

Press release

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ECB selects “European culture” and “Rivers and birds” as possible themes for future euro banknotes

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- Advisory group to propose motifs by the end of 2024
- Governing Council expected to choose final designs and decide when to produce and issue new banknotes in 2026

The Governing Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) selected “European culture” and “Rivers and birds” as the possible themes to choose from for future euro banknotes. The decision takes into account the results of surveys conducted in the summer of 2023, published in a [report](#) today, for the European public to express their preferences from seven shortlisted themes.

In the survey commissioned by the ECB, “European culture” was most popular (21%) amongst euro area citizens, followed by “Rivers: the waters of life in Europe” (18%) and “Birds: free, resilient, inspiring” (17%). The survey comprised a representative sample of 23,377 Europeans.

The ECB also conducted the same survey online throughout July and August 2023, attracting a record number of more than 365,000 responses from Europeans. The results complement the findings of the representative survey. The same three themes were preferred, albeit in a different order. In both surveys, the other four shortlisted themes were ranked substantially lower.

To reflect the public’s preferences as broadly as possible, the Governing Council gave its approval to combine “Rivers: the waters of life in Europe” and “Birds: free, resilient, inspiring” into a single nature-related theme.

“We are very happy with the strong participation in our online survey,” said ECB President Christine Lagarde. “Both of the chosen themes share a common thread of connecting Europe and Europeans,

and this is very much in keeping with our goal of making banknotes more relatable to people of all ages and backgrounds.”

The Governing Council decided to establish an advisory group to propose motifs for the selected themes by the end of 2024. After that, a competition to design the new banknotes will be held and European citizens will again have the chance to express their preferences on the design options.

“Banknotes are a symbol of our European unity, now and in the future. We are committed to ensuring that everyone can choose how they pay, be it using cash or digital payments,” said Executive Board member Piero Cipollone.

The ECB is expected to decide on the final designs, and when to produce and issue the new banknotes, in 2026. Once a decision to produce new banknotes has been taken, it will still be several years before the first banknotes are issued.

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Notes

1. It is the duty of the ECB and the euro area national central banks to ensure that euro banknotes remain an innovative, secure and efficient means of payment. Developing new series of banknotes regularly is standard practice for all central banks. In a world where banknote reproduction technologies are rapidly evolving and counterfeiters can easily access information and materials, it is necessary to issue new banknotes on a regular basis. Beyond security considerations, the ECB is committed to reducing the environmental impact of euro banknotes throughout their life cycle, while also making them more relatable and inclusive for Europeans of all ages and backgrounds, including vulnerable groups such as the visually impaired. For more information, see [the future banknotes page on the ECB's website](#).
2. The current theme of the euro banknotes is “ages and styles” and the main motifs on each banknote are windows, doorways and bridges based on architectural styles from various periods in Europe's history. For more information, see [the banknotes design elements page on the ECB's website](#).
3. The two selected themes are defined as:
 - European culture: Europe's rich cultural heritage and dynamic cultural and creative sectors strengthen the European identity, forging a shared sense of belonging. Culture promotes common values, inclusion and dialogue in Europe and across the globe. It brings people together.
 - Rivers and birds: Rivers and birds recognise no borders, symbolising freedom and unity amongst Europeans and our connection to nature. Europe boasts a wide variety of rivers and birds that inspire us and remind us of our responsibility to protect the environment.

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