

DG-MIP/MIS

# Pontes Pilot - Testing and Onboarding Strategy

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## Disclaimer

This document is based on the regular TARGET Services Onboarding, Migration and Testing Principles and has been adapted to the Pontes Pilot Phase. Considering the progress within the project, also the testing strategy will be adapted accordingly.

## Introduction

The **Pontes project**, initiated by the Eurosystem, addresses market demand for Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) in wholesale central bank money (CeBM) solutions. The project aims to overcome the lack of CeBM availability for settling DLT-based transactions, which has hindered the scalability of DLT-based market solutions.

The short-term solution consists of a **Pilot Phase**, aiming to accelerate time-to-market, to meet market expectations and to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive Eurosystem DLT-based offering. It is operated outside the technical parameter of the TARGET Services, whereas the subsequent Pontes solution will be a new TARGET Service and fully integrated. In addition, this testing strategy refers to the existing descriptions of the solution, i.e., the Business Description Document (BDD) and the Service Description in their latest versions at the time of drafting.

In accordance with its mandate, the Pontes Working Group<sup>1</sup> elaborates with this document a testing, onboarding and readiness strategy to ensure a smooth start of and subsequent onboarding to the Pontes Pilot Phase. For the subsequent Pontes solution, a separate strategy will be drafted in due course.

The current testing strategy leverages processes and lessons learned from previous implementations within the TARGET Services framework to effectively minimize project-related risks associated with testing. Where possible, this Testing and Onboarding Strategy reflects the structured approach the Eurosystem typically employs to minimize risks and to ensure the smooth implementation of large-scale financial market infrastructure projects. Still, a risk remains that individual steps may have to be adjusted during the various test phases. Delays in precedent project phases and issues raised during the testing may bear the risk of a delayed test start and even reduce the testing for all stages if the Go-live date is kept.

The Pilot Phase Testing Strategy consists of the following chapters:

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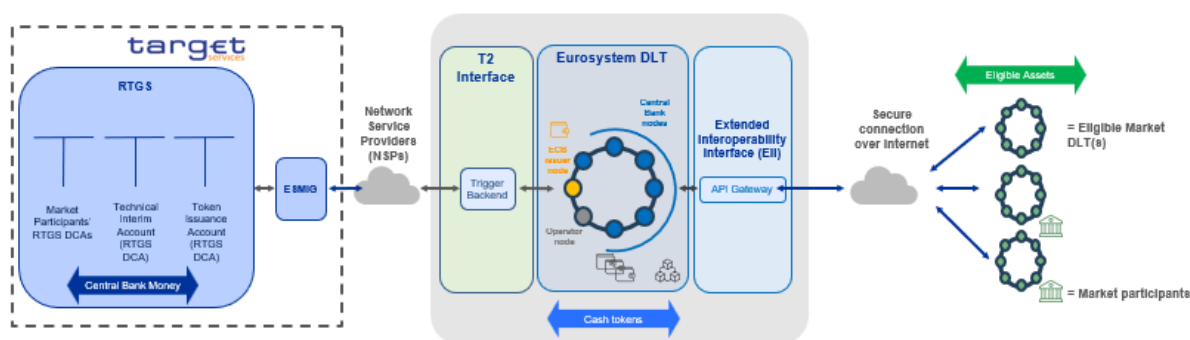
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/paym/target/pontes/governance/html/index.en.html>

- Pilot Phase description
- Pilot Phase testing overview
- Pilot Phase high level testing timeline
- Pilot Phase testing approach
- Pilot Phase onboarding strategy

This document has been prepared for an external audience.

## 1. Pilot Phase – Description

### 1.1 High Level Design Overview



The Extended Interoperability Interface (EII) is the component that serves as the only entry point to the Eurosystem DLT (ESY DLT), via Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and via a Graphical User Interface (GUI). It is also responsible for routing requests to the correct node in the ESY DLT.

The ESY DLT platform refers to the Eurosystem infrastructure that manages the cash-leg of DLT-based transactions, providing either a settlement using cash tokens or directly in RTGS. The ESY DLT is a DLT-based platform.

The term “cash token” means a proxy of euro denominated central bank money, without any legal effect other than embodying a contractual claim against the token issuer to transfer CeBM in T2 RTGS to the holder market participant that owns such tokens in exchange for such tokens.

The T2 interface is the single-entry point to the TARGET Services via the existing Eurosystem Market Infrastructure Gateway (ESMIG). The T2 interface enables smooth funding and defunding of intra-day

tokenised liquidity (including mandatory automated defunding at the end of each business day) and direct T2 RTGS Settlement of transactions coming from the ESY DLT. It relies on the existing functionalities of the TARGET Services.

## 1.2 Stakeholders involved in Testing and Onboarding of the Pontes Pilot Phase

This section lists the stakeholders involved in the testing and onboarding to Pontes Pilot. All Pontes Pilot participants are responsible for their own readiness.

- Market Infrastructure Board (MIB) to approve this test strategy and be informed of test results, as steering body for Pontes Pilot
- Service Provider – 4CB
- European Central Bank (ECB) as Project Owner
- Pontes Actors as defined in the “Business Description Document for Pilot”:
  - ECB (Owner of: Issuer Node, Technical Interim Account, Token Issuance Account, Token Issuance Wallet)
  - National Central Banks (NCBs) (Manager and Owner of Dedicated Cash Wallet, Node Owner)
  - Market participants entitled to access to TARGET (Owner of Dedicated Cash Wallet)
  - Market DLT operators acting on behalf of market participants
- Pontes Working Group (WG) plans, coordinates and monitors the testing and onboarding activities where relevant to ensure Central Bank and market readiness for those participating in the Pontes Pilot.
- Pontes Market Contact Group (MCG) supports and facilitates an active dialogue. Will be consulted on user requirements, change requests, user testing and onboarding activities.

## 2. Pilot Phase –Testing Overview

### Testing objectives

The Pontes Pilot phase will lay the foundation for the Pontes project, integrating key features of the three interoperability solutions assessed during the exploratory work. Testing of the Pontes Pilot needs to ensure a proper testing of a solution based on new technology linked to TARGET Services. The Eurosystem Acceptance Testing (EAT) is the main pillar for the Pilot Go-Live decision. This means that the successful completion of EAT activities is a prerequisite for determining whether the solution is ready for deployment to production.

Central Bank Testing (CBT) and User Testing (UT) are mandatory components in the overall testing framework for Pilot as long as there is (i) the wish of an NCB to participate with a node in the testing or (ii) a market participant wants to join the pilot and thus needs a connection through a dedicated NCB. The CBT and UT results—if conducted—may still influence the final decision for the Pilot's Go-Live as they cover scenarios that may not be addressed in the EAT phase. Essentially, these additional testing phases provide supplementary insights into the system's readiness, reliability, and performance. However, the ultimate decision hinges on the outcomes of the mandatory EAT phase.

Due to the short-term nature of the project, there will be one single test environment for EAT, CBT, and UT interconnected with the T2 UTEST Test environment and all testing phases will overlap to some degree. In addition, the testing shall prepare for the transition to production and prepare the onboarding to production after the Go-live of the solution.

#### Testing stages and scope

After the successful conclusion of service provider's (4CB) internal testing, the following testing period will be divided into the regular three stages consisting of (i) Eurosystem Acceptance Testing (EAT), (ii) Central Bank Testing (CBT) and (iii) User Testing (UT), each phase will focus on its special needs. Due to the special nature of the EAT, the phase will cover the end-to-end process of the Pilot in the definition and execution of the test cases. The scope of EAT is to verify that the delivered software is in line with the specifications for Pontes Pilot, i.e. Business Description Document (BDD) and Service Description.

### **3. Pilot Phase – High Level Testing Timeline**

The present testing timeline represents the baseline for the regular reporting. One single test environment will be shared amongst EAT, CBT and UT adding to the overlaps of the different stages stated before due to the short testing time.



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	2026												2027
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Internal Acceptance Testing - IAT (Actors: Service Providing Central Banks)													
EAT Connectivity					15.04.	15.05.							
Eurosystem Acceptance Testing - EAT (Actors: ECB)					18.05.			31.08.					
CBT Connectivity						01.06.-30.06.							
Central Bank Testing - CBT (Actors: NCB)							01.07.		11.09.*				
UT Connectivity							01.07.-30.07.						
User Testing - UT (Actors: all)								01.08.	11.09.*				
Go-live													
Pilot Phase													

\* 11.09.26 cut-off date refers to the mandatory testing to be conducted by CBs and market participants using the Pilot immediately as of Go-live

All dates tentative

## 4. Testing Approach

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define the testing framework and to describe how the Eurosystem and Pontes Pilot participants will test the Pontes Pilot functionality and perform the required testing in view of preparing the Go-live and the onboarding to the Pontes Pilot.

Furthermore, a clear set of responsibilities and activities of all relevant stakeholders during the testing period is defined as well as the testing governance and an appropriate escalation procedure to ensure the early addressing of all high priority issues.

The internal testing phase of the 4CB as Service Provider is followed by three different testing stages consisting of the Eurosystem Acceptance Testing stage (EAT), the Central Bank Testing stage (CBT) and the User Testing stage (UT). Their principles, the dedicated entry criteria and further details for each phase are described in this document.

All three stages will share one single test environment, and their testing phases will overlap. Restrictions and rules resulting from the use of a single test environment will be described in a dedicated Pontes Pilot Testing Terms of Reference (ToR) document, covering all testing stages.

### 4.2 Risks and Root causes

The proposed timeline and testing approach are contingent upon early mitigation of identified risks and related root causes. The inherent risks and root causes will be monitored and reported regularly within the Pontes Project, with mitigation and contingency actions applied to prevent delays and protect critical

test coverage where feasible. The ECB TQR Team will escalate all risks identified in testing to the Risk Owners.

### 4.3 Expectations of the Eurosystem regarding testing by the Service Provider

Before the new product is deployed to the Eurosystem Acceptance Testing Stage, 4CB as service provider will conduct internal acceptance tests (IAT) covering functional, technical and operational aspects as described in the published specifications. Furthermore, 4CB is going to execute End-to-End (E2E) testing to certificate (CER) the quality of the solution as a whole. This also includes the testing of the non-functional requirements as described in the Pontes Pilot Business Description Document. The 4CB Internal Acceptance Testing Approach (IATA) will be shared with the ECB for information, and dedicated IAT reports will be provided to the ECB at relevant points during the IAT phase.

### 4.4 Eurosystem Acceptance Testing Stage (EAT)

The EAT under ECB responsibility gives an independent view on behalf of the Eurosystem. The objective of the EAT phase is to confirm the compliance of the Pontes Pilot implementation against its specifications (Business Description Document, Service Description).

The EAT is started after the 4CB internal testing (IAT) and certification testing (CERT) have been successfully concluded. EAT relies on the execution of end-to-end scenarios, selected following a risk-based approach. While the following subsections provide an overview of the envisaged approach for EAT, a dedicated EAT approach document (EATA) will detail the relevant elements e.g. testing scope, entry/exit criteria or test methods. The EAT objective is to test the perspective of every possible role/actor, subject to risk and challenges identified in chapter 4.2.

#### 4.4.1 EAT Principles

The following principles applying to the EAT activities were agreed by the MIB in November 2023.

Principle	Description	Interpretation for Pontes Pilot
1	EAT performs an acceptance phase to give a recommendation for the subsequent phase	Provide assurance on the full alignment of the solution with the specifications (BDD, Service Description) before the start of the CBT.



2	EAT scopes focus particularly on cross-TARGET Services interactions	Test cases will be prioritised involving multiple components of the Pontes Pilot architecture i.e. the interactions between Pontes Pilot components with T2 RTGS.
3	EAT testing takes place in L2 test environment, using constellations not conflicting with other stakeholders, being aligned to TARGET Services best practices	Rules for the use of the single test environment will be defined in an overall Testing ToR for Pontes Pilot phase.
4	EAT promotes increased collaboration for the preparation and/or execution of testing campaigns with testing communities	ECB TQR Team executing EAT will closely collaborate with 4CB colleagues and groups/subgroups organising and monitoring the Pontes Pilot testing effort.
5	EAT follows a risk-based approach	This approach optimises the test scope given the limited amount of time and/or resources to assess the well-functioning of the system and to define the criticality of all scenarios to be tested allowing to prioritise certain business scenarios over less critical ones.
6	EAT tests in a black box approach, i.e. executing end-to-end scenarios in the defined test environment	Test cases will be defined based upon published specifications (BDD, Service Description).
7	EAT leverages automated testing capabilities, in particular regression campaigns	Through usage of predefined tools, e.g. Jira, B2S, Postman, etc.
8	ECB specific functionalities to be tested on behalf of ECB	To be defined once specifications are available.
9	EAT seeks continuous improvement	Experience gained from the Pilot phase will be considered for the Pontes testing.
10	EAT is fully transparent to all its stakeholders	Dedicated reporting in the stakeholders' groups will be implemented.

#### **4.4.2 EAT Entry Criteria**

To start with EAT, several preconditions need to be met:

- IATA report provided by 4CB on successful conclusion of IAT and CER;
- Information to the MIB via the Pontes WG on the start of the EAT phase;
- Connectivity to test environment is established;
- Reference Data Set-up executed; and
- Process for possible bug fixing and resulting regression testing is defined.

#### **4.4.3 EAT – scope**

The ECB Testing, Quality and Readiness team (ECB TQR Team) will define test cases based upon the Business Description Document and the Service Description and cover the defined roles and actors (cf. chapter 1.2) to the extent possible. The test cases must be successfully passed after completion of EAT to provide the MIB via the Pontes WG with a recommendation for the Pilot's entry into Production.

Whereas the report on the non-functional tests executed by 4CB are reviewed within the EAT phase, non-functional requirements incl. their testing and operational topics are out of scope.

#### **4.4.4 EAT – test environment**

One single test environment – “L2 Test Environment” - will be provided where Eurosystem Acceptance Testing, Central Bank Testing and User Testing will take place.

The exact specifications of the environment will be elaborated in the respective Testing ToR, including also connections to market DLT test environments and T2 UTEST environment. The test environment provided should be segregated either physically or logically (if certain criteria are met) from the production environment and have sufficient capacity to ensure smooth testing and allow for sufficient test coverage.

#### **4.4.5 EAT – participants**

EAT stage is under the responsibility of the ECB Testing, Quality and Readiness Team (ECB TQR Team).

#### **4.4.6 EAT – test approach**

Without hampering the independent nature of the EAT testing stage, the preparation and execution of the testing will exploit the synergies between ECB TQR team, ECB functional team, the 4CB functional team and the 4CB internal testing team.

Given the size and the timeline of the project, the aim of the EAT testing is to cover 100% of the functional requirements of the Pontes Pilot Phase to provide the MIB with maximum reassurance on the compliance and quality of the service prior to its formal acceptance.

The execution of EAT will be divided into different stages with an incremental approach to allow the start of the subsequent CBT and UT phases. The MIB will be regularly informed via the Pontes WG on the status of the acceptance testing.

The EAT testing consists of:

- Validating end-to-end connectivity;
- Testing and acting as roles and profiles defined for Pontes Pilot;
- Verifying the compliance of the system to its (functional) specifications;
- Reviewing the outcome of the non-functional tests performed by 4CB;
- Signalling major issues which may endanger the Go-live decision; and
- Assessing the quality for the start of the subsequent phase.

#### **4.4.7 EAT – reporting**

Notwithstanding a regular reporting in the Pontes WG and Pontes Market Contact Group (MCG), further documents might need to be provided, amongst which can be found:

- Eurosystem Acceptance Test Approach (EATA);
- EAT report for recommending the start of the subsequent test phases; and
- EAT recommendation as input for decision of Pontes Pilot Go-Live.

#### **4.4.8 EAT - timeline**

Following the connectivity testing, the currently foreseen timeline for the EAT functional test execution is to start on 18/05/26 and end 31/08/26. Prerequisite for the start of the EAT are the conditions mentioned under 4.4.2.

## **4.5 Central Bank Testing (CBT)**

The start of CB Testing will precede the start of User Testing to allow Central Banks to validate the appropriate system setup and the CB functionality prior to the user testing.

The CBT is started after the successful conclusion of a first EAT phase and shall focus on the functionalities linked to their roles in the design of Pontes Pilot and the integration with their own systems. Additional testcases to prepare the subsequent UT phase could be useful, too.

### **4.5.1 CBT Fundamentals**

The following aspects will be covered by the CBT phase:

- Provide assurance on the quality of the system before the start of UT;
- Rules for the use of the single test environment will be defined in a Testing ToR;
- CBT will be closely monitored by ECB and close collaboration with 4CB colleagues is key for the success of this and the subsequent UT phase; and
- Any NCB joining the Pontes Pilot will need to confirm the functioning of the intended roles before giving a recommendation to start their community's User testing.

### **4.5.2 CBT Entry Criteria**

To start with CBT, a number of preconditions need to be met:

- Information to the MIB via the Pontes WG on the start of the CBT phase after successful conclusion of a first EAT phase;
- Connectivity to test environment is established;
- Reference Data Set-up executed; and
- Process for possible bug fixing and resulting regression testing is defined

### **4.5.3 CBT – scope**

Each participating CB will define test cases based upon the Business Description Document and the Service Description and meeting the individual business needs. The CBT is mandatory for those CBs owning a node in the Pilot phase and admitting market participants to their node. Also, the CBT for a given CB needs to be completed to allow the start of UT phase for their participants. The ECB will require evidence on the successful completion of the Central Banks testing or those CBs owning a node in

Pontes (cf. execution of mandatory test cases for certification) and/or having participants at the time of the Go-live.

One mandatory dress-rehearsal will be planned for those being part of the Go-live in case of need, individual re-tests can be planned.

#### **4.5.4 CBT – test environment**

One single test environment – “Pontes Pilot Test Environment” - will be provided where Eurosystem Acceptance Testing, Central Bank Testing and User Testing will take place. This Pontes Pilot Test environment will be connected to T2 UTEST environment.

The exact specifications of the environment and the connection to T2 UTEST environment will be elaborated in the respective Testing ToR. The test environment provided should have sufficient capacity to ensure smooth testing and allow for sufficient test coverage.

#### **4.5.5 CBT – participants**

Considering the current architecture approach for Pontes Pilot, those NCBs owning a node and those, admitting participants to the solution are required to test the Pontes Pilot.

#### **4.5.6 CBT – test approach**

The objective is to give an NCB participation view about the quality and thus acceptance of the Pontes Pilot in view of the start of UT.

It consists of:

- Verifying the (functional) compliance of the system to its specifications relevant to the specific participating NCB;
- Assessing the quality in view of the start of User Testing;
- Validating end-to-end connectivity and functionality and
- Tracking the defects eventually discovered.

#### **4.5.7 CBT – reporting**

The ECB project team together with the Central Banks shall define the reporting and input templates before the start of the CBT. The results of the CBT will be recorded and consolidated by the ECB in a status report and delivered to the respective project governance bodies i.e. the Pontes WG and the MIB.

#### **4.5.8 CBT - timeline**

The currently foreseen timeline for the overall (connectivity and functional testing) CBT testing is start on 01/06/26. Prerequisite for the start of the functional CBT on 01/07/26 is a successfully executed connectivity test to the test environment and the conclusion of the set-up of reference data.

#### **4.6 User Testing (UT)**

The objective of the User Testing stage is for UT participants, i.e. market participants and market DLT operators acting on behalf of a market participant to verify that the software complies with the defined Business Description Document and to check the compatibility with their local applications, processes and procedures. The UT approach follows TARGET Services principles, i.e., participants interact with their relevant NCB, which will in turn report consolidated testing results to the Eurosystem.

For the Pontes Pilot, UT is not required for the MIB decision on the general technical go-live of the Pontes Pilot solution but considered optional. However, every UT participant in Pontes Pilot i.e. complying to the eligibility criteria at the point of entering production environment, has to undergo a UT phase which needs to be successfully concluded before being admitted to Production. “Successful” will be determined by a set of test cases defined by the Pontes WG.

As only one test environment will be available for the Pontes Pilot, EAT/CBT/UT will overlap. A Testing ToR will be drafted to circumvent mutual interference of the different testing stages. Only a successfully i.e. proved execution of the defined set of mandatory test cases will allow the user to join the production environment.

##### **4.6.1 UT Fundamentals**

The following aspects will be covered by the UT phase:

- Provide assurance on the end-to-end consistency of the business processes including relevant operational procedures;

- The registration process – aligned between participating NCBs, 4CB and ECB – will have successfully concluded; and
- Rules for the use of the single test environment will be defined in a Testing ToR.

#### **4.6.2 UT – Entry Criteria**

To start with UT, several preconditions need to be met:

- Participants have completed registration for User Testing with their Central Bank;
- Successful connectivity tests for the test environment have been performed;
- Go/No-Go recommendation from the Pontes WG via WP to start UT;
- MIB to approve the start of the UT phase;
- Confirmation by the relevant Central Bank of its readiness to support the individual participant's UT; and
- Confirmation of the reference data set-up.

#### **4.6.3 UT – scope**

The Eurosystem will define test cases in the Testing ToR based upon the specifications and meeting the individual business needs, covering also end-to-end test cases and ensuring that internal systems can properly interact with the Pontes Pilot. The ECB will require evidence on the successful completion of the UT test cases, but it is up to each Central Bank to define the verification process for its participants.

#### **4.6.4 UT – test environment**

One single test environment – “L2 Test Environment” - will be provided where Eurosystem Acceptance Testing, Central Bank Testing and User Testing will take place.

The exact specifications of the environment will be elaborated in the respective Testing ToR. The test environment provided should have sufficient capacity to ensure smooth testing and allow for sufficient test coverage.

#### **4.6.5 UT – participants**

UT participants need to comply with the eligibility criteria for Pontes Pilot as defined by the Eurosystem prior to the start of their test activities.

#### **4.6.6 UT – test Approach**

The common Testing ToR outlines the principles for the preparation, organisation and execution of User Testing, detailing the testing activities which will be carried out, the entry and exit criteria, and the roles and responsibilities of the different testing actors.

#### **4.6.7 UT – reporting**

The ECB project team together with the Central Banks shall define the reporting and input templates before the start of the UT. The results of the UT will be recorded by the relevant NCBs and consolidated by the ECB in a status report and delivered to the Pontes WG and the MIB.

The Incident Management and communication process will be described in the Testing ToR.

#### **4.6.8 UT – timeline**

The current approach allows for a subsequent user testing not earlier than 01/07/26 for the connectivity testing, and 31/07/26 for the functional testing provided that the respective NCB has passed the CBT stage.

## **5. Pontes Pilot Onboarding Strategy**

### **5.1 Onboarding Approach**

Onboarding applies for actors joining the Pilot after the Go-live date in Q3 2026 and will be possible until 31/12/2027<sup>i</sup>.

These participants need to undergo an onboarding process depending on their dedicated role in the system. Similar to the UT approach, each individual NCB is responsible for the onboarding process of its community.

The monitoring of the onboarding process is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders and the 4CB. For this purpose and to ensure a successful onboarding to Pontes Pilot, the readiness of the new participants needs to be confirmed by undergoing a certification process which consists of:

- Successfully completing the connectivity testing;
- Finalisation of the registration process; and
- Successfully completing the functional testing by confirming the execution to the stakeholders.

A dedicated onboarding guide will be drafted to serve as a guideline for the process additionally to what is described in the Pilot Service Description document or the User Handbook.

## 5.2 Pontes Pilot Registration and Connectivity Guide

The objective of the Pontes Registration Guide is to deliver a description of different configurations of reference data and the registration process for a participant for the production environment. This document will be the basis for the registration process for User Testing. The Pontes Registration Guide will contain inter alia the description of configurations of Central Bank reference data that needs to be entered by the Pontes Operator, the description of configurations of participants' reference data that needs to be entered by the Central Bank and the configurations of own reference data to be done by the participants.

A **Pontes Pilot Connectivity Guide** describing the connectivity set-up to the different environments (Test and Production) is to be provided by 4CB.

Both documents will be input for the training of the onboarding teams, the preparation of Central Bank Testing and User Testing, registration to the test environment and the connectivity testing.

## 5.3 Client readiness

A dedicated Client Readiness Monitoring will be implemented and included in the Testing ToR to monitor the readiness of participating NCBs and their UT participants, i.e. market participants and market DLT operators prior to the Go-live of the Pontes Pilot.



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<sup>i</sup> This date has been agreed in the Pontes WG on 20/11/25, but could be subject to changes depending on the launch of the Pontes enhanced product.