) (“SEPA for the citizen”). In terms of volume of payment transactions, the Belgian banks having adhered to the SEPA Credit Transfer Scheme represent a much higher market share than the 80% which was initially fixed as the target critical mass rate. Only a few Belgian banks are still only capable of receiving SEPA transactions and will start sending SEPA transactions by the end of 2008.

The Direct Debit payment instrument will be supported as from November 1\(^{st}\), 2009. Both reachability (receiving side) and offering the Direct Debit instruments to creditors (sending side) will be guaranteed as from November 1\(^{st}\), 2009 (please refer to chapter 9. for more details on Direct Debits).

For Card payment instruments, the former decision to replace the Belgian Bancontact/MisterCash scheme by an international scheme on January 1\(^{st}\), 2008 has been reviewed.

Furthermore the Belgian banking community is planning to process and settle a vast majority of the payment messages resulting from the use of these SEPA payment instruments in a European infrastructure, without commitment of a fixed end date for legacy systems (“SEPA for Infrastructure”). The creation of a full level playing field in the SEPA area is a prerequisite for the Belgian banking sector in order to decide on end dates for legacy systems.

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4 “Local payments” meaning national payments between two Belgian accounts.

5 “Domestic payments” meaning payments between two accounts inside the SEPA area.
2. SCOPE

2.1. POSITIVE SCOPE

This migration plan covers the entire payment chain (end-to-end), including the three pan European payment instruments currently defined in the EPC Rulebooks and Framework:

- SEPA Credit Transfers,
- SEPA Direct Debits and
- SEPA Cards.

These three pan European payment instruments will gradually replace the existing Belgian instruments, taking into account a certain transitional period in which non-SEPA payment instruments will exist next to the newly introduced SEPA payment instruments. By the end of 2010 the majority of the Belgian Credit Transfers will be replaced by SEPA Credit Transfers.

While the EPC defines rules on the inter-bank level in its Rule Books and Implementation Guidelines, the scope of this Belgian migration plan is intended to be end-to-end, from ordering customer to receiving customer (for more details, please refer to chapter 7.).

All possible efforts are made in order to keep the transition for customers as smoothly and seamlessly as possible.

2.2. NEGATIVE SCOPE

Cheques and bills of exchange are not SEPA payment instruments and are therefore considered out of scope of SEPA and of this migration plan. Their use will be discouraged as much as possible.

Cheques and bills of exchange are legal instruments regulated by international conventions and therefore cannot be abolished by a Belgian decision. None of these instruments are planned to be physically modified in order to make them SEPA-compliant.
Concerning cheques, the Belgian banking community decided:
  o as a main objective, to investigate measures to discourage the use of cheques and explore alternatives to cheques;
  o as a secondary goal, to investigate alternatives for exchanging and settling the remaining volume of cheques;
  o to abolish the local payment instrument “invoice cheque” one year after the launch of the SDD payment instrument⁶;
  o up till the end of the use of the cheque, the residual, marginal volume of high value cheques will no longer be exchanged physically within the Manual Clearing House: all cheques will be settled under the principle of full truncation organised within the Automated Clearing House CEC.

Concerning bills of exchange, the Paysys committee decided to:
  o investigate measures to discourage the use of bills of exchange;
  o dismantle the local Centre for Bills of Exchange by September 22nd, 2011;
  o investigate an alternative settlement mechanism for bills of exchange with a due date later than September 22nd, 2011.
  o investigate alternatives for a central registration system for protested bills of exchange.

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⁶ This period has been set because a transitional period is necessary during which this local payment instrument will be turned into/migrated towards the one-off SEPA Direct Debit instrument.
2.3. SCOPE: SUMMARY

The following table shows the existing Belgian national payment instruments, their SEPA equivalents and some implementation issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belgian payment instrument</th>
<th>SEPA payment instruments</th>
<th>Implementation Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Belgian CT                 | SEPA CT                  | - Belgian structured remittance information reference  
|                            |                          | - SCT paper form release |
| Belgian standing order     | SEPA CT                  | identical to a basic CT |
| Belgian money order        | out of scope             |                         |
| Belgian DD DOM70/80        | SEPA DD                  | continuity and validity of existing DOM80 mandates has been confirmed by legal experts |
| Belgian Bancontact/MisterCash scheme for Cards | SEPA Cards Framework | Belgian scheme will be replaced by an international or any SEPA-compliant scheme |
| Cheques                    | out of scope of SEPA     | use will be discouraged |
| Invoice Cheques            | out of scope of SEPA     | will be abolished one year after launch of SEPA Direct Debit Scheme |
| Circular Cheques           | out of scope of SEPA     | use will be discouraged |
| Bills of Exchange          | out of scope of SEPA     | use will be discouraged - close down of Centre for Bills of Exchange by September 22nd, 2011 |
3. EXTERNAL FACTORS

Examination of the road to SEPA reveals a number of uncertainties and external factors, both at the European level and at the Belgian level.

3.1. ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

The European legislation on payment services (in full the Directive 2007/64/EC\(^7\) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2007 on payment services in the internal market amending Directives 97/7/EC, 2002/65/EC, 2005/60/EC and 2006/48/EC and repealing Directive 97/5/EC) leaves room for national interpretation (“goldplating”), which can lead to different national laws and disruption of the necessary level playing field. One of the examples risking to hinder the creation of a true level playing field is the uncertainty about a SEPA-wide unique definition of a “micro-enterprise” (an important topic in the Business-to-Business Direct Debit scheme).

The EPC has not yet had the chance to prove its self-regulating power. If the EPC’s ability to regulate itself is inadequate, this would endanger the efficient and swift implementation of SEPA. For example, if EPC would not succeed in convincing all Belgian banks to adhere to the schemes, national Belgian payments would only be partially converted into SEPA payments. Even more, all European banks should subscribe to the adherence agreements of the EPC schemes in order to have a fully reachable, interconnected banking system for SEPA payments.

The European Commission pointed out only recently that the set up of an interchange fee agreement within the SEPA products could be acceptable under certain conditions. The point of view of the Commission needs however further clarification and analysis.

3.2. ON THE BELGIAN LEVEL

One of the most important external factors concerns the timing of the transposition into national law of the PSD. Although the European Commission has stated on several occasions that the transposition in the different countries is well on track, it remains a topic creating uncertainty. Next to the timing of the transposition in all countries, the content of the transposition text set up by the Belgian legislator is of utmost importance for the start and implementation of the SEPA Direct Debit. This transposition text is however not yet available for consultation.

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\(^7\) Commonly known as the Payment Services Directive or PSD
limited impact on EPC decisions

acceptance by all stakeholders:
- creditors
- debtor banks

Belgian banks do not have control over the external factors at European level, as they have only moderate influence on the decision-making process within the EPC. Furthermore, at the Belgian level, individual commercial strategies exist which can be subject to internationally oriented banking group strategies.

The support of all stakeholders is of utmost importance. Within the different working groups of the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means, the platform for the societal debate on SEPA, it has become clear that most creditor parties have not yet finished the evaluation of the business model for SEPA Direct Debit. By the end of 2008, information on customer-to-bank standards and electronic mandates will be made available to creditors.

Furthermore, reachability within the SDD Business-to-Business scheme (which would provide the market with an answer to the refund topic) is far from certain, as the scheme is not mandatory for debtor banks. The B2B scheme will be reserved for "non-consumers", but a clear definition of "non-consumer" is still to be defined (and is pending on the Belgian PSD transposition text).

Despite these external factors, the Belgian banking community has successfully and unanimously reached a number of formal decisions on the scope, the time lines, the non-SEPA payment instruments, infrastructure and communication. These decisions are listed in the following chapters.
4. MIGRATION WINDOWS

Different migration windows exist:

the migration of the Belgian Credit Transfers started on January 28th, 2008 and will be a market-driven process\(^8\) in which it is up to corporates and consumers to progressively make use of the SEPA Credit Transfer in replacement of the current Belgian Credit Transfer.

Chapter 8 contains a detailed description of the SCT migration process.

Concerning SEPA Direct Debits, the Belgian banking community is planning the launch date of the SDD product on November 1st, 2009. The banking community is working on a migration planning in the framework of the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means, together with all relevant stakeholders.

Chapter 9 contains more information on SEPA Direct Debit migration.

Concerning Debit Cards, the Belgian banks offer a SEPA-compliant product as of January 1st, 2008. Acceptance in the market will be a crucial issue and the final fade-out is still uncertain.

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\(^8\) The Belgian banking community is planning to migrate a vast majority of the Credit Transfers, without a full commitment to have achieved a 100 % migration by December 31st 2010, as the full migration depends on the acceptance of SEPA by the market.
The lower part of the graph above contains a second timeline on which the planned close down window for the Belgian retail payment system CEC is plotted. The exact momentum of close down will be situated within the close down window indicated in red. Please refer to chapter 5 for more details on the Belgian infrastructure.

The migration windows of the different instruments in the upper part of the graph are further detailed in chapters 6, 8 and 9.
5. ACH INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1. THE BELGIAN ACH (CENTRE FOR EXCHANGE AND CLEARING - CEC) WILL NOT BE POSITIONED AS A PE-ACH.

One of the basic decisions of the Belgian banking community is not to invest in the current Belgian ACH in order to become PE-ACH-compliant. Belgian banks want to avoid parallel investments in retail payment systems in several SEPA countries. The processing of payment messages to or from a Belgian bank will consequently have to be transferred to a PE-ACH.

All Belgian banks having adhered to the EPC Credit Transfer Scheme are connected directly or indirectly to a PE-ACH. Other potential PE-ACH-providers have been contacted in order to prepare for the consequences of the future migration of the local payment volume. The assessment is still ongoing. These contacts are based upon an inter-bank agreed scheme of functional needs and specific requests for prices, access rights and governance rules. The Co-ordination Committee collects and evaluates all information received through this PE-ACH Assessment Scheme, thus comparing the functional, financial and other needs of the Belgian banking community with the offerings of the various potential PE-ACH providers.

5.2. CEC TEMPORARILY SEPA COMPLIANT FOR LOCAL PAYMENTS

The fall-back scenario covers the SEPA Credit Transfer instrument on the condition that both customer accounts are located in Belgium. The CEC processes the Belgian SEPA Credit Transfers as described in the appropriate EPC Credit Transfers Rule Books and Implementation Guidelines, in the UNIFI ISO 20022 XML format. SEPA formatted payments are processed in parallel with the CEC local non-XML formats. By implementing this fall-back scenario, Belgian banks have been ensured of the technical ability to exchange local Belgian Credit Transfer payments in SEPA format, up till the moment Belgian banks will move the Belgian SEPA payment traffic to a European-wide platform.

As a general principle, SEPA-compliance means the ability of the ACH to process, separately and in parallel with the existing local payments traffic, SEPA payment instruments. The new parallel circuit has been designed in such a way to anticipate as much as possible to the expected technical and business requirements of future PE-ACH providers.

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9 PE-ACH-compliance would mean: SEPA-compliance + accessibility/reachability throughout the SEPA area.
SEPA-compliance would mean: being able to process pan-European payment instruments.

A full definition of the PE-ACH concept has been developed in the EPC document “Framework for the evolution of the Clearing and Settlement of Payments in SEPA”.

10 EBA STEP2 is de facto the only operational retail payment system which can be considered to be a PE-ACH because of its European wide reach.
Any change on the CEC should be made in accordance with the following principles:

1) changes serve the whole Belgian banking community;
2) changes facilitate a seamless migration to a PE-ACH;
3) investments are made within a market reality, and the payback is situated within the migration window towards a PE-ACH provider.

Participating banks in the CEC are not obliged to process their local SEPA payments through the CEC: Belgian banks are free to exchange local Belgian SEPA transactions amongst each other through a PE-ACH.

5.3. MOVE TO THE SAME PE-ACH IN A FIRST STAGE

Certain criteria have to be fulfilled before the Belgian local payments volume can be migrated, e.g. a critical mass at the level of the PE-ACH must have been reached and a favourable pricing structure and service level is needed. Another important issue is the governance structure within the candidate PE-ACH. The detailed PE-ACH Assessment Scheme lists these criteria.

In case the Belgian banking community should not dispose of a favourable PE-ACH offer to cover the above mentioned issues by end 2010, it is preferable to extend the fall-back scenario beyond September 22nd, 2011.

Although Belgian banks are free to switch to a PE-ACH of their preference, it is recommended that they migrate, at an early stage, to the same PE-ACH unless interoperability between PE-ACHs is guaranteed. One of the main issues which is still unclear is how messaging and liquidity flows will be managed between SEPA compliant interoperable infrastructures in scenarios in which Belgian banks migrate to different infrastructures. In order to stay informed on this crucial topic, the Belgian banking community, through its CEC ACH infrastructure, decided to become member of the European Automated Clearing House Association (EACHA). This European non-for-profit organisation of ACH's has developed a model for interoperability and settlement procedures for SEPA compliant PE-ACHs.
5.4. GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT ON CEC

The Belgian banking community agrees on the principle of having an exit agreement in a scenario whereby the CEC will gradually be dismantled. A gentlemen’s agreement will compensate the higher costs for remaining CEC members in case other CEC members would leave the system. At the launch of SEPA on January 28th, 2008, the four major banks expressed their support for a Gentlemen's Agreement. The Gentlemen's Agreement document has been approved by the FEBELFIN Board and is applicable up till the end of 2010.

5.5. OTHER FUTURE INVESTMENTS

Any other investment that may be needed for the CEC as a result of specific circumstances (settlement on TARGET2 for example) will be evaluated, on an ad hoc basis, by the Paysys Committee.

5.6. CLOSE DOWN OF THE CEC

Taking note of

- the possibility that not the full 100% of all Credit Transfers and Direct Debits in Belgian format may have migrated by the end of 2010
- and more specifically the close down of the Center for Bills of Exchange on September 22nd, 2011

the banking sector has decided to maintain the CEC for local purposes at least until September 22nd, 2011. The banking community remains committed to migrate all SEPA payments to a European platform and continues the analysis of the migration process. The timing of the migration of the legacy systems will define the end date of the CEC.
6. CARDS INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1. IMPLEMENTATION OF EMV IN BELGIUM

Belgian banks started the migration of the magnetic stripe based credit cards to EMV compliant smart cards in the course of 2001. The migration of debit and credit cards towards chip-based EMV cards was fully achieved in the course of 2004. By midst 2008, 95% of the POS terminals and 68% of all ATM terminals have been upgraded to an EMV-ready status.

6.2. MIGRATION TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SCHEME

Belgian banks deem it economically not feasible to turn the Belgian Bancontact/MisterCash card scheme into a generally accepted card payment scheme on the European market. Consequently, the Belgian banks have decided to migrate, together, towards an international card scheme, convinced that such a move offers the best solution to all stakeholders. Hence, Belgium has opted to migrate its local Bancontact/MisterCash scheme into an international or any SEPA-compliant scheme, a solution which is already common practice in other European countries.

Within the SEPA area it is likely that only international/high volume brands will be processed. As a result, Banksys/BCC\(^{11}\) needed to enter into partnership. The take-over of Banksys/BCC by Atos Origin took place at the end of 2006, with the approval of the European Competition Authorities. This move gives Banksys/BCC a sound, strategic starting position in the SEPA environment. On 1st of June 2007, Banksys/BCC changed its name into Atos Worldline NV.

The initial plan was to let the switch from the Bancontact/MisterCash scheme to an international scheme coincide with the start of SEPA on January 1st, 2008. However, the introduction of a new payment scheme requires full acceptance from all stakeholders. Inspite of the major efforts made by the Belgian banks, the unstable European context has resulted in a lack of sufficient support for the project. It has been decided to maintain the Bancontact/MisterCash scheme after January 1st, 2008 for an indefinite time.

The decision not to convert the Bancontact/MisterCash scheme into a SEPA compliant scheme, and to switch to an international scheme, remains unchanged. The banks welcome any initiative which can lead to enhanced competition, in the interest of all.

\(^{11}\) BCC: Bank Card Company
In the meantime, Europay has allowed Belgian banks to offer Belgian cardholders with the Maestro application on their cards, the use of the Maestro payment scheme for national Belgian card payments as of January 1st, 2008.

Any issuing bank will become SEPA compliant by offering this scheme, while being free to offer other schemes to the cardholders among its customers. The acceptance of international schemes on Belgian payment terminals is a concern for the various acquirers and merchants.

As mentioned before, the critical success factor is the acceptance by all different stakeholders. The Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means, presided by the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium, has been asked to foster the debate between the main stakeholders.

6.3. CLEARING CARD TRANSACTIONS

A study executed by the Belgian banks and Atos in the first half of 2008, revealed that it is impossible at this moment to take a decision on the clearing of the card transactions in the future. Several options are still open. A formal decision can only be expected by midst 2009, after which an implementation period of two years is expected.

In the current way of settling Card payments, the card processor ATOS Worldline credits the beneficiary party and debits the payer by sending two separate payment instructions through the CEC. The crediting is incorporated in a Belgian Credit Transfer message, the debiting is incorporated in a Belgian Debit Transfer message (similar to a virtual cheque). The graph above contains information on both legs of a Card payment.
7. STANDARDS AND INTERFACES

To support the SEPA payment instruments, there is a need for pan-European payment channels within the banks to process both local and SEPA-domestic payments.

Not only the interbank part of a payment has been examined, but the whole payment chain starting from the initiation of a payment up to its reception by the customer has been included. All existing standards have been adapted in the three spaces: customer-to-bank (C2B), bank-to-bank (B2B) and bank-to-customer (B2C).

The large majority of banks are offering at least one C2B channel for the initiation of SEPA payment instruments and are free to adapt any following customer interface(s): the popular C2B-channel for professionals called ISABEL\(^{12}\), the proprietary professional e-banking tools, the amongst non professional customers widely used web-banking channel, the self-banking channel, the SEPA Credit Transfer paper form, etc.

7.1. BANK-TO-BANK: USE OF SEPA SUBSET OF ISO20022 STANDARD

Belgian banks support the use of the ISO20022 standard and the subset for SEPA as presented in the Implementation Guidelines of the EPC.

The Belgian banking community has decided to limit the set of XML elements in the B2B space to the "yellow shaded" data elements as published in the EPC Implementation Guidelines. In the case banks want to develop specific Additional Optional Services (AOS) or want to define specific usage rules, this will be organised by making agreements on the usage of the "yellow shaded" elements, without conflicting the rules of the Implementation Guidelines. Use of optional elements (shaded white in the IG) could hinder a smooth migration to a PE-ACH and could lead to specific national interpretation of a SEPA payment creating a "lock-in" effect, endangering an easy switch to a PE-ACH.

The Belgian banking community supports the mandatory use of IBAN+BIC in the interbank space, as required in the EPC Rule Books. Banks are however not obliged to request the BIC from the ordering customer, and many banks are offering the service of adding the BIC to the payment initiation in case the ordering customer does not provide the BIC in the payment initiation data set. As a principle this service is set up for payments in which the IBAN of the counterparty starts with "BE", but can also be offered for payments with IBANs starting with other country codes.

As a support tool for entities wanting to convert files of Belgian BBANs into IBANs, FEBELFIN has published a counterparty tool on the website www.sepabelgium.be

\(^{12}\) ISABEL is an integrated solution enabling banks’ business customers to carry out all banking transactions in a secure way via a single interface. It also allows them to sign contracts, send and receive invoices and submit documents to government administrations.
7.2. CUSTOMER-TO-BANK & BANK-TO-CUSTOMER E-STANDARDS

7.2.1. C2B

The C2B standard is based on the B2B ISO20022 XML standard and SEPA Implementation Guidelines. Belgian standard Implementation Guidelines version 1.2b. have been published\textsuperscript{13} for SEPA and non-SEPA Credit Transfers and have become operational as from January 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2008.

By the end of 2008 the new version of the Belgian standard Implementation Guidelines for SEPA Direct Debits will be published and will become operational as from the launch of the SEPA Direct Debit instrument in Belgium.

The new version of the "Belgian" Implementation Guidelines for Credit Transfers (version 1.3) will have converged completely with the initiative of the EPC in the C2B space in order to avoid having to deal with a different Belgian standard next to the EPC C2B standard. This version will be effective as from February 1st, 2009.

7.2.2. B2C

The Belgian bank account statement standard (CODA) has been turned SEPA compliant (the up-to-date SEPA version is called version 2.2).

CODA v1.0 is no longer the official standard since January 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2008. CODA V 2.2 will be the official standard as from March, 2009.

The Belgian standard Implementation Guidelines will be published for the ISO20022 XML standard for Statements by midst 2009.

\textsuperscript{13} www.sepabelgium.be/
## 8. CREDIT TRANSFERS

The graph above shows two different C2B Credit Transfer initiation channels. For the Credit Transfer paper form, widely used in Belgium as an "advice to pay" attached to an invoice or a bill (see also 8.3.), two important end dates have been fixed:

- **end of 2009**: stop issuing by banks of Belgian non-SEPA paper form
- **end of 2010**: creditors should stop issuing the Belgian non-SEPA paper form, allowing the banks to stop accepting and processing this legacy product; from January 1st, 2011 only SEPA CT paper forms are to be used.

The electronic C2B Credit Transfer channel, chosen by the ordering customer when transforming the above mentioned paper form into an electronic payment instruction (PC banking, selfbanking, ...), will most likely have reached a near full migration by the end of 2010, but mindful of the first possible end date of the CEC (being September 22nd, 2011) it is to be expected that the migration towards the electronic SEPA Credit Transfer will only be finalised in the course of 2011. After the full migration, it is to be expected that the Belgian traffic will be migrated towards a European platform.
8.1. REACHABILITY AND INITIATION

In line with the EPC’s recommendations, all Belgian banks having signed the EPC Adherence Agreements are reachable through the connection with a PE-ACH\(^{14}\) from January 28\(^{th}\), 2008 onwards. Next to this PE-ACH connection, most Belgian banks are reachable for Belgian SEPA Credit Transfer transactions via the Belgian retail payment system CEC.

Furthermore, by January 28\(^{th}\) almost all customers have access to the initiation of SEPA CT through at least one customer-to-bank channel. Only a few Belgian banks do not support the sending capacity from the start on January 28\(^{th}\), 2008, but these banks will comply by the end of 2008 at the latest.

8.2. BBAN - IBAN CONVERSION

Belgian banks are granted the ability to convert the internally stored BBAN numbers of accounts not belonging to their own clients into an IBAN format. This mandate leads to a smooth and possibly quick migration of registered standing orders into SEPA format. To keep control over this process, this conversion practice is limited to the migration period and some other conditions are introduced, such as mandatory check on correct BBAN before conversion. Customers are allowed to convert BBAN to IBAN for files or bulks, and banks are not expected to convert BBAN to IBAN on-the-fly for individual payment instructions.

FEBELFIN has published on its website\(^{15}\) a full set of recommendations which assists other stakeholders (like corporates) to come to a swift and faultless conversion of a BBAN into an IBAN. A free-of-charge conversion tool aiming at assisting corporates in transforming files of Belgian BBAN to IBAN-BIC is published on this website. It is to be expected that each bank will offer a comparable service in its proprietary e-banking tools.

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\(^{14}\) EBA STEP2 is the only PE-ACH available at the moment of publication.

\(^{15}\) www.sepabelgium.be
8.3. SEPA CREDIT TRANSFER PAPER FORM

A SEPA Credit Transfer paper form has been developed.

On top of the general idea of offering to the customer at least one channel for the initiation of SEPA payments from the beginning of 2008, the Belgian banks have launched a SEPA Credit Transfer paper form.

The Belgian payment market recognises the need for a SEPA Credit Transfer paper form as corporates and public sector entities have the habit of sending a Credit Transfer form attached to the bill or invoice to the customers, as an “advice to pay”.

The SEPA Credit Transfer paper forms are published in several combinations of languages on the websites of FEBELFIN\(^\text{16}\) and the National Bank of Belgium\(^\text{16}\). Belgian customers are able to use Credit Transfer paper forms in Dutch, French, German and English. The lay-out and personalisation-printing guidelines of the Credit Transfer paper form have been published since January 2007.

The banking community is recommended to adapt the web-banking and self-banking screens in line with the new SEPA Credit Transfer paper form.

\(^\text{16}\) www.nbb.be => Other products and services => Protocols secretariat => Transfers
In practice, a SEPA Credit Transfer paper form is initiated on the initiative of a creditor who sends the paper form, often attached to an invoice, to its customers. This initiative has a tangible impact on all Belgian banks, as the payers/customers are de facto invited by the presence of the SEPA Credit Transfer paper form (with IBAN and BIC) to initiate a SEPA Credit Transfer. The payer/customer may remit the paper form over the counter to his bank, or may initiate an electronic payment instruction through a self-banking or PC-banking channel. The bank servicing the payer/customer is therefore being confronted and impacted soon after the first use of the Credit Transfer paper form by one or more creditors.

For the specific reason that creditors, be it corporates or government administrations, are in the driving seat, the Belgian banking sector decided to ask the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means to chart the expected payment flows (which in large part are driven by a limited number of "big billers"). It has carefully considered all operational issues inherent in the migration of credit transfers, and subsequently it has set up an appropriate plan for a successful and gradual migration of these flows. It is of utmost importance that the SEPA Credit Transfer paper form is rolled out in a manageable way. The overall idea communicated in the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means is to stabilize normal payment activities during the first months after the start of the SEPA Credit Transfer, by monitoring all migration initiatives in the Steering Committee. The soft roll-out has turned out to be a success: in September 2008 the Belgian CEC exchanged approximately 1% of all Credit Transfer in SEPA format, a volume allowing each bank to get familiarized with the SEPA CT without being loaded up with an unmanageable volume of SEPA CT payments.

The federal authorities plan to start issuing the paper credit transfer form to the public in the last quarter of 2008. Public authorities will in particular issue invoices (advice to pay) with the new European credit transfer form attached. From April 2008 on, public authorities have launched a vaste communication effort by providing all income tax payers a flyer explaining IBAN and BIC on the one hand and the use of the SEPA Credit Transfer paper form on the other hand. The flyer was published on 7 million copies. From September 2008 on and gradually, liable tax payers will receive the new SEPA Credit Transfer paper form as an advice to pay.

During the societal concertation parties agreed that the SEPA momentum would benefit from an approach by public authorities that is consistent at all levels. Hence, all public authorities are being asked to switch to the European Credit Transfer form during the fourth quarter of 2008, or shortly after.
The societal concertation also showed it would be advisable for those corporates that issue large quantities of paper credit transfer forms towards the broad public (big billers) to explore migration scenarios that align with the migration plans of the public authorities. This would facilitate a smooth migration in an organised and co-ordinated manner and according to a well-known and published migration calendar. A jointly planned communication strategy would benefit from such a procedure and is under investigation. Consequently, the big billers are asked to start to shift from the Belgian to the SEPA paper Credit Transfer forms together with the public authorities, or shortly after. By end 2009 they should no longer use the old paper credit transfer form at all.

In order to limit the co-existence of two Credit Transfer paper forms, the Belgian banking sector has decided to stop issuing the non-SEPA paper form by the end of 2009. Creditors should stop issuing the non-SEPA paper form by the end of 2010.

8.4. STRUCTURED REMITTANCE INFORMATION: BELGIAN STANDARD

Belgian creditors already dispose of a Belgian structured remittance information agreement. As there was a strong request from Belgian corporates, it is possible to continue the use of the current Belgian structured remittance information inside the SEPA message format.

An ISO standard for a SEPA-wide structured remittance information will be published by the end of this year. The EPC has published guidelines for migration from a national structured remittance information standard towards the RF standard. The Belgian banking sector is currently analysing how both standards can temporarily co-exist and how the switch to the RF standard will be organised.
9. DIRECT DEBITS

9.1. LAUNCH DATE OF SEPA DD PAYMENT INSTRUMENT

The successful introduction of the SEPA Direct Debit payment instrument requires further review of a number of operational challenges as well as market acceptance. The challenges and external factors are described under chapter 3, and are also the main agenda points for the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means.

By mid-2008, the assessment of the Belgian banking community concerning the launch of the Direct Debit payment instrument put in evidence the following issues:

1. the adoption period of the Payment Service Directive (PSD) by EU Parliament/Council has been set by means of a specific deadline: November 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2009; a real level playing field in all euro countries without specific national interpretation should be the consequence;

2. Belgian banks have decided to update the legacy direct debit product (DOM 80\textsuperscript{17}) to become PSD compliant;

3. the transition period from the national direct debit product to the SDD is being discussed inside the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means, with all relevant stakeholders. It is desirable for all parties to limit the co-existence of a local scheme next to a SEPA scheme, and therefore the migration period towards SDD should be limited to 3 years;

4. uncertainty about the acceptance and the readiness of all stakeholders (corporates and consumers in Belgium, banks abroad);

5. SDD Collections will not be exchanged via the CEC but via a PE-ACH.

\textsuperscript{17} The Belgian scheme for Direct Debits Collections is called DOM80, and is comparable to a DMF scheme in which the debtor bank stores the mandates.
reachability as debtor bank

replacing DOM80

continuity of validity of mandates

Information on existing Belgian direct debit mandates will be sent from debtor bank to creditor through a central databank...

Therefore, it has been decided that all Belgian banks will be reachable, from November 1st, 2009 onwards, as debtor bank for Core SEPA Direct Debit transactions, meaning that they should be capable of receiving and processing Core SEPA Direct Debit transactions in XML format. Belgian banks are aware of the fact that full SEPA reachability will only be achieved at the moment that all SEPA countries will have adopted and implemented the DD scheme.

On the sending side within the Core scheme, each creditor will dispose of a migration period (to be fixed in co-operation with all stakeholders) to replace the existing DOM80 Collections by SEPA DD Collections. At the end of the migration period, Belgian banks will process exclusively Collections in SEPA format.

9.2. MIGRATION OF EXISTING MANDATE INFORMATION

The continuity and the validity of the Belgian mandates under the SDD scheme has been confirmed and supported by legal experts.

The data of all currently existing Belgian DOM80-mandates (e.g. mandate reference number, client reference, creditor’s identity, debtor’s identity, debtor’s bank account number) residing at present at the debtor’s bank, will be migrated through the creditors’ bank to the creditor. This migration is needed as the Belgian mandate handling deviates from the SEPA DD scheme, in which all mandates are to be stored by the creditor. Currently, the Belgian debtor banks manage and archive their clients’ direct debit mandates. The migration of these paper form mandates would be very costly and, due to practical and commercial considerations, unfeasible taking into account the number of existing mandates.18 Therefore, debtor banks will remain responsible for the manual mandate archivation as laid down by Belgian law, and only mandate related data will be transmitted from debtor banks to creditors. Creditors migrating from the existing national direct debit scheme to the SEPA DD will be requested to inform the debtor about the migration.

18 The volume of current Belgian mandates is estimated at about 30 million paper forms.
The National Bank of Belgium will provide technical support for the set up of the centralised database and will provide the Belgian banking sector with a fully operational database by November 2009 for the migration of mandate related information from the debtors' banks to the creditors' banks. After a testing period, the centralised database will be available from June 10th, 2009 onwards for uploading the data of the existing mandates (enriched with IBAN and BIC) by the debtor banks. From June 11th or at the latest from November 11th 2009 onwards (it is expected that the building up of the database with all relevant mandate data could take more than one monthly upload), creditor banks can start downloading all mandate data upon request by a creditor. By November 11th, 2009 Belgian creditors will thus be able to access all necessary data so that current Belgian Direct Debits will be ready to be migrated, on the initiative of the creditor, to the SEPA standard.

As sending and receiving of the mandate information will take place through the current CEC Gateway\textsuperscript{19}, all direct participants\textsuperscript{20} of the CEC will be requested to send and receive the necessary information of the indirect participants.

All existing Belgian mandates will be considered, after migration, as SEPA Core mandates.

### 9.3. USAGE RULE TO ENABLE FULL MIGRATION OF EXISTING MANDATES

When launching the first collection the creditor will be obliged to add the Belgian mandate identification number ("domiciliæringsnummer-numéro de domiciliation") and the creditor identification number in the reference of the first DD collection, to allow the debtor bank to use this information to trace the paper mandate by joining this "old" information to the newly created Mandate Related Information (MRI) in the first Collection. This Belgian interbank agreement is the one and only Belgian usage rule to be applied for Direct Debits.

### 9.4. OUTPHASING OF BELGIAN DD SCHEME

Local Belgian direct debit (DOM80) Collections will not be IBAN compliant. For the migration period there will be co-existence of both instruments (Belgian DOM80 next to SEPA DD). By the end of the migration period, the Belgian Direct Debit instrument DOM80 should have disappeared.

\textsuperscript{19} A front computer of the CEC central IT-platform.
\textsuperscript{20} A full description of the procedure is available on the CEC website \url{www.paymentsystems.be}
9.5. BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS

The B2B-scheme is an optional variant of the existing Direct Debit core scheme and can be used between corporates and non-consumers. The main features of the B2B-scheme are:
- shorter timeframe
- no Refund
- explicit mandate checking by the Debtor Bank

Regarding the launch of the SEPA Business-to-Business DD scheme, which is optional for Debtor banks as for Creditor banks, the four major Belgian banks committed themselves to offer creditors the possibility of sending Collections using the B2B scheme. The other Belgian banks will be invited to become reachable for B2B Collections.

A Business-to-Business Mandate will always be a newly signed specific SEPA mandate. No existing Belgian mandate will be migrated towards the B2B Scheme.

9.6. EXISTING CENTRALISED DATABASE ON CREDITOR IDENTIFIERS

The Belgian banking sector currently uses a centralised database on unique creditor information data, which is serviced by the central bank and serves mainly security measures. This database allows banks to check the authenticity of creditors, client at another bank, which will send Direct Debit Collections to their own clients. As this database contains information mainly on Belgian creditors, the Belgian banking sector decided not to continue the support of the central database on creditor information, meaning that this database will be deactivated at the end of the migration period towards SEPA DD.

After the close down of the Belgian database on creditor information Belgian banks have agreed to licence creditor identifier data on their own initiative, but in respect to specific agreements. These agreements comprise a standardised way of creating new creditor identification data containing the three-digit identification code of the bank.

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21 The database on creditor information contains data on 15,000 creditors.
10. COMMUNICATION

A Communication Working Group has been set up to develop the communication strategy. The first communication work stream focused on the communication within the Belgian banking community. Workshops are organised on a regular basis, to which all Belgian banks are invited. The workshops aim at distributing detailed information on implementation issues, planning and deadlines of the SEPA project to be respected by all Belgian banks. The main permanent tool for distributing information among the banking sector is the extranet organised by FEBELFIN. This site for interbank information collects specific SEPA information for Belgian implementation, such as the C2B and B2C and other specific Belgian standards and agreements, and functions as a distribution channel for all relevant EPC documentation.

A second work stream is the general communication organised by FEBELFIN and targeted to the public at large, meaning all the banks’ clients. To this end FEBELFIN created and maintains the general SEPA information site (www.sepabelgium.be). This site explains SEPA, its benefits for all stakeholders, and explains the new European payment instruments. It also addresses the non-SEPA payment instruments and contains some of the new, general standards and a FAQ. So far, both a general brochure on SEPA as well as a very practical leaflet on the new paper credit transfer form are available to end consumers. As far as SEPA Direct Debit is concerned, the banks will also issue a more technical brochure targeted at billers.

The banking community has opted for a specific translation of the SEPA payment instruments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPC</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEPA Credit Transfer</td>
<td>le virement</td>
<td>de Europese</td>
<td>die europäische</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>européen</td>
<td>overschrijving</td>
<td>Überweisung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPA Direct Debit</td>
<td>la domiciliation</td>
<td>de Europese</td>
<td>die europäische</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>européenne</td>
<td>domiciliëring</td>
<td>Lastschrift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In parallel with the shared communication on the inter-bank level, banks, are communicating individually about SEPA. Furthermore, other stakeholders have their own SEPA items posted on their websites, such as the National Bank of Belgium, the Flemish Community, etc. These websites contain SEPA information, each for its own goal and proper governance. Also, the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means represents a communication channel by which SEPA-related information will be distributed.
An important momentum in the communication set up of the Steering Committee on the Future of Payment Means has been the launch by the tax income authorities of a nation-wide communication on IBAN and BIC on the one hand and on the new SEPA Credit Transfer paper form on the other hand. Gradually, from September 2008 onwards, all liable tax payers will receive the SEPA CT paper form as an advice to pay. The public authorities in general will migrate to the SEPA CT paper form gradually from the beginning of 2009 and will stop using the "old" Belgian paper form by the end of 2009.

Finally, different events organised by the financial sector have been dedicated to SEPA on which occasion SEPA issues were communicated to large audiences.
Les autorités fédérales lancent le SEPA

Le 1er janvier 2009 les services publics fédéraux utilisertont les nouveaux formulaires de virement européen, codes bancaires et numéros de compte pour toutes les transactions financières avec les citoyens et les entreprises.

Sur proposition de MM. Yves Leterme, Premier ministre, Didier Reynders, ministre des Finances, Vincent Van Quickenborne, ministre pour l'Entreprise et la Simplification, et Melchior Wathelet, secrétaire d'Etat au Budget, le Conseil des ministres a marqué son accord sur l'introduction progressive des nouveaux formulaires de virement européen au niveau des services publics. Ainsi, au 1er janvier 2009, les services publics n'utiliseront plus que le nouveau standard SEPA.

A partir de 2011, nous pourrons payer de la même manière dans tous les pays du SEPA au moyen de virements, domiciliations et cartes bancaires. En effet, il n'y aura plus qu'un seul standard pour tous les paiements scripturaux en Belgique et dans les pays participants. Ce standard porte le nom de SEPA, Single Euro Payments Area, ou espace unique de paiement en euros (*). Le nouveau formulaire de virement est déjà utilisé depuis le 28 janvier 2008.

Les autorités fédérales ont décidé que leurs services appliqueraient déjà les nouveaux formulaires de virement européen dès le 1er janvier 2009. Les autorités belges font ainsi office de pionniers au sein de l'Union européenne. Pour le contribuable, la première modification concrète sera déjà visible à partir de septembre 2008 sur l'avertissement-extrait de rôle.

Le SEPA, cela signifie quoi en pratique ?

*Un nouveau numéro de compte et l'utilisation du code BIC*

- Désormais, vous mentionnerez le code IBAN, l'International Bank Account Number, comme identifiant de votre compte. Ce code est constitué de quatre fois quatre caractères. Ainsi, le compte 539-0075470-34 deviendra BE68 5390 0754 7034.
- Vous devrez également utiliser le code BIC pour les virements. Le Bank Identifier Code ou BIC identifie la banque. Chaque banque en Europe dispose donc de son propre code, comme par exemple BANKBEBB.
- Le code BIC figure déjà sur vos extraits de compte ou sur les factures du bénéficiaire.

*Un nouveau formulaire de virement*
• Pour les virements européens, le nouveau formulaire de virement est utilisé depuis le 28 janvier 2008.
• Pour les virements belges, le nouveau formulaire sera introduit de manière progressive pendant une période de transition jusqu'au 1er janvier 2011. Jusqu'à cette date, le formulaire belge actuel coexistera avec le nouveau formulaire. Après cette date, seul le formulaire européen subsistera pour tous les virements. Des nouvelles règles seront également d'application :
  • les banques européennes ne pourront pas prélever de commission sur le montant,
  • l'exécution du paiement ne pourra pas excéder trois jours. Ce délai passera à un jour à partir de 2012.

Ce qui change au niveau du formulaire de virement

• Le nouveau formulaire de virement est rose et rouge.
• Le volet client est supprimé.
• La date d'exécution souhaitée remplace la date mémo.
• Vous devez mentionner votre code IBAN et le code BIC du bénéficiaire.
• Vous devez mentionner le nom du bénéficiaire.
• La date de signature du formulaire est supprimée.
• Les données du bénéficiaire figurent sous celles du donneur d'ordre.

En annexe, vous trouverez une brochure reprenant un exemple du nouveau formulaire.

Domiciliations dans toute la zone SEPA

A l'heure actuelle, vous ne pouvez exécuter des domiciliations qu'en faveur des créanciers en Belgique. A partir du 1er novembre 2009, cela sera possible pour les créanciers établis dans toute la zone SEPA. Cela signifie qu'avec une domiciliation vous pourrez, par exemple, payer la facture d'électricité de votre maison de vacances à l'étranger. La nouvelle domiciliation européenne va également de pair avec de nouvelles règles. Ainsi, vous obtiendrez toutes les informations sur le paiement du créancier quinze jours avant que l'argent ne soit prélevé de votre compte. Vous avez jusqu'à huit semaines après l'encaissement pour le contester (s'il ne s'agit pas d'un montant fixe périodique). Deux nouvelles domiciliations voient également le jour : la domiciliation unique et la domiciliation entre entreprises (business-to-business).

Cartes bancaires

Pour 2011, toutes les cartes bancaires au sein de la zone SEPA seront uniformisées. En d'autres termes, vous pourrez utiliser votre carte bancaire dans la zone SEPA, comme vous le faites maintenant en Belgique.
Les autorités fédérales introduisent ces nouveaux moyens de paiement de manière progressive

A partir de septembre 2008, vous recevrez votre avertissement-extrait de rôle accompagné du nouveau formulaire de virement, qui mentionnera le montant de l'impôt restant dû ou du remboursement dont vous bénéficierez selon le cas. A partir du mois de septembre 2008, le SPF Finances n'utilisera plus que les nouveaux formulaires de virement.

Tous les services publics introduiront progressivement le nouveau formulaire et le nouveau numéro de compte bancaire jusqu'à ce que tous les services soient adaptés au 1er janvier 2009.

Lors de chaque changement de document officiel, les autorités fédérales remettront ou enverront une brochure d'information reprenant de plus amples explications. Les brochures seront également disponibles dans tous les bureaux du SPF Finances accessibles au public, ainsi que dans les bureaux de poste. Les sites web des services publics fédéraux fourniront eux aussi des renseignements.


De qui émane l'initiative ?

L'espace unique de paiements en euro est la conséquence logique de la libre circulation des personnes, des biens, des services et des capitaux à l'intérieur de l'Union européenne et rejoint la stratégie de Lisbonne, qui doit promouvoir l'économie des connaissances et davantage de compétitivité en Europe. C'est la raison pour laquelle la Commission européenne a créé un cadre juridique, qui supprime les barrières entre les différents pays et harmonise les réglementations en matière de services de paiement en Europe (Directive 2007/64/CE du Parlement européen et du Conseil concernant les services de paiement dans le marché intérieur, modifiant les directives 97/7/CE, 2000/12/CE, 2002/65/CE, 2005/60/CE et 2006/48/CE). Pour le 1er novembre 2009, la directive doit être transposée dans la législation belge. La Commission européenne au travers du Commissaire Charlie McCreevy, direction générale marché intérieur et services, a demandé un effort particulier aux ministres européens des Finances. Un point SEPA a donc systématiquement été mis à l'ordre du jour des réunions ECOFIN.

Vu l'impact sur l'ensemble de notre société, un Steering Committee sur l'avenir des moyens de paiement a été créé en Belgique, sous la présidence du gouverneur de la Banque nationale de Belgique, pour accompagner l'introduction des nouveaux moyens de paiement européens. Ce comité rassemble toutes les parties concernées : les
ministres du gouvernement fédéral et des gouvernements communautaires et régionaux, les plus hauts représentants du secteur bancaire, de La Poste, des entreprises et des associations de consommateurs. Ensemble, ils ont élaboré un plan de migration pour la Belgique. Le Conseil des ministres vient d'approuver le volet de l'exécution au sein des services publics fédéraux.

(*) Quels pays participent au SEPA ?

Il s'agit des 27 pays de l'Union européenne ainsi que ceux de l'Association européenne de libre échange.


AELE : Islande, Liechtenstein, Norvège et Suisse.

Les territoires français d'outre-mer comme la Guadeloupe, la Martinique, la Guyane française et la Réunion participent aussi, les autres régions non. Andorre, les îles Féroé, le Groenland, Monaco, Saint-Marin, la cité du Vatican, les îles anglo-normandes et l'île de Man ne font pas partie du SEPA.

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Lancering van SEPA bij de Federale Overheid

Op 1 januari 2009 gebruiken de federale overheidsdiensten de nieuwe Europese overschrijvingsformulieren, bankcodes en rekeningnummers voor alle financiële transacties met burgers en ondernemingen

De ministerraad ging akkoord met het voorstel van eerste minister Yves Leterme, minister van Financiën Didier Reynders, minister voor Ondernemen en Vereenvoudigen Vincent Van Quickenborne en staatssecretaris voor Begroting Melchior Wathelet om geleidelijk aan de nieuwe Europese overschrijvingsformulieren in de overheidsdiensten in te voeren, zodat op 1 januari 2009 de overheidsdiensten de nieuwe SEPA-standaard gebruiken.


Wat houdt SEPA in?

Een nieuw bankrekeningnummer en het gebruik van de BIC-code

- Voortaan vermeld je de IBAN-code, het international bank account number, om je Belgische bankrekening te identificeren. De code bestaat uit vier maal vier tekens: je huidige bankrekeningnummer 539-0075470-34 wordt dan BE68 5390 0754 7034.
- Je zal ook de BIC-code moeten gebruiken voor de overschrijvingen. De bank identifier code (BIC) identificeert de bank. Elke bank in Europa heeft dus een eigen code, bijvoorbeeld BANKBEBB.
- Je vindt de BIC code nu al op je rekeninguittreksels of op de facturen van de begunstigde.

Een nieuw overschrijvingsformulier
Voor Europese overschrijvingen is het nieuwe overschrijvingsformulier al sinds 28 januari 2008 in gebruik.
Voor Belgische overschrijvingen wordt het nieuwe formulier geleidelijk aan ingevoerd. Daarvoor hebben de banken een overgangsperiode tot 1 januari 2011. Tot dan blijven de bestaande Belgische formulieren naast de nieuwe bestaan. Vanaf 1 januari 2011 blijft er nog één formulier over voor alle overschrijvingen. Er komen ook nieuwe regels:
- De Europese banken mogen geen commissie van het bedrag afhouden.
- De uitvoering van de betaling mag ten hoogste drie dagen duren, en vanaf 2012 maar een dag, zoals in België al het geval is.

Wat verandert er aan het overschrijvingsformulier?

- Het nieuwe overschrijvingsformulier is roze en rood.
- Er is geen strookje meer voor de klant.
- De datum van je gewenste uitvoeringsdatum komt in de plaats van de memodatum.
- Je moet je IBAN vermelden en de BIC code van de begunstigde.
- Je moet de naam van de begunstigde vermelden.
- De datum waarop je het formulier ondertekent, valt weg.
- De gegevens van de begunstigde staan nu onder de opdrachtgever.

In bijlage vind je een brochure met een voorbeeld van het nieuwe formulier.

Domiciliëringen in heel het SEPA gebied


Betaalkaarten

Tegen 2011 zullen alle bankkaarten binnen het SEPA gebied eenvormig zijn. Dat wil zeggen dat je je bankkaart kan gebruiken in het SEPA gebied, zoals je dat nu in België doet.

De federale overheid voert de nieuwe betalingsmiddelen geleidelijk in


Meer info vind je op de website van de Belgische overheid [www.belgium.be/sepa](http://www.belgium.be/sepa) en voor meer gespecialiseerde informatie kan je terecht bij je bank of op de site van de Belgische Federatie van de financiële sector [www.sepabelgium.be](http://www.sepabelgium.be).

**Van wie komt het initiatief?**


De Europese Commissie had via Charlie McCreevy, EU-commissaris voor de interne markt en diensten, aan de Europese ministers van Financiën gevraagd om een bijzondere inspanning te doen voor het SEPA dossier. Daarom bespreekt men bij elke ECOFIN vergadering de invoering van SEPA.

Omdat SEPA een impact heeft op heel de maatschappij leidt een steering committee op federaal niveau de introductie van de nieuwe betaalmiddelen in goede banen. De gouverneur van de Nationale Bank van België is voorzitter van het comité dat alle betrokken partners samenbrengt: de ministers van de federale regering en van de gewest- en gemeenschapsregeringen, topvertegenwoordigers van de banksector, De Post, de ondernemingen en de consumentenverenigingen. Samen hebben ze een migratieplan voor België opgesteld. De ministerraad heeft nu het luik van de uitvoering binnen de federale overheidsdiensten goedgekeurd.

(*) **Welke landen nemen deel aan SEPA?**
Het gaat om de 27 landen van de Europese Unie plus de landen van de Europese Vrijhandelsassociatie.

EU: België, Bulgarije, Cyprus, Denemarken, Duitsland, Estland, Finland, Frankrijk, Griekenland, Hongarije, Ierland, Italië, Letland, Litouwen, Luxemburg, Malta, Nederland, Oostenrijk, Polen, Portugal (met de Azoren en Madeira), Roemenië, Slovenië, Slowakije, Spanje (met de Canarische Eilanden, Ceuta en Melilla), Tsjechië, Verenigd Koninkrijk (met Gibraltar en Noord-Ierland) en Zweden.

EVA: IJsland, Liechtenstein, Noorwegen en Zwitserland.

De Franse overzeese gebieden Guadeloupe, Martinique, Frans Guyana en Réunion nemen deel, de andere gebieden niet. Andorra, Far Oër Eilanden, Groenland, Monaco, San Marino, Vatikaanstad, de Kanaaleilanden en Isle of Man maken geen deel uit van SEPA.

Voor meer informatie:
Persdienst van eerste minister Yves Leterme
Woordvoerder: Peter Poulussen
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Persdienst van de vice-eersteminister en minister van Financiën en Institutionele Hervormingen Didier Reynders
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Persdienst van staatssecretaris voor Begroting toegevoegd aan de eerste minister, en staatssecretaris voor Gezinsbeleid toegevoegd aan de minister van Werk, Melchior Wathelet
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Pascale Boulanger
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pascale.boulanger@wathelet.fed.be
Please follow the instructions below for filling in a European credit transfer form:

The following information must be given:
- The amount
- The payer’s IBAN (*)
- The payee’s IBAN and name (*)
- The payer’s signature
- The BIC of the payee’s bank if the payee’s IBAN does not begin with ‘BE’ (*)

(*) See overleaf.

The 'requested execution date in the future' replaces the 'memo date'.

Start from the left when you fill in the boxes for the IBAN account numbers and the BIC. For more information: see overleaf.

The payee will normally have already filled in the structured remittance information.
**IBAN and BIC: what you should know**

The IBAN (International Bank Account Number) is used to identify the Belgian accounts and the accounts in all the other SEPA countries. This number varies in length from one country to another but consists of no more than 34 characters.

In Belgium, the IBAN consists of 16 characters structured as follows: ‘BE’ followed by 2 digits which, in their turn, are followed by the 12 digits of the current bank account number.

For example:
the Belgian account number 539 0075470 34
gives as corresponding IBAN BE68 5390 0754 7034

The IBAN for your Belgian bank account is indicated on your bank statements.

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The European credit transfer can be sent or entered on paper or electronically.

Any questions?
See www.sepabelgium.be
or
ask your bank

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To make a credit transfer requires not only the IBAN but also the BIC (Bank Identifier Code) so that the bank in which the payee has his account can be identified. Each of the approximately 8,000 European banks has its own code.

The payee’s BIC consists of either 8 or 11 characters.

For example: BANKBEBB
The BIC must be entered when the payee’s IBAN does not begin with ‘BE’.

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**What will change?**

- The new form is red in colour (the previous form was amber)
- There is no longer a counterfoil
- The ‘requested execution date in the future’ replaces the ‘memo date’
- The IBAN and BIC must be used
- The payee’s name must be indicated
- There is no longer any mention of the date on which the form is signed
- The payee data are given below those for the payer.

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On January 28, 2008, the process of creating the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) took a concrete form with the introduction of the European credit transfer and the requisite credit transfer form.

This leaflet explains how to use the new credit transfer form. The new form gives you the possibility of making credit transfers in euros to payees residing in Belgium and in the other SEPA countries, i.e. the 27 European Union Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Public institutions, companies and banks gradually begin using the new form. As for domestic payments, it will coexist alongside the current Belgian form for a limited period. By the end of 2010, the latter will have disappeared completely.
Virements européens

Migration vers les standards SEPA en Belgique

Commentaires pour les autorités et les entreprises en tant que donneurs d’ordres et payeurs

Lors de la réalisation du SEPA (Single Euro Payments Area ou espace de paiement unique européen), les acteurs sociaux (entreprises, autorités et consommateurs) devront tôt ou tard abandonner le bulletin de virement belge actuel et adopter le virement en format standardisé européen, en abrégé « virement européen ». Le bulletin de virement européen est de plus en plus utilisé, même pour effectuer des paiements purement nationaux.

Le passage au nouveau bulletin est surtout déterminé par les autorités et les entreprises: une organisation choisira à un moment donné de munir ses factures d’un bulletin de virement européen, ce qui incitera ses clients à effectuer le paiement via ce format européen (entre autres en utilisant leur IBAN).

Cette brochure offre un aperçu des principaux points auxquels il faut répondre pour mener à bien la migration vers les standards européens.

La première partie est utile pour les autorités et entreprises en tant qu’expéditeurs du bulletin de virement papier. Ce bulletin est utilisé par le client-payeur pour exécuter des paiements en format européen (virement européen). La seconde partie de cette brochure est destinée aux autorités et entreprises exécutant elles-mêmes des paiements (sortants) comme par exemple, les paiements d’appointements et de factures d’achat de marchandises, ...

1. Migration vers le bulletin de virement européen papier

La migration porte donc sur le remplacement du bulletin de virement belge actuel par le bulletin du virement en format européen. Les autorités et entreprises qui souhaitent adopter le nouveau bulletin devront de préférence répondre aux points d’attention suivants:

- **Spécifications officielles**

- **Test du bulletin en format européen**
  Avant de répondre un bulletin de virement européen sur le marché, il est indiqué de remettre préalablement un nombre de formulaires de test à un banquier quelconque. Si des tests avec plusieurs banques s’imposent, les formulaires de test pourront être remis à la Fédération des banques belges [Febelfin – rue d’Arlon 82 à 1040 Bruxelles].

- **Information du secteur financier**
  Le volume de paiements qui sera effectué suivant le nouveau bulletin européen, constitue un élément important. Parlez-en à votre banque de sorte à ce que le secteur bancaire puisse se faire une idée de l’avancement de la migration.

- **Communication vis-à-vis de la clientèle**
  Il est recommandé que les autorités et les entreprises mettent en place une communication transparente vis-à-vis de leur clientèle. La facture/virement pourront être accompagnés d’un dépliant offrant aux clients toutes les informations utiles sur l’utilisation et la complétion du bulletin de virement. Ce dépliant fournit toutes les informations sur l’International Bank Account Number (IBAN) et explique où le client peut retrouver cet IBAN. Les autorités et les émetteurs de factures peuvent également afficher ce dépliant sur leurs propres webistes; le cas échéant, une référence peut être renseignée sur l’avis de paiement. Le dépliant est disponible sur www.sepabelgium.be et peut être personnalisé.

Si les clients destinataires ont des questions sur les nouveaux standards, il leur est utile de contacter leur banquier.

- **Préparation interne**
  Si l’émetteur de factures dispose d’un centre d’appel ou d’un helpdesk, il est conseillé de former leurs occupants préalable à la première diffusion de bulletins de virement européens. De cette façon, bon nombre de questions de la clientèle peuvent être résolues efficacement. Un FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), permettant de répondre à la plupart des questions posées par la clientèle, peut être rédigé sur base des questions-clés suivantes:
1. Qu’est-ce un IBAN?
Le numéro de compte bancaire international est un numéro de compte bancaire qui, jusqu’à présent, était utilisé pour les paiements transfrontaliers mais qui, dans le cadre de la zone de paiement unique européenne, est également utilisé dans le trafic de paiement national belge. L’IBAN est une extension du numéro de compte belge devant lequel quatre positions sont rajoutées : les deux premières sont « BE » (pour Belgique), les deux suivantes sont un chiffre de contrôle, suivi des douze positions du numéro de compte belge. L’IBAN se présente en 4 groupes de 4 caractères.

2. Où retrouver mon IBAN?
L’IBAN est renseigné sur tous les extraits de compte bancaires ou postaux.

3. Qu’est-ce un BIC?
Le Bank Identifier Code, souvent déjà renseigné par le bénéficiaire sur le bulletin, est un code identifiant la banque du bénéficiaire ou du donneur d’ordre.

4. Où retrouver des informations sur la réalisation de la zone de paiement européenne unique (SEPA) ?

5. Pourquoi un virement européen ?
Le projet SEPA poursuit la réalisation de la zone de paiement unique via des standards uniques. L’utilisation d’un standard de paiement unique dans toute la zone SEPA sera lucrative pour toutes les parties et stimulera le processus d’unification européenne. Le projet SEPA est la suite logique de l’introduction physique de l’euro.
Il est attendu que le bulletin de virement européen incitera le client à utiliser ce document tant pour ses paiements transfrontaliers que pour ses paiements nationaux belges.

6. Qu’adviendra-t-il de l’« ancien » bulletin de virement belge?

2. Le bulletin de virement européen électronique pour paiements sortants
Cette seconde partie se rapporte aux opérations unitaires des entreprises ou organisations qui effectuent elles-mêmes les paiements en format européen (paiement d’appointements, règlement d’achats et services, etc.). La liste de contrôle suivante peut faciliter la migration :

- Conversion de la structure de compte belge en IBAN
Les numéros de compte des bénéficiaires dans les livres du donneur d’ordre devront être convertis en format IBAN. Pour les numéros de compte belges avec structure 3-7-2, cette conversion est assez simple. Un instrument de conversion (en masse ou individuelle) est disponible sur les websites www.sepabelgium.be et www.febelfin.be. Ceux qui souhaitent réaliser cette conversion par leurs propres moyens pourront retrouver l’algorithme de conversion sur ces deux sites.

- Utilisez le format SEPA XML correctement
Jusqu’au moment de la conversion, l’entreprise ou l’autorité publique enverra leurs ordres de paiement sortants à la banque donneur d’ordre suivant le format spécifique belge (CIRI). La migration vers le standard européen implique l’utilisation du standard SEPA XML, également connu sous le nom UNIFI-ISO20022 (voir également www.iso20022.org). Le format C2B (customer to bank), suivant lequel le donneur d’ordre remet ses ordres de paiement à sa banque, est disponible sur les websites www.sepabelgium.be et www.febelfin.be, plus particulièrement dans la rubrique « Guidelines ».
Un upgrade XML implique pour la plupart des organisations une modification de la programmation comptable ou de ERP. Les utilisateurs d’Isabel Business Suite 5.0 devront adopter la version Isabel 6 (www.isabel.eu/isabel6).

- Centralisez toutes les informations sur l’utilisation du virement européen dans votre organisation
- analysez via vos extraits de compte comment se traduit l’utilisation du virement européen et examinez les modifications SEPA en CODA v 2.2.
- examinez l’impact de SEPA sur les canaux électroniques tels que ISABEL6 et les modules de PC-banking.

- Projets et tests
Au cas où le donneur d’ordre émet régulièrement des volumes importants, il est fortement recommandé d’envisager une migration phasée et de conclure des accords bilatéraux avec le(s) banquier(s) concerné(s).
Commentaires pour les autorités et les entreprises

Lors de la réalisation du SEPA (Single Euro Payments Area ou espace unique de paiement en euros), les acteurs sociaux (entreprises, autorités et consommateurs) devront tôt ou tard adopter le virement européen. Le virement européen est de plus en plus utilisé, même pour effectuer des paiements purement nationaux.

Le passage au nouveau bulletin est surtout déterminé par les autorités et les entreprises. Une organisation choisira à un moment donné de munir ses factures d’un bulletin de virement européen, ce qui incitera ses clients à effectuer le paiement via ce nouveau format (entre autres en utilisant leur IBAN).

Cette brochure offre un aperçu des principaux points auxquels il faut répondre pour mener à bien la migration vers le virement européen.

La première partie est utile pour les autorités et entreprises en tant qu’expéditeurs du bulletin de virement papier. Ce bulletin est utilisé par le client-payeur pour exécuter un virement européen. La seconde partie de cette brochure est destinée aux autorités et entreprises exécutant elles-mêmes des paiements électroniques (sortants) comme par exemple, les paiements d’appointements, de factures d’achat de marchandises, ...

1. Migration vers le bulletin de virement européen

La migration porte sur le remplacement du bulletin de virement belge actuel par un format belge adapté : le bulletin de virement européen. Les clients peuvent utiliser ce bulletin pour remettre leurs ordres de paiement à leur banque belge. Les autorités et entreprises qui souhaitent adopter ce nouveau bulletin devront de préférence tenir compte des points d’attention suivants :

- Test du bulletin
  Avant de répandre un bulletin de virement européen sur le marché, il est conseillé de remettre préalablement un nombre de formulaires de test à un banquier quelconque. Si des tests avec plusieurs banques s’imposent, les formulaires de test pourront être remis à la Fédération des banques belges (1).

- Information envers votre banque
  Le volume de paiements qui sera effectué au moyen du nouveau bulletin constitue un élément important. Parlez-en à votre banque dans le cas où cela concerne un nombre important de bulletins.

- Communication vis-à-vis de la clientèle
  Il est recommandé que les autorités et les entreprises mettent en place une communication transparente vis-à-vis de leur clientèle. La facture/le virement pourra être accompagnée d’un dépliant offrant au client toutes les informations utiles sur l’utilisation du bulletin de virement. Ce dépliant fournit les informations concernant l’International Bank Account Number (IBAN) et explique où le client peut retrouver cet IBAN. Les autorités et les émetteurs de factures peuvent également afficher ce dépliant sur leur propre site Internet ; le cas échéant, une référence peut être renseignée sur l’avis de paiement. Le dépliant est disponible sur www.sepabelgium.be et peut être personnalisé.

Si les clients destinataires ont des questions sur le nouveau format, ils peuvent contacter leur banquier.

- Préparation interne
  Si l’émetteur de factures dispose d’un centre d’appel ou d’un helpdesk, il est conseillé de former leur personnel préalablement à la première diffusion de bulletins de virement européens. De cette façon, bon nombre de questions de la clientèle peuvent être résolues efficacement. Un FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), permettant de répondre à la plupart des questions posées par la clientèle, peut être rédigé sur base des questions-clés suivantes :

- Spécifications officielles
  La fabrication et le lay-out du bulletin de virement européen doivent répondre aux accords interbancaires. Ces spécifications sont affichées sur les sites Internet www.sepabelgium.be (sous forme d’un dépliant fonctionnel all-round) et www.febelin.be (règles relatives à la personnalisation et à l’impression du bulletin de virement européen). La personnalisation du bulletin peut se faire dans les 3 langues nationales (individuelles ou combinées) et en anglais. Les fichiers d’impression sont disponibles sur le site Internet de la Banque nationale www.rbb.be (> autres produits et services > secrétariat des protocoles).

1. Qu’est-ce un IBAN ?

Le numéro de compte bancaire international est un numéro de compte qui, jusqu’à présent, était utilisé pour les paiements transfrontaliers mais qui, dans le cadre de l’espace unique de paiement en euros, est également utilisé dans le trafic de paiement belge à usage national. L’IBAN est une extension du numéro de compte belge devant lequel quatre positions sont rajoutées : les deux premières sont « BE » (pour Belgique), les deux suivantes sont un chiffre de contrôle, suivi des 12 positions du numéro de compte belge. L’IBAN se présente en 4 groupes de 4 caractères.

2. Qu’est-ce un BIC ?

Le code BIC (Bank Identifier Code) est un code identifiant la banque du bénéficiaire ou du donneur d’ordre. Le code BIC de la banque du bénéficiaire est souvent déjà renseigné sur le bulletin.

3. Où retrouver mon IBAN et mon code BIC ?

L’IBAN et le code BIC sont renseigné sur tous les extraits de compte.

4. Où trouver des informations sur la réalisation de l’espace unique de paiement en euros (SEPA) ?


5. Qu’advendra-t-il de l’« ancien » bulletin de virement belge ?

Le nouveau bulletin remplacera le bulletin belge actuel.

L’« ancien » bulletin de virement belge pourra encore être utilisé jusqu’en 2010 et à partir du 1er janvier 2011, seul le bulletin européen sera encore utilisé.

(1) Febelin – Département Organisation et Informatique – rue d’Arlon 82 à 1040 Bruxelles,
2. Le bulletin de virement européen électronique pour paiements sortants

Cette seconde partie se rapporte aux paiements sortants des entreprises ou organisations qui effectueront elles-mêmes des paiements en format européen (appointements, paiements de produits et de services, etc.). La liste de contrôle suivante peut faciliter la migration :

**Conversion des numéros de compte belges en IBAN**
Les numéros de compte des bénéficiaires dans les livres du donneur d’ordre devront être convertis en format IBAN. Pour les numéros de compte belges avec structure 3-7-2, cette conversion est assez simple. Un instrument de conversion (en masse ou individuelle) est disponible sur le site Internet www.sepabelgium.be. Ceux qui souhaitent réaliser cette conversion par leurs propres moyens pourront retrouver l’algorithme de conversion sur ce site.

**Utilisez le format XML correctement**
Jusqu’au moment de la conversion, l’entreprise ou l’autorité publique enverra ses ordres de paiement sortants à sa banque suivant le format spécifique belge (CIR). La migration vers le virement européen implique l’utilisation du standard XML. Ce standard, également connu sous le nom UNIFI-ISO20022 (voir également www.iso20022.org) peut être utilisé pour tous les paiements, également pour les paiements non SEPA (paiement en devises, chèques internationaux, …). Le format suivant lequel le donneur d’ordre remet ses ordres de paiement à sa banque est disponible sur le site Internet www.febelfin.be, plus particulièrement dans la rubrique « Standards ».

Un upgrade XML implique pour la plupart des organisations une modification de la programmation comptable ou de ERP. Les utilisateurs d’Isabel Business Suite 5.0 devront adopter la version Isabel 6 (www.isabel.eu/isabel6).

**Impact sur les rapports et les réconciliations**
Analysez via vos extraits de compte comment se traduit l’utilisation du virement européen et examinez les modifications SEPA en CODA v 2.2.

Des informations relatives à ce sujet sont disponibles sur www.febelfin.be.

**Projets et tests**
Au cas où le donneur d’ordre émet régulièrement des volumes importants, il est recommandé d’envisager une migration phasée et de conduire des accords bilatéraux avec le(s) banquier(s) concerné(s).

Votre banque est toujours dispensée à vous aider dans les différentes phases de migration vers le virement européen !

Des questions ?
Voyez les sites Internet suivants :
www.febelfin.be
www.sepabelgium.be
www.nbb.be
www.europeanpaymentscouncil.eu
ou contactez votre banque
Europese overschrijvingen

Migratie naar SEPA standaarden in België

Toelichtingen voor ondernemingen en overheden als opdrachtgevers en betalers

Bij de totstandkoming van SEPA (Single Euro Payments Area of de eengemaakte Europese betaalruimte) zullen alle maatschappelijke actoren (ondernemingen, overheden en consumenten) vroeg of laat de overstap maken van het huidige Belgische overschrijvingformulier op de overschrijving in een Europese formaatstandaard, of korter: de Europese overschrijving. Het Europese overschrijvingformulier vindt steeds meer ingang, ook voor louter Belgische betalingen.

De overstap op het nieuwe formulier wordt vooral bepaald door de overheden en de ondernemingen: op een bepaald ogenblik zullen deze hun facturen uitsturen samen met een Europese overschrijvingssformulier, wat de betalende klant ertoe zal aanzetten de betaling uit te voeren in dit Europese formaat (onder andere met gebruik van zijn of haar IBAN).

Deze brochure geeft een opsomming van de voornaamste punten waaran moet worden voldaan om de migratie naar de Europese standaarden in goede banen te leiden.

Een eerste deel is nuttig voor ondernemingen en overheden als verzenders van het papieren overschrijvingsformulier. Dit formulier wordt door de klant-betalers aangewend om een betaling in Europese formaat (Europese overschrijving) uit te voeren. Het tweede hoofdstuk van deze brochure is bedoeld voor ondernemingen en organisaties die zelf (uitgaande) betalingen uitvoeren (salarissen betalen, aangekochte goederen betalen, enz.).

1. Overstappen op het papieren Europese overschrijvingsformulier

De migratie betreft dus het vervangen van het huidige Belgische overschrijvingssformulier door het overschrijvingformulier in Europese formaat. De ondernemingen of organisaties die wensen te starten met het nieuwe formulier voldoen bij voorkeur aan de volgende aandachtspunten:

- Officiële specificaties

- Testen van het formulier in Europese formaat
  Voordat een Europese overschrijvingssformulier op de markt uit te sturen, is het aangewezen een aantal testformulieren aan een bank naar keuze voor te leggen. Als tests met meerdere banken zijn aangezien, is het ook mogelijk deze testformulieren aan de Federatie van Belgische Banken [Febelfin – Aarlenstraat 82 te 1040 Brussel] voor te leggen.

- Informatie naar de banksector toe
  Het volume betalingen dat door de overstap op het nieuwe Europese formulier in Europese formaat zal worden betaald is een belangrijk gegeven. Communiceer hierover met uw bank, zodat de banksector zich een idee kan vormen over de vooruitgang van de migratie.

- Communicatie naar de klanten toe
  Een onderneming of publieke instelling wordt aangeraden om naar de klanten toe een duidelijke communicatie op te zetten. Samen met de factuur/overschrijving kan een folder worden meegestuurd, die ten behoeve van de betalende klant een compleet informatiepaket geeft over hoe hij het overschrijvingssformulier moet gebruiken en aanvullen. Deze folder bevat alle informatie over het International Bank Account Number (IBAN) en waar de klant dat IBAN kan terugvinden. Een facturerende onderneming of overheid kan de folder ook op de eigen website plaatsen; op de uitnodiging tot betalen kan dan een verwijzing worden vermeld. De folder is beschikbaar op www.sepabelgium.be en kan worden gepersonaliseerd.
  Als de geadresseerde klanten vragen hebben over de nieuwe standaarden, kan het nuttig zijn hen door te verwijzen naar hun bankier.

- Interne voorbereiding
  Als de facturerende partij over een callcenter of helpdesk voor klanten beschikt, is het aangewezen om die medewerkers voldoende op te leiden tijdens de begins fase van het uitsturen van het Europese overschrijvingsformulier. Op die manier kunnen eventuele vragen van klanten efficiënt worden opgevangen.
  Een FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), die anticipeert op de meest voorkomende vragen van klanten, kan worden opgebouwd op basis van de volgende sleutelvragen:
1. Wat is een IBAN?
Het International Bank Account Number is een bankrekeningnummer dat voorheen vooral werd gebruikt in grensoverschrijdende betalingen, maar dat in de kader van de eengemaakte Europese betaalzone ook voor het lokale Belgische betaalverkeer wordt gebruikt. Het IBAN is een uitbreiding van het gekende Belgische rekeningnummer, waaraan vier posities zijn toegevoegd: de eerste twee posities zijn de letters «BE» (voor België), de volgende twee zijn een controlegetal, waarna het gekende Belgische rekeningnummer met 12 posities volgt. Het wordt voorgesteld in 4 groepen van 4 tekens.

2. Waar vind ik mijn IBAN?
Het IBAN is vermeld op alle bank- of postrekeninguitreksels.

3. Wat is een BIC?
De Bank Identifier Code is een code die de bank van de begunstigde of van de opdrachtgever identificeert, en die in veel gevallen door de begunstigde op het formulier reeds vooraf werd ingevuld.

4. Waar vind ik informatie over het eenmaken van de Europese betaalzone (SEPA)?
Informatie is beschikbaar op de diverse websites van de Belgische banken en ook op www.sepabelgium.be en www.febelfin.be

5. Waarom een Europese overschrijving?
Het SEPA-project tracht een eengemaakte betaalruimte met unieke standaarden te verwezenlijken. Het gebruik van een unieke betaalstandaard in de SEPA-zone zal voor alle partijen voordelig zijn, en zal de verdere eenmaking van Europa ondersteunen. Het is het girale verlengstuk van invoering van de chartale euro.
Verwacht wordt dat het Europese overschrijvingsformulier de klantertoe zal aanzetten om Europese overschrijvingen aan te maken, zowel voor betalingen naar andere landen als voor lokale betalingen in België.

6. Wat gebeurt er met het «oude» Belgische overschrijvingsformulier?

2. De elektronische Europese overschrijving voor uitgaande betalingen
Dit tweede deel heeft betrekking op de uitgaande betalingen, waar de onderneming of organisatie zelf betalingen gaat uitvoeren in het Europese formaat (salarissen betalen, goederen en diensten aankopen, enzovoort). De onderstaande checklist kan bijdragen tot een vlotte en foutloze overstap.

- Conversie van de Belgische rekeningstructuur naar IBAN
De rekeningnummers van de begunstigden in de boeken van de opdrachtgevende partij dienen te worden omgezet naar het IBAN-formaat. Voor de Belgische rekeningnummers in de gekende 3-7-2-structuur is dit vrij eenvoudig. Een conversietool (zowel voor single conversie als voor bulkconversie) is terug te vinden op de websites www.sepabelgium.be en www.febelfin.be. Voor die partijen die de conversie met eigen middelen en met eigen ontwikkelingen willen uitvoeren, wordt ook het gebruik van algemene conversiesystemen wel aangeraden.

- Gebruik het correcte SEPA XML-formaat
Een upgrade naar XML impliqueert voor de meeste organisaties een aanpassing van het boekhoudsoftwarepaket of ERP-pakket. Ook gebruikers van Isabel Business Suite 5.0 dienen te migreren naar de versie Isabel 6 (www.isabel.eu/isabel6).

- Centraliseer alle informatie over het gebruik van de Europese overschrijving in uw organisatie
- onderzoek de invloed van het gebruik van de overschrijving in Europese formaat op de rekeninguitreksels, en bekijk de SEPA-wijzigingen in CODA v2.2
- bekijk de impact van SEPA op de elektronische kanalen, zoals Isabel 6 en de PC-banking modules
Informatie hierover is beschikbaar op de websites www.febelfin.be en www.sepabelgium.be.

- Plannen en testen
Als de opdrachtgever geregeld grote volumes aan betalingen uitstuur, wordt sterk aangeraden een gefaseerde migratie te overwegen. Ook bilaterale afspraken en praktische testen met de dienstverlenende bank(en) worden warm aanbevolen.
1. Wat is een IBAN?
Voorouders van de huidige Europees overschrijvingsformulier waren al vroeg in de markt te vinden, maar het is pas na de invoering van de IBAN dat een standaardformulier voor bilaterale betalingen op de Europese markt kwam. Een IBAN (International Bank Account Number) is een unieke rekeningsnummer dat maatwerkbanken aangrenden aan de IBAN. Het formuleert een uitsluitend digitale rekening van een klant in een rekeningnummer van 16 plaatjes.

2. Wat is een BIC?
De BankIdentificatiecode (BIC) is een code die op bank van de IBAN-nummer is afgeleid. Het is een zwakke combinatie uit de IBAN-schakelaar om het IBAN-nummer te beschermen. Omdat het IBAN-schakelaar een veelvoud is, is het IBAN-schakelaar waarschijnlijk goedgekeurd voor de IBAN-schakelaar waarmee het IBAN-schakelaar goedgekeurd is voor de IBAN-schakelaar.

3. Wat vind ik bij IBAN en BIC?
Het IBAN en BIC worden door verschillende instellingen gebruikt voor diverse doeleinden. Het IBAN wordt gebruikt voor de bescherming van de IBAN en BIC wordt gebruikt om de IBAN te beschermen.

4. Wat vind ik in de BIC?
De BIC is een code die op bank van de IBAN-schakelaar is afgeleid. Het is een zwakke combinatie uit de IBAN-schakelaar om het IBAN-schakelaar te beschermen. Omdat het IBAN-schakelaar een veelvoud is, is het IBAN-schakelaar waarschijnlijk goedgekeurd voor de IBAN-schakelaar waarmee het IBAN-schakelaar goedgekeurd is voor de IBAN-schakelaar.

5. Wat gebeurt er met het "oude"
Belgische overschrijvingsformulier?
Het nieuwe formulier is het huidige Belgische overgeschreven formulier met de IBAN.

(1) Feedin - Departement Organisatie en Informatie - Adresstraat 32 te 1040 Brussel.
2. De elektronische Europese overschrijving voor uitgaande betalingen

Dit tweede deel heeft betrekking op de uitgaande betalingen, waar de onderneming of organisatie zelf betalingen gaat uitvoeren in het Europese formaat (salarissen, goederen en diensten betalen, enz.). De onderstaande checklist kan bijdragen tot een vlotte en foutloze overstap.

- **Conversie van de Belgische rekeningnummers naar IBAN**
  De rekeningnummers van de begunstigden in de boeken van de opdrachtgevende partij dienen te worden omgezet naar het IBAN-formaat. Voor de Belgische rekeningnummers in de gekende 3-7-2-structuur is dit vrij eenvoudig. Een conversietool (zowel voor single conversie als voor bulkconversie) is terug te vinden op de website www.sepabelgium.be. Voor de partijen die de conversie met eigen middelen en met eigen ontwikkelingen willen uitvoeren, werd het te gebruiken algoritme op die website gepubliceerd.

- **Gebruik het correcte XML-formaat**
  Tot op het moment van migratie stuurt een onderneming of publieke instelling haar uitgaande betaalopdrachten naar haar bank in een specifieke Belgisch formaat (het zogenaamde CIRI-formaat). De migratie naar de Europese overschrijving betekent dat de XML-standaard moet worden gebruikt. Die standaard, ook bekend onder de benaming UNIF-ISO20022-standaard (zie ook www.iso20022.org), kan worden gebruikt voor alle betalingen, ook de niet-SEPA-betalingen (betalingen in deviezen, internationale cheques, ...). Het formaat waarin een opdrachtgever de betaalopdracht aan zijn bank doorgeeft is beschikbaar op de website www.febelfin.be, onder de rubriek «Standaarden».

Een upgrade naar XML impliceert voor de meeste organisaties een aanpassing van het boekhoudsoftwarepakket of ERP-pakket. Ook gebruikers van Isabel Business Suite 5.0 dienen te migreren naar de versie Isabel 6 (www.isabel.eu/isabel6).

- **Impact op rapportering en reconciliatie**
  Ondersoek de invloed van het gebruik van de overschrijving in Europees formaat op de rekeninguitreksels, en bekijk de SEPA-wijzigingen in CODA v 2.2.

Informatie hierover is beschikbaar op de website www.febelfin.be.

- **Plannen en testen**
  Als de opdrachtgever geregeld grote volumes aan betalingen uitstuurt, wordt sterk aangeraden een gefaseerde migratie te overwegen. Ook bilaterale afspraken en praktische testen met de dienstverlenende bank(en) worden aanbevolen.
List of participants in the working groups
Enterprises - Public Administrations - Consumers - Banks

Enterprises:

ABTO – Association of Belgian Tour Operators
Acerta
ADMB Logistiek vzw
Assuralia
ATEB
Base NV
Belgacom
CHU Liège - Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Liège
Electrabel
ESS Abante 990
ESS Handel & Ambacht
ESS Securex
FEBEG
Febelfin
Financière Rémy Cointreau SA/NV - ATEB
Infrax
ISABEL
KPN Belgium N.V.
Alliance nationale des mutualités chrétiennes
Union nationale des mutualités libérales
Union nationale des mutualités libres
Union nationale des mutualités socialistes
Mobistar
Partena
SD Worx
SPE-Luminus
SWDE - Société wallonne des eaux
Telenet NV
UCM
UNIZO Internationaal
USS
VMW - Vlaamse Maatschappij voor Watervoorziening
Public Administrations:

CSVCRPW - Conseil Supérieur des Villes, Communes et Provinces de la Région wallonne
Police fédérale
SPF Budget et Contrôle de la Gestion
SPF Défense
FOD-SPF Economie - Conseil de la concurrence
FOD-SPF Economie, PME, Classes moyennes et Energie
SPF Finances
SPF Finances - Contributions Directes
SPF Finances - Trésorerie
SPF Technologie de l'information et de la Communication - FEDICT
SPF Justice
SPF Sécurité sociale - INAMI
SPF Sécurité sociale
Cabinet du Ministre Guy Vanhengel, Ministre du Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
Ministère de la Communauté Française - CFWB
Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
Ministère de la Région Wallonne
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Ministerium der Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft
Office National des Pensions
UVCW - Union des villes et communes de Wallonie
AVCB - Association de la ville et des communes de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
VVP - Vereniging van Vlaamse Provincies
VVSG - Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten

Consumers:

GOC
OIVO-CRIOC
Test-Achats / Test-Aankoop

Banks:

FORTIS
DEXIA
ING
KBC
POSTE
AXA
BNB