



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK
EUROSYSTEM

Report of the Design Contest Jury on the winning design proposals for future euro banknotes



Contents

Executive summary	4
1 Introduction	8
2 Themes and motifs for future euro banknotes	10
2.1 European culture: shared cultural spaces	10
2.2 Rivers and birds: resilience in diversity	11
3 Establishment of the Design Contest Jury	12
Design Contest Jury members	12
4 The design contest process	15
4.1 Application phase	15
4.2 Design proposal phase	17
5 Award criteria	19
5.1 Required items	19
5.2 Visual and technical aspects	19
6 Assessment process	21
7 The ten winning design proposals	23
7.1 European culture	23
7.2 Rivers and birds	25
Annex 1 List of Design Contest Jury members	27
DCJ members	27
Maryke Degryse	27
Chavdar Kenarov	27
Lisa Borgenheimer	28
Anne Pikkov	28
John Paul Dowling	28
Eleftheria Deko	29
Juan Lupiáñez Castillo	29

Constance Guisset	29
Iva Babaja	30
Tommaso Salvatori	30
Demetrios Michaelides	30
Ieva Zībārte	30
Marius Čepulis	31
Jan Glas	31
Emanuel Buttigieg	31
Stefan van der Stigchel	31
Robert Kalina	32
Marta de Figueiredo	32
Tomato Košir	32
Patrik Kovačovský	32
Timo Huusko	33
Pablo Hernández de Cos, Chair	33

Executive summary

The Eurosystem is preparing a redesign of euro banknotes that should reflect Europe's shared identity, rich cultural heritage and commitment to sustainability. The goal is to create banknotes that are not only secure and functional but also inclusive and relatable to all Europeans.

Following extensive preparatory work, in which the European Central Bank (ECB) tasked independent advisory groups and gathered insights from the public, two themes and associated motifs were chosen: "European culture", which celebrates Europe's heritage and cultural spaces, and "Rivers and birds", which symbolize freedom, unity and our connection to the natural world.

The design contest

In July 2025 the ECB launched a design contest to translate these themes into design proposals. It invited graphic designers from across the EU to submit proposals.

In the first phase of the contest, an open call for applications attracted 1,241 submissions from designers across all EU countries. 25 designers were selected to move forward to the second phase: 17 for both themes, six for "Rivers and birds" only, and two for "European culture" only.

In the second phase, starting November 2025, the selected designers were given a detailed design brief and tasked with creating designs for the €5, €10, €20, €50, €100 and €200 banknotes. Each designer was asked to prepare a visual narrative across the series while ensuring compliance with technical, legal and thematic requirements.

By the deadline of 24 April 2026 the designers had submitted 39 proposals: 23 for "Rivers and birds" and 16 for "European culture".¹

The Design Contest Jury

An independent Design Contest Jury, with members from all euro area countries, was tasked with evaluating the submissions and selecting up to ten winning design proposals, five for each theme. The jury had full autonomy in its decision-making.

The evaluation process was conducted in two stages, always with pseudonymised design proposals². In a first step, jury members independently assessed the proposals, scoring them on the basis of criteria such as creativity, thematic

¹ In three instances design proposals were not submitted.

² The design proposals were submitted via an independent third-party provider, which pseudonymised them. This ensured that neither the ECB nor the jury could link any design proposal to its designer.

consistency, accessibility and public appeal. In a second step, the jury convened at the ECB for a discussion and the selection of the winning design proposals.

The winning design proposals and the designers' descriptions

After thorough discussion and evaluation, the jury selected the ten winning design proposals described below, five for each theme. The proposals are shown in ascending order of the identification numbers allocated to them.

European culture

- EC145

The design can be explained as a reflection on how culture is formed. The eyes represent observing, sensing and reflecting, while the mouth symbolises expression, dialogue and exchange. By focusing on these elements, the portraits move beyond individual identity towards a shared human capacity for cultural production. On the reverse, contemporary cultural spaces show people of different backgrounds and ages meeting and interacting. Together, the two sides connect individual perception and expression with collective exchange, inviting the public to see the banknotes as representations of culture as a living, shared process.

- EC564

The design aims to illustrate the official motto of the EU – “United in diversity”. Europe is united by a rich shared cultural history and heritage, represented by the portraits of iconic European figures. It is united by shared values and a sense of belonging, strengthened by the diversity of cultural identities. This diversity is visualised in a collage through a multitude of forms and textures that together create a new whole, uniting these different elements. The collage forms the background for the hand-drawn portraits and depictions of shared cultural spaces as concrete manifestations of these ideas.

- EC617

An engaging gaze meets the viewer from the centre of the banknote. It encapsulates a proposal, an idea and a dialogue between those who have forged our cultural identity and those of us who are making Europe a place at the forefront of thought, keeping the spirit of these figures alive in our daily lives. A dominant, consistent and recognisable colour meets a linear pattern that provides a shared texture, within a structure that holds the whole together. If we turn the banknotes horizontally, we see four vertical blocks, each inspired by a letter: “E”, “U”, “R” and “O”.

- EC799

The design tells a simple story: Europe is a shared cultural space. Each banknote is instantly identifiable by its dominant colour and its own central motif; each portrays a personality whose life and work connect Europeans across centuries. The reverse pairs a map of Europe, lightly overlaid with the constellations that have long guided travellers, with a present-day scene of the cultural space the note represents –

performing arts, music, schools, libraries, museums and public squares. People are rendered without specific features so that citizens can recognise themselves in them.

- EC915

The communicative approach focuses on the universal value of each person's work rather than their personality. The circle and the symbols function as a visual message denoting an intellectual space. This space offers the viewer immediate visual familiarity. Simultaneously, symbolic details provide subtle references for a deeper conceptual reading. In this way, the design communicates that, despite the diversity of the individuals, their contribution constitutes a unified source of inspiration and a means of reconnecting with familiar, yet ever-evolving cultural values.

Rivers and birds

- RB120

From the beat of a bird's wing to the flow of rivers, movement is at the heart of this proposal. It seeks to embody both the dynamism of the EU and the tangible and intangible flows that pass through its territory. As a true messenger, the bird – appearing alone on the front and as a group on the back – symbolises the dialogue and interdependence between our societies and nature. From a river's source to the ocean, the bird's flight reveals the landscape it traverses through the interweaving of two patterns – one hand-drawn in felt-tip pen and the other vector-based – embodying cohesion through diversity.

- RB227

The "Rivers and birds" banknote series communicates its concept through a direct connection between visual elements and their meaning. Each banknote presents a specific bird species in relation to its habitat, linking biodiversity with European landscapes. Horizontal bar structures translate the individual sound of each bird into a visual form, while a vertical scale indicates its flight speed, enabling an intuitive reading of the information. Concise data on the front further contextualise the species. On the reverse, EU buildings and the map of Europe establish a connection between natural environments and shared cultural identity.

- RB637

This euro banknote series tells a visual story of European rivers, from their origins in mountain springs to merging with the sea. The main characters are the European birds in their natural habitats. The higher the banknote denomination, the closer the imagery gets to the sea. The security foils each show one phase of a river with the associated bird, and work as an infographic device, introducing the narrative concept of the banknote series. Even the EU buildings on the reverse sides of the banknotes merge with the wings of the particular birds on the front sides.

- RB754

Water flows. It is the very foundation for life, shaping our environment and the habitats for the rich European birdlife depicted on the banknotes. Also, water can take on many characteristics, such as balance or consistency. Using these qualities as analogies for the EU institutions creates trust and understanding of their functions. A drop might seem negligible, but over centuries a stream is powerful enough to sculpt mountain ranges. One person might seem insignificant, but millions of people united by a common goal are resilient and powerful. In this light, water is a fitting analogy for the EU.

- RB832

Six birds appear within abstracted landscapes, connected by the continuous journey of a river, from a mountain source to a stormy sea. Light accompanies this progression, evolving from a soft presence into a dynamic, incisive force with symbolic resonance. The scenes invite close inspection, placing the viewer in the position of a birdwatcher, gathering traces of each species. On the reverse, EU institutions are expressed through human gestures and a morphing fabric-like mesh. Hands hold, stabilise, align and debate, suggesting cooperation in action, while light radiates from each building across the EU territory.

The Governing Council of the ECB will take its final decision on the future euro banknote design on the basis of the outcome of the design contest, taking into account the preferences of the public.

It is the duty of the Eurosystem 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 visually impaired people.

The ECB launched the redesign process end-2021 with the aim of giving the banknotes a new look that would better reflect Europe's shared identity and cultural diversity. The development of new themes and associated motifs has been guided by extensive collaboration with independent groups of experts and the general public. Two key advisory groups were established to propose, respectively, the themes and the associated motifs. The public were also invited to express their preferences and opinions on the proposed themes.

The Governing Council selected two themes for the design contest.

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 among 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.

On 15 July 2025, to bring these themes (and the associated motifs) to life, the ECB launched the design contest. It was open to graphic designers residing in the EU.

The contest was executed in two phases: an application phase and a design proposal phase. The first phase closed on 18 August 2025 with 1,241 applications submitted by designers from all EU countries. All applicants were assessed on the basis of their qualifications and achievements.³ 25 designers were then invited to participate in the design proposal phase: 17 were invited to provide proposals for both themes, six to submit proposals for "Rivers and birds" only, and two for "European culture" only. To maintain confidentiality and impartiality in the design contest, the names of the competing designers were not disclosed. The designers

³ The eligibility and selection criteria, which covered relevant education, professional experience and track record in creative expression (awards, exhibitions and sample projects) are set out in Annex 1 of the [Call for applications](#).

were also obliged to adhere to strict confidentiality, and not announce their participation in the contest.

The Design Contest Jury was established as part of this process, tasked with evaluating the submissions from the designers and selecting a list of up to ten winning design proposals, a maximum of five for each theme. The jury's work started in early 2025, following the previous work of the advisory groups.⁴ The jury finalised the design brief and a structured evaluation process, which it then applied to identify design proposals that best represented the selected themes and motifs and were best aligned with the ECB's vision for the future euro banknotes. The jury operated as an independent body, with the ECB acting solely as facilitator. The selection of the winning design proposals was made exclusively by the jury.

The results of the jury's work will support the Governing Council in its decision-making process. The Governing Council is expected to make a final decision on the design for the future euro banknotes at end-2026, taking into account the jury's recommendations and the results of surveys to be held during summer 2026 in which the public will express their preferences.

⁴ The process of designing the future banknotes has followed a clear structure, starting with the selection of themes and then moving on to the selection of specific motifs. The work of the respective advisory groups involved in the two stages is detailed in the [Report of the Theme Advisory Group](#) and the [Report of the Motifs Advisory Group](#).

2 Themes and motifs for future euro banknotes

The themes – the overarching concepts defining the narrative of the banknotes – were selected on the principle that euro banknotes are a symbol of European unity and should connect Europe and Europeans. The Theme Advisory Group advised on and proposed a shortlist of six themes for the future banknotes. The Governing Council, after carefully considering whether the shortlisted themes were relatable to Europeans and represented European life and values, decided to add a seventh theme, “European culture.” Following a public survey in which more than 365,000 Europeans expressed their preferences, two themes, emphasising shared identity and diversity, were selected: “European culture” and “Rivers and birds”.

The Motifs Advisory Group was then asked to propose specific motifs – visual elements embodying the themes – that are relatable to Europeans of all ages and representative of the entire euro area. On 31 January 2025, motifs were chosen for each of the themes.

2.1 European culture: shared cultural spaces

For the theme “European culture”, the motifs celebrate the shared cultural spaces that have shaped European identity over the centuries. The motifs for this theme will, on the front of the banknotes, depict iconic European personalities who have contributed to Europe’s cultural heritage. On the reverse, they will show various activities and spaces where shared cultural activities take place.

Table 1
European culture

	Front	Reverse
€5 Performing arts	Maria Callas	Street performers (music/dance/theatre) entertaining passersby
€10 Music	Ludwig van Beethoven	A song festival with a choir of children and young adults singing
€20 Universities and schools	Marie Curie Skłodowska	A school or university with a female teacher with young students. There are notebooks and books on the tables
€50 Libraries	Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra	A library with some adults reading paper and digital books. A little boy and girl in front of a bookcase trying to get a book
€100 Museums and exhibitions	Leonardo da Vinci	Adults and children admiring some examples of street art, contemporary art, etc.
€200 Public squares	Bertha von Suttner	A tree-covered square allowing people to come together, with adults and children talking, walking, playing, etc.

2.2 Rivers and birds: resilience in diversity

The motifs for the theme “Rivers and birds” follow a geographical and biological progression, moving through different stages of rivers and various bird species, emphasizing the importance of nature and environmental protection. The reverse sides feature the buildings of European institutions, which remind us of the fundamental values of the European project, which include protecting the environment.

Table 2
Rivers and birds

	Front	Reverse
€5	Mountain spring Wallcreeper next to a mountain landscape	European Parliament
€10	Waterfall Kingfisher in a waterfall or run pool	European Commission
€20	Confined river valley Bee-eater colony in a sand wall on the side of a large, confined river valley along a riverbank	European Central Bank
€50	Meandering river White stork flying over a meandering river in an unconfined river valley	Court of Justice of the European Union
€100	River mouth Avocet sweeping over the surface of a mud flat	European Council and Council of the European Union
€200	Seascape Northern gannet flying over big ocean waves	European Court of Auditors

3 Establishment of the Design Contest Jury

A Design Contest Jury composed of independent experts was established to select design proposals for the future euro banknotes. The jury's primary role was to identify up to five design proposals for each theme, which would then be presented, together with the outcome of public surveys, for the final selection by the Governing Council. Each euro area country – including Bulgaria when it became part of the euro area on 1 January 2026 – was represented by one jury member nominated by their national central bank.

The jury was formed following the Governing Council's approval in June 2024 of the design contest framework and jury selection procedure. All of the Eurosystem national central banks proposed at least one candidate with expertise in fields such as graphic design, industrial design, architecture, communication or neuroscience. From these nominations, 21 members, one per country, were selected on the basis of defined criteria⁵, ensuring diversity in age, gender and professional background. Pablo Hernández de Cos, General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements, was appointed as the Chair of the jury.

Meetings were conducted either remotely or in person, with confidentiality agreements in place.

The jury's work began in early 2025 and spanned both preparatory and evaluative phases. Before the contest began, the jury finalised the design brief and the related award criteria. Following the submission of design proposals, it then assessed each design proposal according to the award criteria, and produced a list of winning design proposals for each of the themes. The jury's report, together with the outcome of the public surveys, will form the basis of the Governing Council's decision on the final design, to follow at end-2026. The jury members were prohibited from participating in the design contest.

Design Contest Jury members

- Maryke Degryse, Banknote and graphic designer, formerly of Nationale Bank van België / Banque Nationale de Belgique
- Chavdar Kenarov, founder and Creative Director, illustrator and graphic designer Noble Graphics, Bulgaria⁶

⁵ Decision (EU) 2016/245 of the European Central Bank of 9 February 2016 laying down the rules on procurement (ECB/2016/2) (OJ L 45, 20.2.2016, p. 15).

⁶ Member from January 2026, when the euro was introduced in Bulgaria.

- Lisa Borgenheimer, Professor of Information Design, Offenbach am Main University of Art and Design, Germany
- Anne Pikkov, graphic designer, book Illustrator and Vice-Rector, Estonian Academy of the Arts
- John Paul Dowling, Head of Department of Communication Design, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, Ireland
- Eleftheria Deko, lighting designer, Edeko Lighting Studio, and former professor at A.U.T.H. School of Fine Arts, Greece
- Juan Lupiáñez Castillo, Professor of Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Granada, Spain
- Constance Guisset, designer, Constance Guisset Studio, France
- Iva Babaja, Assistant Professor in visual design and public visual communications design, Algebra Bernays University, Zagreb, Croatia
- Tommaso Salvatori, Designer/Director/Professor in Visual Communications; Dean, Head of Institution, Visual Designer, ISIA Roma Design academy / Intorno Design, Rome, Italy
- Demetrios Michaelides, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology, University of Cyprus / Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Arts
- Ieva Zībārte, architect and writer, Latvia
- Marius Čepulis, naturalist photographer/communicator, self-employed, Lithuania
- Jan Glas, industrial design engineer, Luxembourg
- Emanuel Buttigieg, Associate Professor in History, Faculty of Arts, University of Malta
- Stefan van der Stigchel, Professor of Cognitive Psychology, Utrecht University, the Netherlands
- Robert Kalina, Banknote designer, formerly of Oesterreichische Nationalbank, Austria
- Marta de Figueiredo, graphic designer, formerly of Banco de Portugal
- Tomato Košir, graphic designer and typographer, self-employed, Slovenia
- Patrik Kovačovský, Professor/Head of the Art in Architecture Department, designer, sculptor and Professor of the Art in Architecture Studio, Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia
- Timo Huusko, art historian, Finnish National Gallery/University of Turku, Finland

- Chair: Pablo Hernández de Cos, General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements

4 The design contest process

The design contest was organised to obtain a diverse set of creative design proposals from which winning design proposals would be selected for each theme. The process was designed to be fair, transparent, and open, ensuring equal opportunities for all participants within the EU.

Clear rules for the contest, covering the procedure, criteria for all the steps, financial compensation and intellectual property rights requirements, were made available to the participants. Participation in the design contest was open to graphic designers from all over the EU, with or without experience in banknote design, broadening the expertise and ideas that would flow into the design proposals.

Given the high number of expected applications, it was decided to run the contest in two main phases: the first phase identified skilled and experienced designers on the basis of their achievements in graphic design or similar fields. The best candidates then advanced to the second phase, in which they were invited to prepare design proposals. Both phases were part of a single ECB procurement process and were implemented following predefined selection and award criteria.

4.1 Application phase

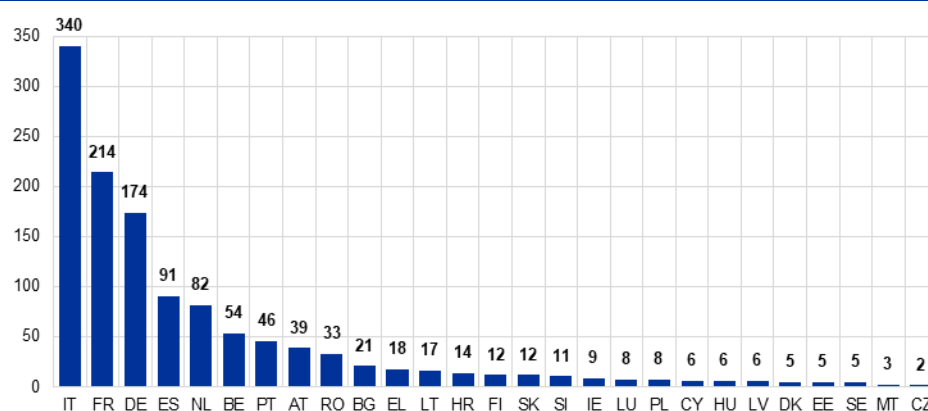
The design contest was launched with the opening of the application period for graphic designers residing in the European Union. The opening of the contest was published in the European Union's Official Journal. In parallel, the ECB and national central banks raised awareness of the contest to encourage a broad range of qualified graphic designers to apply.

Information on the design contest was provided on the ECB's website, and a dedicated design contest portal was made available to receive applications. Designers could apply as an individual applicant, a team of natural persons, a legal entity, a team of legal entities or a legal entity with subcontractors. Besides providing details on their relevant education and recent relevant achievements, designers were also asked to indicate if they intended to compete for both themes, or only for either "Rivers and birds" or "European culture."

During the application period, which lasted from 15 July 2025 to 18 August 2025, 1,241 applications were received from designers residing in all EU countries.

Chart 1

Number of applicants by country



Applicants had a broad range of profiles, including artists, graphic designers and banknote designers. Applications were received from individuals, teams of designers and businesses. Group applicants were required to identify a lead designer whose qualifications formed the basis of the assessment.

To identify the applicants to be invited to the second phase of the design contest, the ECB applied two criteria:

1. compliance with the formal requirements⁷ of the contest and the eligibility criteria;
2. qualification in accordance with the predefined selection criteria (covering relevant education, professional experience and a proven track-record of creative expression, through awards, exhibitions and sample projects).

An initial assessment was carried out using the application data provided via the dedicated design contest portal. The 28 designers with the highest scores, based on the predefined selection criteria outlined in Annex 1 of the [Call for Applications](#), were shortlisted. Following this initial shortlisting, their applications were further validated using supporting documentation which the designers provided upon request after the shortlisting.

In total, 25 designers qualified and were invited to participate in the second phase of the contest: 17 designers were invited to provide design proposals for both themes, six for “Rivers and birds” only and two for “European culture” only. To maintain confidentiality and ensure impartiality in the assessment of design proposals, the names of the selected designers were not disclosed. The designers were also obliged to adhere to strict confidentiality rules, not announcing the participation in the contest.

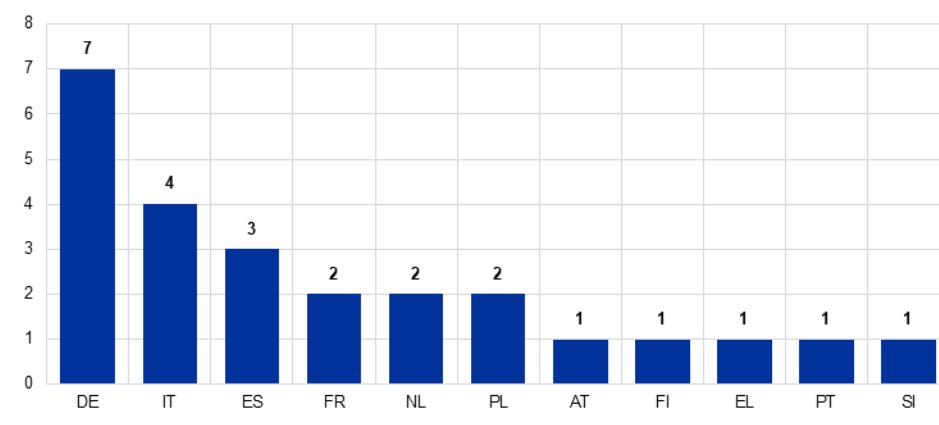
⁷ See Chapter IV, Section 2 of the Call for Applications.

4.2 Design proposal phase

The 25 designers invited to Phase 2 of the design contest resided in 11 different EU countries.

Chart 2

Designers by country of residence



Approximately 40% of the lead designers were female. Neither residence nor gender were considered in the selection process.

The second phase began on 7 November 2025, when the selected designers were informed that they had been admitted to this phase. The designers were tasked with developing design proposals for the €5, €10, €20, €50, €100 and €200 banknotes. Designers were asked for design proposals meeting functional requirements but also provided a compelling visual story that resonates with Europe's values and diverse cultures.

To ensure the banknotes remained recognisable and consistent across the series, designers were required to adhere to the detailed guidelines in the design brief setting out characteristics such as the dominant colour and the size of the banknotes (same as for the current series). Common design elements that had to be integrated included the European flag, the map of Europe and a placeholder for the signature of the President of the ECB. Designers also had to address accessibility requirements, such as tactile features and contrasting colours, to make the banknotes easy to identify for visually impaired users.

Although the security features, such as foil stripes, optically variable elements and watermarks, will be decided on and incorporated later, designers were asked to propose images that could later be transformed into security features. These security elements are essential for preventing counterfeiting, while ensuring that the banknotes remain visually appealing and easy for the public to authenticate.

While creativity and originality were encouraged, designers had to work within a structured framework that included technical and legal constraints. For example, they were required to use images provided as starting points for their designs and ensure

that all other design elements used were free from intellectual property rights. Additionally, the ECB placed strong emphasis on thematic consistency, requiring designers to create a narrative that ties the series together, while differentiating each denomination.

During the design phase designers had the opportunity to ask questions. Where appropriate, the answers were shared transparently with all participants via a Q&A process. The designers submitted their final proposals by a deadline of 24 April 2026.

Submissions were made via a third-party provider, which pseudonymised the proposals and forwarded them to the ECB. This was done to underline the impartiality of the process and the independent assessment by the jury.

During the design phase, one participant decided to withdraw from the contest (for the theme “Rivers and birds”). In addition, two design proposals for the theme “European culture” were not submitted. Thus, all in all, 39 design proposals were submitted, 23 for “Rivers and birds” and 16 for “European culture”. Following the submission, the Design Contest Jury evaluated the proposals on the basis of the criteria outlined in Chapter 5.

All designers were compensated for their efforts in participating in the design contest, with the winning designers receiving an extra payment as a prize. A total of 25 designers were invited to Phase 2, each receiving a compensation of €5,000 per theme. Designers submitting complete proposals in Phase 2 were further compensated with €10,000 per theme, and the designers received an additional €10,000 per theme for each winning design proposal.

5 Award criteria

The design contest was conducted as an EU-wide procurement procedure, and all submissions were consistently evaluated against 13 predefined and transparently communicated criteria, developed and agreed on by the jury. The criteria were divided into two categories: required items and visual and technical aspects. Each criterion had a specific weight in the evaluation.

5.1 Required items

There were five required items, each weighted at 20% and collectively contributing to 40% to the overall evaluation score.

Table 3

List of required items and weights

Required items	Weight in %
Compulsory design elements	20
Mandatory design of security features	20
Avoidance of nationalistic symbols	20
Completeness of deliverables	20
Position of security features	20

Each required item was assessed using a scoring system ranging from 0 to 3 points. The score for each required item was multiplied by its assigned weight of 20%. To proceed to the evaluation of visual and technical aspects, submissions had to achieve an average score of more than 2.5 points across all required items.

5.2 Visual and technical aspects

The design proposals were also evaluated on the basis of eight visual and technical aspects, focusing on creativity, technical execution and thematic consistency. This contributed 60% to the overall score.

Table 4

List of visual and technical aspects and weights

Visual and technical aspects	Weight in %
Visual harmony and coherence of the complete full series	10
Thematic consistency with the theme and the story	10
Visual appeal and aesthetic quality	20
Symbolism and cultural representation of the EU	10
Discrimination between denominations	10
Public recognition	5
Accessibility	10
Creativity and originality	25

The visual and technical aspects were assessed on a scoring system ranging from 0 to 5 points. The score for each aspect was multiplied by its assigned weight (ranging from 5% to 25%) and contributed 60% to the final evaluation. The total score for each submission was calculated by combining the weighted scores for the required items (40%) and for the visual and technical aspects (60%). The final score was given to two decimal places.

All designers admitted to Phase 2 were briefed on the award criteria.

6 Assessment process

In the first step of the assessment process, between 11 and 22 May 2026, each jury member individually and independently assessed the pseudonymised proposals on the basis of the pre-established criteria (see Chapter 5).

To ensure confidentiality and control over sensitive materials, the assessment of the proposals was conducted at the ECB in Frankfurt. All materials necessary for the assessment, both in print and electronically, were provided by the ECB. Each jury member received booklets containing details of the design proposals for the six denominations, and the watermarks and foils, as well as the accompanying stories. Boards showing each proposal were also displayed in the rooms. Electronic materials, including the full design proposal submissions, were accessible through ECB-provided laptops. Measures were taken to ensure equal treatment of the design proposals during the assessment. For example, display boards were set up in a randomised order which was altered between assessment days. The order in which jury members assessed the designs was also randomised.

In a second step, the jury members met for a discussion at the ECB on 28-29 May to finalise the selection of the winning design proposals. The meeting was held in a conference room equipped with display boards showing all design proposals, and booklets containing details of the proposals. To initiate the discussion, jury members were provided with scores – calculated from the initial assessment of the first step – supported by graphic representation and normalisation of the assessment data.

The discussion was structured so as to identify the winning design proposals per theme. The jury emphasised the importance of collective decision-making and reaching agreement when making their decisions.

European culture

The meeting began with an exhibition of the design proposals for the theme “European Culture”, displayed in order of rank resulting from step one of the exercise. The displays were complemented by assessment data, allowing jury members to compare their own assessment with the jury’s average. The jury then discussed the top-ranked design proposals, as well as some lower-ranked proposals that individual members felt deserved further attention.

The jury exchanged views on how well the design proposals reflected European heritage and worked as practical, user-friendly banknote designs. They appreciated design proposals that were visually clear, accessible to everyone and made it easy to distinguish between different denominations. They also considered whether the design proposals appeared traditional or unconventional for euro banknotes. By the end of their discussions the jury had selected five winning design proposals for this theme.

Rivers and birds

The second half of the meeting focused on design proposals for the theme “Rivers and birds”. As before, the session started with an exhibition of the proposals, followed by in-depth discussion.

The jury looked at how well the design proposals brought the theme to life by blending architectural and natural elements. They considered both bold, innovative ideas and design proposals that leaned more toward traditional styles. After thorough discussions, five design proposals were also selected for this theme.

Summary

The jury praised design proposals that achieved a balance between creativity and practicality. They looked for design proposals that reflected European identity and heritage through meaningful symbolism. The selected design proposals were described as being visually clear and easy to understand, as making the different denominations easy to tell apart, and as being inclusive and accessible for all users.

The jury also highlighted the importance of creating banknotes that resonate with the public, represent European values, and stand out on the global stage, while still being functional for everyday use.

The meeting resulted in the choice of five winning design proposals for the theme “Rivers and birds”, and five for the theme “European culture”, collectively agreed upon by the jury as the outcome of its work and the procurement process.

The results of the design contest will serve as the basis for the Governing Council’s final decision on the future euro banknote design.

7 The ten winning design proposals

Each designer provided a brief description of their design proposal. The jury reviewed and assessed all submissions, selecting the five winning design proposals for each theme without ranking. The ten design proposals were evaluated and discussed in detail, focusing on the standout features and highlights of each design proposal.

7.1 European culture

- **EC145**

The design can be explained as a reflection on how culture is formed. The eyes represent observing, sensing and reflecting, while the mouth symbolises expression, dialogue and exchange. By focusing on these elements, the portraits move beyond individual identity towards a shared human capacity for cultural production. On the reverse, contemporary cultural spaces show people of different backgrounds and ages meeting and interacting. Together, the two sides connect individual perception and expression with collective exchange, inviting the public to see the banknotes as representations of culture as a living, shared process.

Jury assessment: The design proposal is an original and minimalist interpretation of the theme. The focus on the eyes and the mouth in the portraits on the front provides symbols of perception and expression. The overall design is cohesive and aligns the two sides. The simple and coherent approach, and the clear structure of the series, make the design proposal effective and distinctive.

- **EC564**

The design aims to illustrate the official motto of the EU – “United in diversity”. Europe is united by a rich shared cultural history and heritage, represented by the portraits of iconic European figures. It is united by shared values and a sense of belonging, strengthened by the diversity of cultural identities. This diversity is visualised in a collage through a multitude of forms and textures that together create a new whole, uniting these different elements. The collage forms the background for the hand-drawn portraits and depictions of shared cultural spaces as concrete manifestations of these ideas.

Jury assessment: The design proposes a very different approach to banknote design, in particular with a manual and original interpretation of the portraits. The watercolour background also participates in the vibrancy of the design proposal. The concept is artistically very interesting and provides a strong communication message.

- **EC617**

An engaging gaze meets the viewer from the centre of the banknote. It encapsulates a proposal, an idea and a dialogue between those who have forged our cultural identity and those of us who are making Europe a place at the forefront of thought, keeping the spirit of these figures alive in our daily lives. A dominant, consistent and recognisable colour meets a linear pattern that provides a shared texture, within a structure that holds the whole together. If we turn the banknotes horizontally, we see four vertical blocks, each inspired by a letter: “E”, “U”, “R” and “O”.

Jury assessment: The design proposal stands out as innovative, unconventional and modern. It is clear, coherent and easily recognisable. The design is well structured, with good use of the available space. It is well researched and constitutes a strong communication vehicle. The use of the colours creates clear differentiation between denominations.

- **EC799**

The design tells a simple story: Europe is a shared cultural space. Each banknote is instantly identifiable by its dominant colour and its own central motif; each portrays a personality whose life and work connects Europeans across centuries. The reverse pairs a map of Europe, lightly overlaid with the constellations that have long guided travellers, with a present-day scene of the cultural space the note represents – performing arts, music, schools, libraries, museums and public squares. People are rendered without specific features so that citizens can recognise themselves in them.

Jury assessment: The design proposal makes good use of the design elements. In particular, the integration on the reverse side of the map and the representation of diverse people provide a strong symbolism and sense of community. The structure provides continuity with the current series, and the use of saturated colours ensures clear recognition of different denominations.

- **EC915**

The communicative approach focuses on the universal value of each person’s work rather than their personality. The circle and the symbols function as a visual message denoting an intellectual space. This space offers the viewer immediate visual familiarity. Simultaneously, symbolic details provide subtle references for a deeper conceptual reading. In this way, the design communicates that, despite the diversity of the individuals, their contribution constitutes a unified source of inspiration and a means of reconnecting with familiar, yet ever-evolving cultural values.

Jury assessment: The design proposes a very classical and well-thought-out interpretation of the theme. Its clean lines, typography and pastel colours create a functional and approachable design. The reverse side has clear alignments with the personalities on the front and their cultural achievements. The structure of the design proposal provides clear continuity with the current series of euro banknotes.

7.2 Rivers and birds

- **RB120**

From the beat of a bird's wing to the flow of rivers, movement is at the heart of this proposal. It seeks to embody both the dynamism of the EU and the tangible and intangible flows that pass through its territory. As a true messenger, the bird – appearing alone on the front and as a group on the back – symbolises the dialogue and interdependence between our societies and nature. From a river's source to the ocean, the bird's flight reveals the landscape it traverses through the interweaving of two patterns – one hand-drawn in felt-tip pen and the other vector-based – embodying cohesion through diversity.

Jury assessment: The proposed design is clean, consistent and very relatable. The flight of birds and the flow of rivers symbolise unity and movement. The hand-drawn grid adds texture, while the integration of landscapes, natural elements and birds with the EU institutions on the reverse side creates a good connection between the two sides. The design shows an elegant composition and vibrant colours, and effectively conveys European values in an inclusive, visually engaging and uplifting way.

- **RB227**

The “Rivers and birds” banknote series communicates its concept through a direct connection between visual elements and their meaning. Each banknote presents a specific bird species in relation to its habitat, linking biodiversity with European landscapes. Horizontal bar structures translate the individual sound of each bird into a visual form, while a vertical scale indicates its flight speed, enabling an intuitive reading of the information. Concise data on the front further contextualise the species. On the reverse, EU buildings and the map of Europe establish a connection between natural environments and shared cultural identity.

Jury assessment: The design proposes a simple and traditional composition, providing continuity with the current euro banknotes and at the same time exhibiting strong symbolism. It includes a number of innovative elements, including symbolic landscapes, encoded infographics and iconic depictions of buildings. It is a well-executed, cohesive set.

- **RB637**

This euro banknote series tells a visual story of European rivers, from their origins in mountain springs to merging with the sea. The main characters are the European birds in their natural habitats. The higher the banknote denomination, the closer the imagery gets to the sea. The security foils each show one phase of a river with the associated bird, and work as an infographic device, introducing the narrative concept of the banknote series. Even the EU buildings on the reverse sides of the banknotes merge with the wings of the particular birds on the front sides.

Jury assessment: The design shows beautiful motifs that support the narrative intention. The integration of the wing element on the reverse side connects the two

sides. A clean and original design ensures that the series is easy to recognise and distinctive.

- **RB754**

Water flows. It is the very foundation for life, shaping our environment and the habitats for the rich European birdlife depicted on the banknotes. Also, water can take on many characteristics, such as balance or consistency. Using these qualities as analogies for the EU institutions creates trust and understanding of their functions. A drop might seem negligible, but over centuries a stream is powerful enough to sculpt mountain ranges. One person might seem insignificant, but millions of people united by a common goal are resilient and powerful. In this light, water is a fitting analogy for the EU.

Jury assessment: This design offers a clean and elegant approach to integrating the European institutions into the theme. The visual representation of birds' flight patterns and habitats creates a strong narrative. The consistent interpretation across denominations ensures recognisability and cohesion. The design provides continuity with the current euro banknotes.

- **RB832**

Six birds appear within abstracted landscapes, connected by the continuous journey of a river, from a mountain source to a stormy sea. Light accompanies this progression, evolving from a soft presence into a dynamic, incisive force with symbolic resonance. The scenes invite close inspection, placing the viewer in the position of a birdwatcher, gathering traces of each species. On the reverse, EU institutions are expressed through human gestures and a morphing fabric-like mesh. Hands hold, stabilise, align and debate, suggesting cooperation in action, while light radiates from each building across the EU territory.

Jury assessment: This design offers a dynamic visual narrative with its bold use of colour and thoughtful composition. The hand-drawn birds and mesh structures create a contemporary and recognisable aesthetic. The combination of a portrait orientation on the front and landscape on the reverse provides a distinct perspective.

Annex 1

List of Design Contest Jury members

DCJ members

Maryke Degryse

Belgium, Banknote and graphic designer, formerly of Nationale Bank van België / Banque Nationale de Belgique

Maryke Degryse originates from the well-known UNESCO world heritage city of Bruges. She studied applied graphic arts at the Sint-Lucas School of Arts in Ghent and worked as a designer at the National Bank of Belgium. She contributed to the design of the final series of Belgian franc banknotes, participated in the competition to design the first euro banknotes – where her proposals were among the public's favourites – and has also designed banknotes for other countries as well as a range of security documents. Her work as an artist has also been exhibited on several occasions over the past two years. Maryke Degryse is active as a volunteer with several organisations that work with underprivileged communities and refugees.

Chavdar Kenarov

Bulgaria, founder and Creative Director, illustrator and graphic designer Noble Graphics

Chavdar Kenarov holds an MFA degree in illustration and graphic design from the Bulgarian National Academy of Fine Arts. With more than 30 years of professional experience in advertising, graphic design and visual communications, he is the founder and Creative Director of Noble Graphics, one of Bulgaria's leading communication agencies. He has received numerous awards and recognitions throughout his career from both international and local festivals and competitions for creativity and effectiveness in marketing communications. Chavdar Kenarov is a long-standing member of the Management Board of the Bulgarian Association of Communication Agencies and served as its chairman from 2022 to 2025. He is also a Board Member of the Art Directors Club of Europe (ADC*E).

Lisa Borgenheimer

Germany, Professor of Information Design, Offenbach am Main University of Art and Design

Lisa Borgenheimer has professional experience as information designer at Süddeutsche Zeitung and ZEIT Online, among others, and has worked internationally as a lecturer and freelancer. She holds a master's degree in interactive media systems from the Technical University of Applied Sciences Augsburg and has successfully completed her doctoral defence at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar (degree conferral pending, including publication).

Anne Pikkov

Estonia, graphic designer, book Illustrator and Vice-Rector, Estonian Academy of the Arts.

Anne Pikkov is Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs at the Estonian Academy of Arts, as well as a graphic designer and illustrator. Her award-winning work in book design and illustration has been exhibited internationally and is represented in prestigious collections, including the United Nations Headquarters in New York and Spiral Gallery in Tokyo. She served on the Board of Cumulus, the global association of art, design and media universities, where she championed student-centred initiatives and contributed to the organisation's strategic development. She has also served on coin design juries for the Bank of Estonia.

John Paul Dowling

Ireland, Head of Department of Communication Design, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

John Paul Dowling is a practitioner and educator in typographic research and design, recognised by organisations such as the International Society of Typographic Designers and the European Design Awards. As Head of the Department of Communication Design at the National College of Art and Design, Ireland, he has overseen the development of new academic programmes and degrees. John Paul Dowling has contributed to design education through his involvement with the International Society of Typographic Designers and continues to exhibit his work internationally. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

Eleftheria Deko

Greece, lighting designer, Edeko Lighting Studio, and former professor at A.U.T.H. School of Fine Arts.

Eleftheria Deko is a pioneer in architectural and stage lighting design in Greece, with a career spanning hundreds of projects across performances, events and installations both nationally and internationally. She has received numerous awards, including an Emmy for lighting direction at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, and global recognition for her work, such as the lighting of the Acropolis, which earned multiple international awards. Through her teaching and projects, she has significantly influenced the field of stage and architectural lighting in Greece, introducing it to academic settings and elevating its status in the arts.

Juan Lupiáñez Castillo

Spain, Professor of Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Granada.

Juan Lupiáñez Castillo is a professor and researcher in cognitive neuroscience. He directs the Cognitive Neuroscience Research Group at the Center for Mind, Brain and Behavior Research (CIMCYC) and has held visiting positions at universities in Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada and France. He has authored a book, numerous book chapters and over 200 peer-reviewed articles, some of which have earned recognition and won awards. His research focuses on the conceptual and cerebral aspects of attention and its applications across various cognitive processes.

Constance Guisset

France, designer, Constance Guisset Studio.

Constance Guisset is a French designer. She founded her studio specialising in design, interior architecture and scenography in 2009. Her work is featured in renowned collections such as the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP) and the Centre Pompidou. She collaborates with notable furniture brands and has designed spaces including for Ernest restaurant at La Samaritaine and Van Cleef & Arpels. Additionally, she creates scenography for performances and exhibitions, including the Children's Philharmonic at the Philharmonie de Paris and Veuve Clicquot's "Solaire Culture" exhibition. In 2025 she led the seventh Académie des savoir-faire by the Hermès corporate foundation.

Iva Babaja

Croatia, Assistant Professor in visual design and public visual communications design, Algebra Bernays University, Zagreb.

Iva Babaja has extensive experience in the design industry, including her tenure as the former President of the International Council of Design. Her advocacy for professional practice and her leadership in organising international exhibitions underscore her dedication to the advancement of the field. She has won accolades from the Croatian Designers Society and was awarded of the Order of Danica featuring the likeness of Marko Marulić for her contributions to visual culture and communication further highlight her qualifications and expertise.

Tommaso Salvatori

Italy, Designer/Director/Professor in Visual Communications Dean, Head of Institution, Visual Designer, ISIA Roma Design academy / Intorno Design.

Tommaso Salvatori is the Director of ISIA (Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche) in Rome, where he is also Professor of Design. He is a founding member of Intorno Design, a design studio based in Rome, where he works as Strategy and Art Director and as a visual designer. Previously, he was the Art Director and creator of the “Roma Design Experience” and also served as Art Director for the magazine “Artichoke.” Over the course of his career, he has collaborated with various companies, including Caterpillar S.p.A., Bulgari S.p.A., Angelini Farmaceutica S.p.A. and Birra Peroni.

Demetrios Michaelides

Cyprus, Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology, University of Cyprus / Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Arts.

Demetrios Michaelides has professional experience in archaeology and the history of art, acquired during his time with the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus and the University of Cyprus. Michaelides holds a PhD from the University of London.

Ieva Zībārte

Latvia, architect and writer.

Ieva Zībārte is an award-winning architect, writer and curator. She has served as the head of the New European Bauhaus National Contact Point at the Association of Latvian Architects and has published over 1,000 articles on architecture, design and culture. She serves as an external expert on Latvijas Banka’s Coin Design Committee.

Marius Čepulis

Lithuania, naturalist photographer/communicator, Self-employed.

Marius Čepulis is a wildlife photographer, writer and lecturer specializing in nature, animals, photography, and sustainability. He is the co-author, cameraman and host of the Lithuanian television show “Notes of a Naturalist”.

Jan Glas

Luxembourg, industrial design engineer.

Jan Glas has over 25 years of experience in design innovation, management and strategy. He is a consultant and lecturer in graphic and product design at the Lycée des Arts et Métiers in Luxembourg City. Focused on the circular economy, social impact and co-creation methods, Jan Glas advocates for co-design and design thinking to enhance solutions for businesses and societal issues. He co-founded the Luxembourg Creative Industries Cluster and organised the design competition for the new Luxembourg passport.

Emanuel Buttigieg

Malta, Associate Professor in History, Faculty of Arts, University of Malta.

Emanuel Buttigieg is an Associate Professor in early modern history at the University of Malta. He read for his PhD at the University of Cambridge and is an expert on the Knights of Malta (the Knights of St John/the Hospitallers). He is also interested in the history of gender, slavery and rituals.

Stefan van der Stigchel

The Netherlands, Professor of Cognitive Psychology, Utrecht University.

Stefan van der Stigchel is Professor and director in Cognitive Psychology at Utrecht University's Helmholtz Institute. He earned his PhD in experimental psychology from VU Amsterdam, and has held various academic positions advancing research in attention and eye movement trajectories. In addition to his research, Stefan van der Stigchel is President of the Dutch Society for Brain and Cognition, Associate Editor for the Journal of Vision, and author of several popular science books translated into multiple languages.

Robert Kalina

Austria, Banknote designer, formerly of Oesterreichische Nationalbank.

Robert Kalina is a graphic designer specialising in currency design, combining artistic creativity with technical precision and practical functionality. His work demonstrates expertise in visual communication, attention to detail and the integration of security features and cultural symbolism, resulting in intricate and iconic designs. Kalina's currency designs have been widely recognised for his ability to balance aesthetics and functionality. He designed all Austrian schilling banknotes from 1982 onwards, was the winner of the design contest for the first euro banknotes series, and has designed several banknotes and banknote series internationally.

Marta de Figueiredo

Portugal, graphic designer, formerly of Banco de Portugal.

Marta da Cunha Teles de Figueiredo holds an MBA in Design Management from INDEG/ISCTE, Lisbon (1994). She worked as a designer at Editorial Presença before joining Banco de Portugal in 1989, where she served as Communication Designer and later Head of the Editions and Publications Service until her retirement in 2024. In the course of her career, Marta led major projects such as the rebranding of Banco de Portugal, the creation of its Graphic Standards Manual, and the development of communication campaigns, publications and the central bank's Money Museum.

Tomato Košir

Slovenia, graphic designer and typographer, self-employed.

Tomato Košir is an internationally recognised expert in visual merchandising. He graduated from the Department of Design at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (ALUO) of the University of Ljubljana. He has worked for The Guardian, Politico, Weekendavisen, Weissenseer, Internazionale, Slanted, Ideer, Rockport, The One Club for Creativity, New York, and others.

Patrik Kovačovský

Slovakia, Professor/Head of the Art in Architecture Department, designer, sculptor and Professor of the Art in Architecture Studio, Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava.

Prof. Patrik Kovačovský is a renowned visual artist, professor and Head of the Department of Sculpture, Object, Installation at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (AFAD) in Bratislava. He also leads the studio "Sculpture in Architecture and Virtual Space" and serves as a guarantor of studies at AFAD. His work has been exhibited

at prominent international venues, including La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta X in Kassel, and EXPO 2000 in Hannover.

Timo Huusko

Finland, art historian, Finnish National Gallery/University of Turku.

Timo Huusko has broad expertise in art history and is the chief curator of collections at the Ateneum Art Museum (Finnish National Gallery). He was the Chair of the Committee of Commemorative Coins in Finland from 2019 to 2024. Timo Huusko holds a PhD in art history from the University of Turku.

Pablo Hernández de Cos, Chair

Chair of the Design Contest Jury

Pablo Hernández de Cos became General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements on 1 July 2025. He is a member of the Financial Stability Board and the Group of Central Bank Governors and Heads of Supervision.

Pablo Hernández de Cos was Governor of the Bank of Spain and member of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank from 2018 to 2024. From 2019 to 2024 he chaired the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and the Advisory Technical Committee of the European Systemic Risk Board. He began his career at the Bank of Spain in 1997, where he held various roles including Director General Economics, Statistics and Research. He holds a PhD in economics from the Complutense University of Madrid.

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