



Euro Alliance of Payment Schemes

Press release

Euro Alliance of Payment Schemes: SEPA for cards becomes a reality

Berlin, 22 May 2007. The Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) for debit cards is becoming a reality. During an international symposium in Berlin, the Euro Alliance of Payment Schemes (EAPS) presented the structure for a future federation of card payment schemes in Europe. The objective of the EAPS is to link existing national debit card schemes to become a pan-European network by 1 January 2008. From this date, cards of participating schemes will be accepted at the ATMs and POS terminals of all other participating schemes.

The Euro Alliance of Payment Schemes is a consortium founded in mid-2006 by six leading debit card schemes in Europe to develop a cost-effective, high-performance solution for future card payments in the SEPA. The consortium partners – electronic cash (Germany), PagoBancomat/Bancomat (Italy), Multibanco (Portugal), EURO 6000 (Spain), LINK (UK) and EUFISERV (pan-European ATM system) represent more than 228 million payment cards issued in Europe, more than 2 million POS terminals and 200,000 ATMs. Equens, a pan-European provider of payment services, has participated actively in the work of the consortium as a guest.

Specific rules necessary for processing transactions across payment schemes were developed jointly by the consortium partners. This rule-set has now been released for consultation to European banks and payment schemes. It has also been presented to the European Commission and the European Central Bank, which have made supportive statements about the EAPS on a number of occasions.

In the past week, member banks of the Portuguese Multibanco scheme have decided to participate in the EAPS. The decisions of the other consortium partners are expected by the end of June 2007. In addition, every debit card scheme in Europe that meets the requirements of the SEPA Cards Framework of the European Payments Council (EPC) is invited to participate in the Alliance – every scheme can decide on its own if it wants to participate as issuer and/or acquirer and for ATM and/or POS. Discussions are underway with a number of payment schemes and banks.

In future, cardholders will be able to recognise terminals of Alliance participants by an Alliance acceptance logo, also presented in Berlin. (see attachment.) This logo can also be applied by banks to the cards they issue. For cardholders, the EAPS will provide a significantly wider base of terminals for their usage. In some European countries today such as Germany, Italy and Portugal, international debit cards are accepted at only 40 to 80% of all POS terminals. The Euro Alliance of Payment Schemes will close these "acceptance gaps" with 100% acceptance.

The Alliance will be founded as a not-for-profit company in the second half of 2007 with its headquarters in Brussels. The remit of the Alliance company will be to promote the interests

of its members. It will not provide processing services. A lean management team will ensure the functioning and efficiency of the Alliance.

Initial bilateral pilots for transaction processing are already underway between Germany & Italy, Spain & Portugal and Spain & Germany. Additional pilots between other participants will follow by the end of the year. From 1 January 2008, these pilots will be migrated into the EAPS.

For more information visit: www.card-alliance.eu or contact:

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