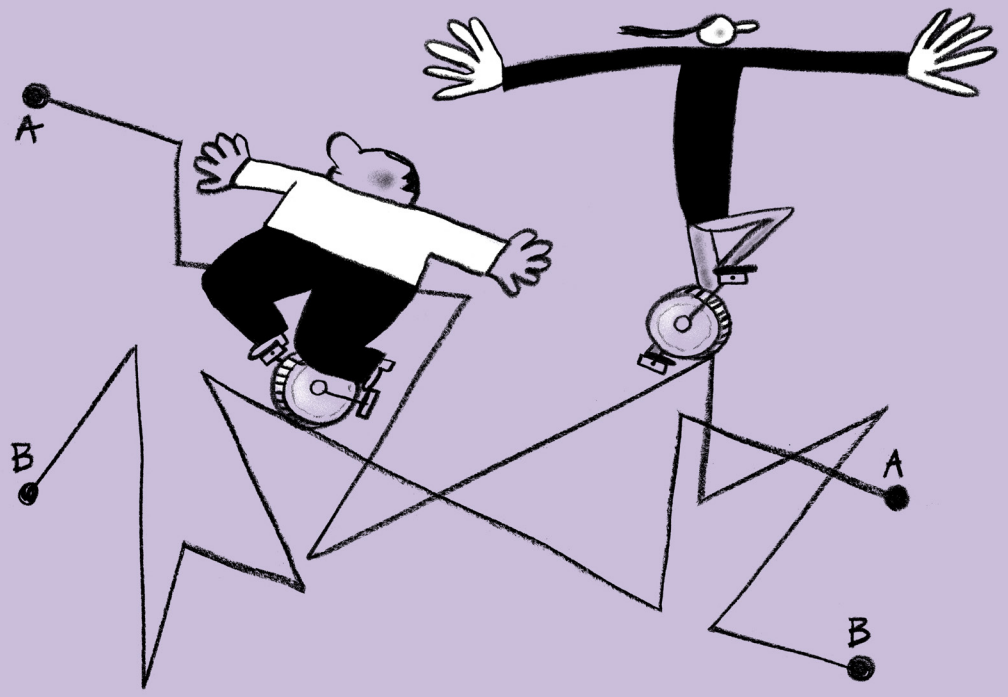


Account-to-Account Payments Report 2026

Progress Updates: Insights into A2A Tech, Interoperability, and Partnerships

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Account-to-Account Payments Report 2026

Progress Updates: Insights into A2A Tech, Interoperability, and Partnerships

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TEL: +31 20 893 4315
FAX: +31 20 658 0671
MAIL: EDITOR@THEPAYPERS.COM



Estera Sava
Senior Writer
The Paypers

Account-to-account (A2A) payments move money directly from the payer's bank account to the payee's without a card network in the middle. Consumers access them via instant payment schemes like Pix, UPI, SCT Inst, Faster Payments, FedNow, and RTP, through Open Banking payment initiation services (PIS) and variable recurring payments (VRPs), by scanning QR codes, or through bank-led schemes and wallets such as Wero, BLIK, Bizum, and Swish.

In several markets, A2A is the preferred online payment method. The 'A2A Payments Report 2025' experts interviewed for The Paypers' **2026 A2A industry updates** point to Brazil, India, and the Netherlands as markets where A2A dominates checkout, supported by public policy and mature infrastructure.

Several aspects impact growth. Instant rails' capacity is increasing: in the US, FedNow **raised its transaction limit to USD 10 million**, matching The Clearing House's RTP network, which opens instant payments to large B2B transfers. Policymakers also see A2A as a tool for competition and sovereignty.

For merchants, A2A usually costs less than cards, settles within seconds, and keeps card data out of their systems. Consumers who use mobile banking and pay by QR code find it natural, and the first agentic commerce services are starting to build on this habit.

A2A payments market size and growth

Juniper Research **expects global A2A transaction value** to grow from USD 91.5 trillion in 2025 to USD 195 trillion in 2030, at an implied CAGR of ~16%. Most of that value comes from B2B, payroll, and treasury payments, where individual transfers are large. The consumer segment is much smaller but grows faster: Juniper **forecasts** value will rise from USD 1.7 trillion in 2024 to USD 5.7 trillion in 2029, or roughly 27% a year.

In ecommerce, A2A payments accounted for 7% of global and 4% of POS value in 2025, according to Worldpay's **Global Payments Report 2026**, while digital wallets accounted for **56% of online spending**. Thailand and Brazil show how far A2A payments can go. PromptPay use sat at 44% of Thai online spending in 2025, and Pix at 42% of ecommerce and 34% of POS value.

APAC leads on volume. UPI processed 24.51 billion transactions in August 2026, a 22% increase from 2025, according to **NPCI data**, and Singapore's PayNow is expected to bring A2A to 13% of local ecommerce by 2030. LATAM is fastest in retail, with A2A payments set to reach 44% of Brazilian ecommerce by 2030, →

and Colombia's Bre-B, launched in October 2025, potentially accounting for 41% of local ecommerce.

Europe has strong domestic schemes, including Wero, BLIK, Bizum, and Bancomat, but no single solution for the entire market. However, the EPI Company and EuroPA collaboration is working to address this fragmentation. In the UK, Open Banking payments **grew 53% in 2025**, according to Yaspa, even though consumer awareness of Pay by Bank has decreased. The US has built capacity ahead of consumer demand, as cards and card-funded wallets still dominate checkout.

> *Cards see mostly card-not-present (CNP) fraud and data theft, whereas the main threat in A2A is authorised push payment (APP) fraud, where scammers persuade people to send the money.*

Cards and A2A payments

Cards offer three advantages consumers value: they are accepted almost everywhere, have easy-to-understand chargeback rights, and offer credit and rewards. A2A competes on cost, speed, and security, as merchants typically pay a flat fee or a lower percentage instead of interchange, scheme, and acquiring fees, and receive funds within seconds.

The risk is different too. Cards see mostly card-not-present (CNP) fraud and data theft, whereas the main threat in A2A is authorised push payment (APP) fraud, where scammers persuade people to send the money. Buyer protection depends on schemes, and dispute frameworks are still being developed. Another limitation is reach: cards work the same way cross-border, while most A2A schemes are domestic. For recurring payments, cards rely on card-on-file and network tokens, whereas A2A uses Open Banking.

How Visa and Mastercard are responding

Visa and Mastercard are building services on instant rails, including rules, liability, disputes, fraud scoring, and cross-border connectivity, where A2A is weakest.

Following Visa's 2022 acquisition of Tink, the network **launched Visa A2A in the UK** in 2025. The service initially included bills and subscriptions, with ecommerce planned in phases, connecting **banks and third-party providers** under a common rulebook, API standard, liability model, and disputes platform. In November 2025, Kroo Bank, Utilita, and Tink **completed the first commercial VRP payment** (cVRP) through the framework. In September 2026, Visa added a Featurespace-tech-enabled fraud score to **A2A Protect**, which flags suspicious transfers before money is sent. →

Mastercard runs an A2A business through its Open Finance unit. In June 2026, it **partnered with PaidBy by Xryma** on cross-border Open Banking payments, enabling consumers to pay in their own currency and merchants to settle in theirs. For the rest of the market, this suggests the rails themselves are becoming a commodity, and value belongs to whoever sets rules, handles disputes, and decides how payments are routed.

Key A2A payment developments in 2026

Three developments made waves in 2026. On 2 June, the UK Payments Initiative (UKPI) **launched the UK's first cVRP scheme**, backed by UK banks, building societies, and fintechs, such as **GoCardless**. This is the use case where cards led. The first phase covers payments to public sector bodies, utilities, charities, and financial services, which the FCA and PSR describe as **lower-risk use cases**, and UKPI plans to extend the scheme to subscriptions and wider ecommerce later. Brazil offers a preview of what can follow, with Juniper Research citing Pix Automático as **evidence that recurring A2A payments scale quickly** once banks support them.

The second development is Europe's push for payment sovereignty. Wero is live for ecommerce in Germany and Belgium. Ecommerce rollout in France began in September 2026, when it also **launched in Luxembourg**, and the Dutch migration from iDEAL is progressing. In February, **EPI and EuroPA members Bancomat, Bizum, SIBS/MB WAY, and Vipps MobilePay signed a MoU** to connect users through a central hub, starting with cross-border P2P, and then adding ecommerce and POS payments. Wero's success in commerce will depend on how quickly merchants and retailers adopt it.

> *"The rails themselves are becoming a commodity, and value belongs to whoever sets rules, handles disputes, and decides how payments are routed.*

The third relevant development is agentic commerce. Juniper Research expects transactions from AI agents buying on behalf of consumers to grow from **USD 8 billion in 2026 to USD 3.5 trillion in 2031**. Card networks enabled them first, but Juniper warns that relying only on cards would hold the market back, and that agent platforms should support consumers' preferred payment methods, including A2A. Agents optimising for cost may favour cheaper rails, and bank-based consent models suit delegated payments. However, several aspects need to be addressed first: how to authenticate a software-initiated payment, who is liable for agent mistakes, and how banks can keep the customer relationship when an AI assistant is the main interface. →

Benefits for merchants, banks, PSPs, and consumers

For merchants, A2A benefits are mainly cost- and cash flow-related. In a **GoCardless survey**, 91% of businesses with recurring revenue said they expect recurring Pay by Bank to reduce their operational costs. Instant settlement improves cash flow, and as no card data is stored, merchants face fewer chargebacks and a lower compliance burden. However, this depends on conversion: A2A pays off if payments succeed at every major bank.

For banks, A2A is now a new revenue source. Open Banking APIs were built to meet regulatory obligations, and TrueLayer argues that **cVRPs will let banks earn money from API data access**. A stronger role at checkout and less dependence on international card networks are further incentives, provided banks invest in API performance and agree on a pricing model suitable for all parties.

PSPs gain new revenue from orchestration, VRPs, instant refunds, reconciliation, and fraud tools, and their value lies in giving merchants a single integration to override scheme and bank fragmentation. Consumers get fast payments, no longer have to share card details, and can manage recurring payments from their banking app. However, adoption depends on whether they understand and trust the protection they receive when something malfunctions.

What is holding A2A payments adoption back?

The payment rails themselves work, but the surrounding ecosystem poses challenges, with four issues slowing adoption:

1. A lack of a global Open Banking standard: The EU, the UK, the US, Brazil, and India each follow a different framework, and API quality varies between markets. Therefore, Open Banking payments **are largely domestic**, and merchants selling in multiple countries must integrate each one separately.
2. The variety of API protocols and compliance rules: authentication flows, payee verification, fraud liability, and consent models differ by jurisdiction, which shows up at checkout.
3. A conflict between business models: the banks funding A2A schemes also earn card interchange. In the UK, UKPI sets a central price between banks and fintechs, similar to interchange, which is why the FCA and PSR had to confirm they would **not prioritise a competition investigation** into its first-wave pricing.
4. Low consumer awareness, as providers use different names for the same payment method. ➔

The role of A2A payments regulation

In the EU, the Instant Payments Regulation is already in force, and Eurozone PSPs have offered **Verification of Payee** (VoP) since 9 October 2025. PSD3 and the PSR are behind. They published final texts on 23 April 2026, but in August they had **not yet been formally adopted** or published in the Official Journal. For A2A, the most important changes are the requirement for bank APIs to match banks' own apps' performance, permission dashboards for consumers, and stricter fraud liability rules.

> *QR codes are the main reason A2A has moved into physical stores, and payment apps, including A2A, are expected to account for* ***46% of global POS value by 2030****.*

In the US, the CFPB is **reconsidering its Section 1033 Open Banking rule** and sent a revised proposal to the **White House for review in August 2026**, putting original compliance dates on hold.

Across these markets, regulators share the same goal of instant, verified A2A payments with strong fraud controls. Differences involve who pays, who is liable, and how quickly the rules apply, all of which PSPs and orchestrators can help merchants manage.

Ecommerce and in-store A2A payments use cases

QR codes are the main reason A2A has moved into physical stores, and payment apps, including A2A, are expected to account for **46% of global POS value by 2030**. **SDK.finance** points out that the QR code is only the interface, and payment cost, speed, and security depend on the scheme. Merchants are better served by dynamic codes, which carry the amount, a reference, and an expiry time, along with payee confirmation, to reduce the risk of fraudulent codes stuck over real ones.

Europe is also adding NFC: Bizum just launched an NFC-enabled A2A wallet in September, and Wero's roadmap includes NFC and QR code in-store payments.

A2A tends to perform best for high-value purchases like travel, cars, energy, and government services, where lower costs and higher limits make a difference, and for recurring bills such as utilities, subscriptions, and iGaming. Cards are still the fallback for cross-border purchases and for customers who want credit.

Governance and interoperability between A2A schemes

Three approaches to connecting A2A schemes are at play in 2026. The first is a hub the schemes own, which I've already touched upon: the MoU between EPI and the EuroPA members. Then there's payment 'roaming'. Bluecode's **Payment Interoperability Hub** is built on EMPSA specifications, so a scheme can connect once and reach all others. Its country reach is currently expanding; however, →

the commercial terms between the home and host schemes remain to be settled. The third is a global wallet interoperability network. TerraPay's Xend reaches 3.7 billion wallets through a single integration, and in September 2026 it **connected to Alipay+**. This model must decide how to share compliance, currency exchange, and settlement risk.

A2A payments fraud, identity, and disputes

Taking card data out of payments doesn't remove risk. With A2A, it shifts to APP fraud, identity checks, and disputes, without a common rulebook. Most A2A payments are mobile, as are many scams. UK Finance found that **66% of APP fraud cases in 2025 started online and 17% through telcos**. Telco data (whether SIM cards were swapped, calls forwarded, or whether a number's user is also the owner) can be checked in real time before a push payment, making telcos and number-intelligence providers useful partners for banks and PSPs.

Disputes are another issue, and most A2A rails don't have a formal chargeback process, making them the bank's direct responsibility. Each has its own procedure, and merchants often cannot present evidence. This leaves room for friendly fraud, and the market needs independent decisions, common processes, monitoring of repeat abusers, and clear liability rules.

For authentication, SMS one-time codes are the most common way to confirm payments and among the easiest to phish. FIDO passkeys are cryptographically tied to a specific website or app, which makes them resistant to phishing, and they **support SCA compliance**. The FIDO Alliance's Payments Technical Working Group now covers checkout authentication and agentic commerce. For A2A, passkeys could let customers authenticate without being sent to their banking app, which benefits consumers who usually abandon shopping when redirected to another platform to pay.

In the EU, digital identity regulation is developing. Under **Regulation (EU) 2024/1183**, every member must offer at least one EU Digital Identity Wallet by the end of 2026, and banks, insurers, and payment providers must accept it for onboarding and SCA by December 2027. The AML Regulation (AMLR), which applies from 10 July 2027, adds more pressure to support wallet-based identification. This is an opportunity to combine identity checks and payment authorisation in a single step.

Trust remains the main barrier to mainstream A2A payments adoption, and consumers' fear of being hacked stops them from using Open Banking. Also, few know what happens when an A2A payment goes wrong, and the numerous brands and terms make A2A harder to recognise at checkout. →

What this means for merchants, banks, and PSPs

Merchants should offer A2A payments in markets where they are popular and make Pay by Bank visible at checkout. Tracking bank conversion shows where problems lie, and it is worth asking PSPs for clear dispute terms.

Banks can start measuring Open Banking APIs uptime, latency, and error rates against their own apps, turning cVRPs and A2A acceptance into products, and measuring outbound transfers in real time. Over the next two years, they will have to meet the PSR's performance and fraud-liability rules, accept the EUDI Wallet, comply with the AMLR, and manage liquidity 24/7.

PSPs need a single API across cards, A2A payments, and instant rails, card fallback through network tokens, instant refunds, and automated reconciliation. Beyond that, opportunities lie in routing and settling A2A payments across schemes and borders, handling disputes on behalf of merchants, and supporting AI agent-initiated payments.

Ultimately, A2A payments' progress depends on trust.

Why this report

The ***Account-to-Account Payments Report 2026*** provides a global overview of the A2A payments market, main players, and the partnerships shaping it. For this edition, The Paypers has brought together payment system and scheme operators, PSPs, fintechs, consultants, analysts, and a merchant to share their views on the industry.

> *"For authentication, SMS one-time codes are the most common way to confirm payments and among the easiest to phish.*

Scope and structure

The report includes five chapters covering infrastructure, technology, interoperability, regional markets, regulation, and fraud prevention. The first chapter, ***Real-Time Payments Infrastructure and Scheme Evolution***, looks at the rails A2A depends on. Catrine Rhenberg, Partner at Nurabal, examines the EPC's One-Leg Out (OLO) Instant Credit Transfer scheme and its role in cross-border SEPA connectivity, and Jude Pinto, Chief Delivery Officer at Payments Canada, explains how Canada's Real-Time Rail will transform A2A payments.

The second chapter, ***A2A Technology Enablers: Open Banking, Open Finance, and CBDCs***, focuses on the technologies driving A2A. Jean Guillaume, CEO of Powens, writes about PIS reaching the reliability needed for Open Banking growth. Nikogiannis Karantzis, Managing Director and CEO of Xryma Plc Group, shares how cross-border settlement makes A2A the default. →

Turning to use cases, Sylvain Fourny, Head of Products, Digital and Fraud at Worldline, presents Open Banking-enabled A2A payments as the channel for high-value billing and transactions. The chapter ends with CBDCs and blockchain, as Milko Filipov, Senior Manager at valantic, and Christian Hartmann, Principal at Roland Berger, consider how the Digital Euro will impact Europe's payment landscape.

In the third chapter, ***A2A Payments Interoperability and Cross-Border Scaling***, we're assessing how fragmented schemes can cooperate. Gabriel Lucas, Director at Redbridge Debt and Treasury Advisory, asks whether A2A can take the place of card schemes, and Nick Maynard, VP of Research at Juniper Research, sets out the obstacles to interoperability.

Ludovic Francesconi, Chief Member and Strategy Officer at EPI Company, describes how Wero enables pan-European A2A interoperability, while Ugnė Buračienė, Group CEO, and Breno Oliveira, CPO, at payabl. look at the merchant side and how to make Europe's mix of A2A schemes more manageable.

We then move to the ***Global A2A Market Landscape – Local and Regional Developments***, our fourth chapter, which compares how A2A is developing worldwide. Francesco Burelli, Partner at Arkwright Consulting, analyses how one technology has five diverging approaches, and Konstantin Surkov, Co-Founder and CEO of Nopan, discusses the importance of performance for payments sovereignty.

The final chapter tackles ***Regulations and Fraud in A2A Payments***. Vlad Macovei, Senior Writer at The Paypers, highlights regulation gaps between mandates and commercial models, and Piotr Kozłowski, Head of Payments and Fraud Prevention at G2A.COM, examines payment threats and fraud impacting agentic A2A payments.

The report also includes an infographic mapping local and regional A2A schemes and rails, together with Open Banking- and Open Finance-enabled A2A payments. We hope it serves as an educational resource and a starting point for those seeking partners in a specific market. Each chapter also features an introductory article by Estera Sava, Senior Writer at The Paypers.

Whether you work for a bank, PSP, merchant, fintech, or regulator, the ***Account-to-Account Payments Report 2026*** aims to provide useful insights into a sector evolving quickly.

Thank you for downloading our report. Enjoy your reading!

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Real-Time Payments Infrastructure and Scheme Evolution

Real-Time Payments Infrastructure and Scheme Evolution



Estera Sava
Senior Writer
The Paypers

In payments, speed isn't the selling point it once was. In 2026, instant payment schemes that truly differentiate themselves add value beyond speed: transaction screening, cross-border functionality, and the ability of the initially consumer-focused infrastructure to handle B2B payment volumes quickly and without issues.

SCT Inst Rulebook update: faster execution and higher transaction limits

Within the Eurozone, the SCT Inst scheme has changed considerably. **The 2025 SCT Inst rulebook update** cut the execution window from 10-20-25 seconds to 5-7-9 seconds, added millisecond timestamp attributes, and removed the SCT Inst EUR 100,000 default cap, allowing PSPs to define transaction limits up to the SEPA ones – a change enabling B2B use cases instant rails couldn't previously touch. **Structured address format requirements**, initially mandatory by 15 November 2026, have been delayed because the industry is not yet prepared to implement them, and SWIFT will provide updates by December 2026. Payee verification and daily sanctions screening are now required, even though screening alone can't slow down the payment.

> *More than half of US banks leveraging instant payments run both networks.*

One-Leg Out (OLO) Instant Credit Transfer (OCT Inst): rules for cross-border SEPA payments

OCT Inst covers the EUR leg of cross-border transfers, where one payment side is outside the Eurozone. **It reuses existing instant payment rails and messaging standards**, giving payers and payees clearer execution timelines and better cost transparency on cross-border legs. The two schemes diverge in several ways: **OCT Instant transactions have an EUR 100,000** limit, far below SCT Inst's no scheme-level limit, reflecting the uncertainty and correspondent-banking dependencies once a payment leaves the Eurozone. The European Payments Council (EPC) published **dedicated comparison documentation that clarifies the differences fully** – useful reading for PSPs trying to work out which rulebook governs a given transaction. →

FedNow, RTP, and the UK's Faster Payments reset

In the US, the two instant rails now focus on scalability. FedNow **lifted its per-payment limit to USD 10 million** in 2025 and recorded **1,800 participating institutions in Q2 2026**. RTP continues to lead on daily transaction values, averaging **USD 6.6 billion as of August 2026**. More than half of US banks leveraging instant payments **run both networks**, which suggests reach matters to institutions just as much as any individual rail's feature. The two systems are still not interoperable, and this missing functionality, along with the 'receive-only' capability of smaller institutions that joined without enabling sending, is a key constraint to further growth.

> *"On the liquidity side, A2A payments and payment APIs cut the working capital needed to cover payment delays and other operational inefficiencies.*

Meanwhile, the UK shows how much harder full infrastructure replacement can be. The New Payments Architecture (NPA), a years-delayed programme meant to replace the country's ageing Faster Payments rail, was reset in favour of a broader, government-led body, the Retail Payments Infrastructure Board (RPIB), after repeated delays and mixed confidence. The **RPIB opened a public consultation in mid-2026 on a next-generation system** to support the National Payments Vision and the Payments Vision Delivery Committee's modernisation strategy, with responses due in September 2026. The existing rail will keep running past its original retirement date, and its replacement must account for a landscape that may eventually include stablecoins or a CBDC alongside conventional transfers.

B2B real-time payments: cash flow vs fraud and error risk

It's easy to see why B2B real-time payments (RTPs) are beneficial. Funds arrive immediately, with instant confirmation, and two-way messaging automates buyer-to-seller payment requests, reducing the once-common manual reconciliation burden. On the liquidity side, account-to-account **(A2A) payments and payment APIs cut the working capital needed to cover payment delays** and other operational inefficiencies. With RTPs, money that would be in transit for days is visible and usable as soon as it clears.

The downside of this real-time element is that once an instant payment settles, it does so for good. With legacy rails' multi-day processing, businesses could catch errors before this happened; however, RTPs put far more weight on validation and fraud checks in the seconds before initiation. It's no surprise that every RTP scheme's decision centres on balancing instant money movement with ensuring it settles where it's supposed to. →

Instant payouts: meeting consumer demand where scheme coverage can't

Oftentimes, payments and payouts are seen as addressing the same issues, but payouts have their own urgency. Users expect withdrawals, refunds, and disbursements to arrive in seconds now more than ever. A Visa 2025 survey supports this with clear data: over **80% of respondents would pay a fee if instant payouts** were a guarantee, and 90 to over 95% (in countries where instant payments are the norm) prioritise quick access to funds.

> *Oftentimes, payments and payouts are seen as addressing the same issues, but payouts have their own urgency.*

Europe's instant payment landscape is still fragmented across national rails, and bank readiness levels aren't where they need to be, so providers have built proprietary networks, **some leveraging blockchain**, to route around those gaps rather than wait for banks to catch up. This approach says as much about scheme-based coverage limits as it does about payout technology, even if it isn't yet the industry norm.

In Europe, 'instant' means several distinct things depending on where a payment starts and ends, making OCT Inst highly relevant for cross-border transactions. The US is finding its way, currently scaling two rails that don't connect. The UK is revamping its approach, and a new, long-awaited development is underway: Canada is launching its Real-Time Rail (RTR) in Q4 2026.

EPC's One Leg Out (OLO) Instant Credit Transfer – and Cross-Border SEPA Connectivity



Catrine Rhenberg
Partner
Nurabal

Catrine Rhenberg is a Partner at Nurabal, a payments strategy consulting firm specialising in RTP schemes and cross-border instant payment connectivity. It partners with global banks, fintechs, and payment infrastructures to design, optimise, and scale RTP-enabled propositions, helping clients navigate technical interoperability, liquidity, and operating models to unlock new value from instant payments.

OLO's promise depends on reciprocity, commercial clarity, and the right partners. Europe built the on-ramp. Who is building the off-ramp?

What is the One Leg Out (OLO) Instant Credit Transfer scheme?

At the end of 2023, the European Payments Council (EPC) launched the **One Leg Out (OLO) Instant Credit Transfer scheme (OCT Inst)**. OCT Inst enables PSPs already within the SEPA area to process the EUR leg of an international instant credit transfer with minimal additional effort. The transaction limit mirrors SCT Inst at EUR 100,000, and the message formats are familiar, so for a bank already live on RT1 or TIPS, the incremental technical investment is modest. But as the name indicates, OLO governs only the EUR leg of a cross-border transaction. Everything that happens outside of SEPA borders relies on someone else.

The ambition behind OLO is to make cross-border payments as fast, transparent, and affordable as domestic ones. It is in line with the G20 Roadmap for enhancing cross-border payments, which established targets for speed, cost, transparency, and access by 2027. The scheme extends SEPA's existing instant payment rails, using them as the foundation for a global connection to Europe.

OCT Inst scheme – progress and challenges to adoption

Two and a half years after launch, adoption remains limited. Fewer than 40 European payment institutions are actively participating, with Spain (via Iberpay) accounting for most of the live adoption. Iberpay built OCT Inst as an extension of its instant payment infrastructure, enabling Spanish banks to join without separate investment. However, the majority of European banks have been focusing on complying first with the Instant Payments Regulation (IPR) and ISO 20022 migration, leaving OCT Inst to follow. Despite this, ten major multinational banks have signalled their intention to be reachable via RT1 by 2027, and the IXB pilot →

between RT1 and The Clearing House's RTP network in the US has **technically** demonstrated that the model can work between compatible systems.

“ OCT Inst enables PSPs already within the SEPA area to process the EUR leg of an international instant credit transfer with minimal additional effort.

So what exactly is holding OCT Inst back? Conceptually, the scheme does what it promises: the transaction limit mirrors SCT Inst, it has familiar message formats, and requires modest investment. Yet the challenge comes from structural and commercial barriers, not technical ones. According to the rulebook, *those involved in executing an OCT Inst transaction are free to determine among themselves who will perform the currency conversion when necessary* (EPC095-23 **v4.0**). In other words, FX conversion responsibility is undefined.

Although the rulebook defines PSP roles in the abstract, it does not give enough practical guidance for scenarios where roles overlap or intermediaries are involved. Two banks looking at the same transaction can reach different conclusions about who is responsible for what. And while the scheme expects the EUR leg to be processed in 20 seconds, it offers little direction on how to reconcile speed with anti-money laundering (AML) obligations, sanctions screening, and fraud controls, especially where the counterparty operates under different standards from those within SEPA.

“ The scheme extends SEPA's existing instant payment rails, using them as the foundation for a global connection to Europe.

OCT Inst – from on- to off-ramp: requirements for interoperability

The corridors where cross-border instant payments would have the greatest impact are often the least prepared. An example is North Africa, which has domestic schemes at varying maturity levels, mainly designed for internal use with no interoperability layer targeting Europe. The Gulf states operate systems like Fawri+ and IPP, which are fast domestically but not developed as counterparts to SEPA. And while India's UPI processes billions of domestic transactions monthly, it remains in its early stages of bilateral connection. In each of these markets, a clear off-ramp for OLO does not exist today. →

“ The corridors where cross-border instant payments would have the greatest impact are often the least prepared.

“ European PSPs must also actively engage with non-SEPA instant payment scheme operators to co-design the off-ramp.

So, what would make OLO work exactly? A functioning OLO corridor requires support for multiple currencies, different time zone management, accommodation for local banking cut-offs, high straight-through processing rates, and strong observability across the transaction lifecycle. However, to compete with correspondent banking, OLO must also be cheap, liquid, and deep enough in its local reach for the beneficiary experience to feel domestic. In most non-SEPA markets, no single institution holds all these capabilities. Real OLO enablement requires finding partners who can act as translators between Europe’s instant payment infrastructure and the domestic schemes, regulatory frameworks, and commercial realities on the non-European side. Not purely technical, but regulatory, commercial, and operational, this ‘translation work’ requires partners who understand both transaction legs, not just the EUR one.

What needs to change for OLO uptake in cross-border payments?

While clearer guidance on PSP roles, FX treatment, and compliance is required, European PSPs must also actively engage with non-SEPA instant payment scheme operators to co-design the off-ramp. Not only that, but commercial sustainability must be properly addressed: if OLO displaces correspondent banking revenue, what replaces it? The on-ramp is ready; the off-ramp is where the work remains.



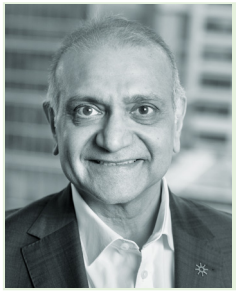
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How Canada's Real-Time Rail Will Transform A2A Payments



Jude Pinto
Chief Delivery Officer
Payments Canada

Jude Pinto is the Chief Delivery Officer at Payments Canada, which owns and operates Lynx, the Automated Clearing Settlement System (ACSS), the forthcoming Real-Time Rail (RTR), and establishes the by-laws, rules, and standards that govern these systems.

Jude Pinto, Chief Delivery Officer at Payments Canada, provides an update on Canada's forthcoming Real-Time Rail, a new piece of critical national payment infrastructure.

Demand for real-time payments (RTPs) in Canada is no longer theoretical: 60% of Canadian businesses are reportedly ready to adopt real-time capabilities to address critical cash flow friction.

Account-to-account (A2A) payments are at the centre of this shift. According to **Payments Canada research**, Canadian businesses cite moving money between accounts as their top use case for RTPs. In many jurisdictions, the use of A2A payments has resulted from the implementation of national RTP systems, allowing for quick, secure, and cost-effective transactions.

Launching later this year, **Canada's Real-Time Rail (RTR)** will transform A2A payments across the country. By enabling instant exchange, clearing, and settlement of funds, the RTR will allow consumers and businesses to send and receive payments in real time, 24/7, year-round. The RTR will launch using the international ISO 20022 financial messaging standard and centralised fraud services from day one — a proactive approach designed to minimise fraud risk.

Canadian consumers and businesses are ready to embrace RTPs

RTPs appeal to **over half of Canadians** (52%), which drives demand. The RTR is ready to meet this need and deliver significant economic benefits for Canada, accelerating the circulation and settlement of funds. Advantages will be most evident in situations where immediate payment is critical. Here is where I believe RTPs will make a significant impact: →

Payments Canada

“ 60% of Canadian businesses are reportedly ready to adopt real-time capabilities to address critical cash flow friction.

“ Canada is setting a new global standard, being among the first countries to introduce a national RTP system with centralised fraud services from the start.

- **Earned wage access**: particularly relevant to contract or gig workers. Shifting payroll from fixed bi-weekly cycles to as-earned pay allows workers to immediately access and withdraw wages as soon as a shift or project ends. For gig workers, the RTR enables instant, 24/7 access to earnings upon job completion, significantly reducing reliance on delayed deposits or costly workarounds, such as payday loans. For businesses, earned wage access provides a new opportunity to attract and retain employees.
- **Real estate**: transactions involving property buyers, sellers, lenders, brokers, agents, and real estate lawyers face challenges, as they rely on legacy payment methods and physical bank drafts. By pairing immediate settlement certainty with data-rich messaging, the RTR can help address closing delays, minimise fraud risk, and provide a standardised, auditable data trail that automates reconciliation.
- **Insurance**: this sector faces significant operational and reputational friction in Canada, as it relies on legacy payment methods like cheques. For insurers, the RTR can drastically lower administrative costs, introduce data-rich payment messaging to automate reconciliation, and simultaneously boost customer retention by delivering funds instantly during high-stress situations. For consumers, the RTR can provide immediate access to essential capital when needed most, replacing multi-day processing delays with instant financial relief.
- **Invoice payments**: Canadian businesses and SMEs paying suppliers and vendors face operational bottlenecks due to delayed payments and manual reconciliation. With the RTR, suppliers and vendors benefit from transparent cash flow management, processing costs cheaper than wires and cheques, and, with the structured data of the ISO 20022 messaging standard, reduced back-office inefficiencies and errors.

RTPs need real-time fraud monitoring

The RTR is built on a **legal framework**, composed of the RTR By-law and the RTR Rules, which establishes a safe, efficient, and resilient payment system. Building on this secure foundation, Canada is setting a new global standard, being among the first countries to introduce a national RTP system with centralised fraud services from the start. →

> *The RTR will enable continued payment innovation, thanks to a secure, regulated foundation, ultimately ensuring RTPs' potential grows as the system evolves.*

Complementing participants' internal fraud services, the RTR's consist of: a *confirmation of payee capability*, which will allow users to confirm the recipient's account identity before sending money; a *fraud transaction 'safety' score*, assigning a real-time risk rating to every transaction to help detect, prevent, and mitigate fraudulent activity before payment authorisation; a *risk list/repository of fraud risks and indicators* that allow participants to identify and flag accounts previously involved in fraud proactively; and a *fraud-reporting and intelligence platform* facilitating data-driven oversight by consolidating fraud trends and performance metrics across the entire RTR ecosystem.

Canada's RTR: on track for Q4 2026

Canada's RTR is currently undergoing comprehensive testing and scheduled to launch in Q4 2026. Participants will be onboarded in deliberate phases to ensure the system's safety and resilience. The RTR will enable continued payment innovation, thanks to a secure, regulated foundation, ultimately ensuring RTPs' potential grows as the system evolves. **Visit our website** for regular updates on the RTR's progress.

A2A Technology Enablers: Open Banking, Open Finance, and CBDCs

A2A Technology Enablers: Open Banking, Open Finance, and CBDCs



Estera Sava
Senior Writer
The Paypers

Instant payment rails move money only when a payer agrees to pay, a payee is correctly identified, and each party's bank has communicated what's happening. Data sharing, payment initiation, payment requests, and the rules governing central bank money – we find Open Banking, Open Finance, and CBDCs at these layers.

From Open Banking to Open Finance: data sharing beyond payments

Open Banking's initial agreement (that a consumer consents, a bank exposes account data through an API, and a third party builds something with it) is now extending past payment accounts and advancing differently across jurisdictions.

The **EU's Financial Data Access (FiDA) regulation, in trilogue as of April 2026**, would apply this consent-based logic to savings, investments, pensions, insurance, and credit data, creating an Open Finance ecosystem. Formal adoption should follow, with obligations applied in phases from 2027, as industry-run data-sharing schemes are established sector-by-sector. However, these schemes and an agreement on how data holders are compensated or whether large non-EU platforms get full access don't exist yet, so the law may pass and find the industry unprepared.

In the US, a federal court has enjoined the **Open Banking rule under Section 1033 of the Dodd-Frank Act**, after the regulator argued that the 2024 version exceeded its authority, and a **Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) submission sits with the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)**.

Request-to-Pay and B2B Open Banking APIs: the need for a messaging layer

While instant credit transfers move funds quickly, they need to inform the payer when and why they owe money. Request-to-Pay schemes exist precisely for this. **Europe's SEPA Request-to-Pay (SRTP) scheme rulebook version 4.0 clarifies** EPC Directory Service (EDS) registration, required of all SRTP participants, and updates the adherence process and procedures for using EDS. For B2B use cases, this layer defines the reason for a payment. SRTP adoption is behind pure payment initiation services (PIS), as both requesting and paying banks →

must support the scheme for it to work end-to-end, limiting its reach until participation broadens.

Payouts, refunds, and recurring payments: Open Banking as a revenue model

Open Banking scales only if merchants can also send money back quickly. Instant rails should settle refunds on a timeline comparable to the original payment, especially important since bank transfers don't carry a card network's built-in dispute mechanism.

The EU is moving slowly. The SEPA Payment Account Access (SPAA) scheme, **focused on 'premium' Open Banking services, including dynamic recurring payments and payments split across multiple recipients, has theoretically existed since 2022 but it's stuck at pilot stage**, with limited bank adoption.

The UK, however, moved from consumer 'sweeping' into commercial use. As part of its **Payments Forward Plan**, the UK Payments Initiative (UKPI) went live on 2 June 2026 to develop a scheme for **commercial variable recurring payments (cVRPs)**. It is set to enable businesses to collect bank-initiated VRPs, first for utilities and government services, with ecommerce billing to follow. While Open Banking payment volumes increased, that scalability is subject to broad bank participation. Visa has built its own **card-like dispute resolution overlay and liability rules on top of Pay by Bank and VRPs**. In 2025, it had already signed up providers like Tink and completed a cVRP, signalling that the incumbents A2A threatens see benefits in shaping the rails instead of resisting them.

Brazil is fastest with Pix Automático. The direct-debit-style recurring feature added in 2025 enables businesses to collect variable payments, while **Pix em Garantia will allow future Pix receivables to be used as collateral for credit**.

Insurers collecting premiums and issuing payouts are the logical next vertical for any of these models, but adoption remains lower than in utilities or government.

CBDCs and multi-rail interoperability

Central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) have progressed politically more than technically, as seen with the Digital Euro. The European Parliament's economic affairs committee approved the **draft report in June 2026** and opened trilogue talks with EU member states. The **Digital Euro pilot with select PSPs** was announced in July 2026, and as of September, **a call for online and mobile merchants to participate in the pilot** is open. **Potential first issuance** is still targeted for 2029, with future ambitions including potential interoperability with other financial services, including A2A. →

Meanwhile, CBDC ambitions meant to solve cross-border interoperability have fragmented: **mBridge and Project Agorá are now competing, non-overlapping blocs**, whereas retail rail-to-rail links are moving faster as they don't require any country to commit to a shared CBDC architecture. India is doing this domestically: **its retail digital rupee pilot has been built to work through the same QR code functionality used for everyday UPI transfers**, showcasing how a live CBDC can reinforce an existing instant payment system rather than compete with it.

Ultimately, however, multi-rail interoperability is happening through bilateral and multilateral links between existing instant payment systems, not CBDCs as the connective layer.

Open Banking and Open Finance – Driving A2A Payments

PIS: Reaching the Reliability Open Banking Needs to Grow



Jean Guillaume
CEO
Powens

Jean Guillaume is the CEO of Powens, a leading Open Finance platform, serving 300+ banks, wealth managers, lenders, fintechs, and accounting software providers across Western Europe and Mexico. Connecting 1,800+ financial institutions, Powens combines financial data aggregation with embedded payment infrastructure – including SEPA payment automation and IBAN issuance – through a single API, helping businesses launch and scale financial services.

PSD2 gave us Open Banking, but we need to be honest that, for a long time, payment initiation services (PIS) did not look like a business opportunity. Slowly but surely, this is changing. But why?

Bank APIs and payment success rates matter

The logic is simple: payment method reliability equals faster adoption. Why would merchants push a payment method that works 50% of the time when alternatives work at least 80% of the time?

This was PIS. In countries with good bank APIs (e.g., the Nordics and the UK), PIS took off fast. In continental Europe and the markets Powens knows best (France, Spain, Italy), PIS is just now speeding up, as bank APIs improve and Open Banking providers get better at working with them. Despite adoption growing, volumes remain small. The threshold? Once it reaches about 70% success rate, PIS stops being niche; it becomes an alternative method worth considering. For any lower success rate, PIS has specific use cases if nothing else works.

PIS reliability is improving, thanks to several things:

1. Big merchants and public authorities started using PIS and told banks, 'this doesn't work, do something'. In France, the tax collector administration adopted it last year, following the UK's example, partly because PIS lets you reconcile payments automatically, which normal wire transfers can't do.
2. European sovereignty discussions raised awareness of native European payment rails, and that the money spent through cards sits with Visa/Mastercard instead of the European economy.
3. Banks are changing their stance. If before Open Banking was bad news, another compliance box, some are now hiring Open Banking teams and learning to support it properly. →

> *PIS lets you reconcile payments automatically, which normal wire transfers can't do.*

> *The interface and what we call it don't truly matter when users see the clear value of a service.*

Pay by Bank conversion matters more than terminology awareness

In the UK, Open Banking payments grew 70% year-on-year, although most people using Pay by Bank don't know what it is. Honestly, I'm not sure that's a problem, as usage keeps growing and the experience mimics paying by card: a notification pops up, you approve it, and it's done.

However, it's worth comparing PIS with account information services (AIS), which grew much faster. Before PSD2, >50% of people who started the payment journey dropped off, confused by requirements to connect a bank account; now, about 70% complete it, and not because they understand AIS. People just got used to it and saw that it works. Currently, the highest conversion rates (>70%) are in credit applications, where data is used for real-time scoring. People know why they're sharing their information, so they don't hesitate. The interface and what we call it don't truly matter when users see the clear value of a service.

Merchants and PIS use cases: ecommerce or recurring payments?

Merchants have heard every pitch by now, so what convinces them to adopt a payment method is choice. Successful PSPs give merchants access to multiple payment methods, allowing customers to pick. Neither PSPs nor merchants can predict which will win every time, so letting consumers choose their preferred method helps with retention.

However, there are specific use cases where PIS makes sense. It's a clear upgrade from wire transfers: faster, easier to reconcile, and no new beneficiary to register. Looking forward, bulk and recurring payments are the real opportunity. ERPs and invoicing platforms are closely monitoring PIS, though it is still gated by uneven bank support. Recurring and variable recurring payments (VRPs) could also replace SEPA Direct Debit (SDD), which has a structurally high default rate and requires managing mandates, something PIS embedded from the start. →

Powens

> *Neither PSPs nor merchants can guess which payment method wins every time, so letting consumers choose their preferred one helps with retention.*

> *While PIS won't overtake cards, banks, merchants, and PSPs have the data to see where it's valuable: recurring billing, invoicing, and reconciliation-heavy flows.*

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If I had to pick the strongest use case, it's recurring billing, especially once PSD3 and the PSR land. Spain's online lending sector already shows this: lenders combine account-based scoring with card, SDD, and PIS to maximise collection.

What does PIS need to be adopted?

People connect their bank accounts without hesitating for loan applications, so trust isn't the issue. Card payments keep getting easier, and conversion rates increase each year, so PIS must stand out for its convenience. Why switch when card information is stored, and you can pay with one tap?

Some merchants incentivise customers with cashback for choosing Pay by Bank, funded with the interchange savings. People will use it when it's beneficial. Powens issues SDD too, and while offering PIS can be seen as cannibalising the business, merchants benefit from having the choice.

PSD3, agentic commerce, and the digital euro: what can PIS do here?

Reliable, secure, and sovereign payment methods will continue to expand. The rise of payment orchestrators, which bundle all the payment methods merchants need for their consumers, illustrates this perfectly.

The SDD comparison is worth repeating: SDD disputes can happen long after the money moved, a risk PIS removes with upfront authorisation. Two areas worth watching, even if still speculative: agentic ecommerce, where PIS could offer built-in fraud protection as AI agents transact, and the digital euro, where it could connect central bank wallets to all European bank accounts using existing payments rails.

While PIS won't overtake cards, banks, merchants, and PSPs have the data to see where it's valuable: recurring billing, invoicing, and reconciliation-heavy flows. PSD3 will decide how far PIS goes.

Cross-Border Settlement: Open Banking Is Making A2A Payments the Default



Nikogiannis (John) Karantzis
Managing Director & CEO
Xryma Plc

Nikogiannis Karantzis is the Managing Director and CEO of Xryma Plc, a regulated banktech group operating dual-authorised EMIs in the EEA and the UK. It owns its full payments stack, from Open Banking initiation to settlement at central banks, delivering accounts, A2A payments, FX, payouts, card services, and core banking technology within one platform.

Open Banking has been around for almost a decade, yet account-to-account (A2A) payments still trail cards in most markets. What has held A2A back?

Open Banking was built for peer-to-peer (P2P) payments, not as a merchant settlement service. The industry added a payment initiation (PI) layer on top of a fragmented settlement model. The PI process typically only notifies merchants that a payment started, similar to card authorisation. However, a merchant needs to know funds have arrived and finalised, as with a card settlement report, something most A2A providers don't offer.

Open Banking was designed for domestic ecommerce: one market and currency; hence, it could not compete with cards on cross-border commerce. Also, it launched without the post-payment layer of card schemes: refunds, disputes, and recalls.

In this context, what is the PaidBy® | Mastercard partnership about and how does it approach the problem?

PaidBy® | Mastercard is a full-cycle Open Banking payment platform. It initiates, processes, and settles payments into a merchant's account. It confirms received funds and enables partial and full end-to-end refund management through one unified system and accountable party. The consumer pays from their bank account, and the merchant receives real-time confirmation, as credit transfers, across Europe and the UK. The PaidBy® platform, live with merchants since 2022, including Wix.com, is now extended through the Mastercard partnership.

We were deliberate about design and didn't build an Open Banking product to rival other providers, but as an alternative to cards. Cards won by making the process invisible to the consumer. →

PaidBy® | Mastercard

Offering an alternative means enabling at least the same payment process for merchants, posing a different engineering problem: minimising consumer friction from user experience through to currency settlement.

Many providers focus on PI. We have built around settlement and own the entire chain: PI, instant rails processing, central bank clearing, optional FX (for cross-border), settlement into merchant accounts, confirmation, notifications, and refund management.

The Xryma Group is a direct participant in the Eurosystem's T2 RTGS and TIPS via Latvia's and Lithuania's central banks, one of the few non-bank institutions with that access level. Central bank money settlement is the fastest form of cross-border interbank settlement. Payment certainty and reconciliation are built-in, with funds typically arriving the same day, often within two hours.

This direct access remains rare. It carries governance, compliance, safeguarding, and wind-down obligations that most electronic money or payment institutions cannot meet, and regulatory rigour is part of a trusted system.

The Mastercard partnership aims to scale cross-border A2A payments. How does paying in one currency and settling in another work?

The consumer pays in their own currency; the embedded FX converts it dynamically into the merchant's currency, and the money settles the next business day in the exchanged currency. We treat currency conversion as core infrastructure. Consumers pay, and merchants receive in their own currency, with no conversion to manage.

We also facilitate a 'refund reserve' to buffer currency fluctuations, available for refund drawdowns. It currently originates in EUR and GBP and settles into over 100 local currencies. Mastercard brings Open Finance connectivity and global reach; PaidBy® brings orchestration, FX, and direct settlement on central bank rails. Together, we remove Open Banking's geographic constraints, and, with cross-border capability and settlement certainty, A2A becomes a true commercial alternative.

Refunds, disputes, and consumer protection are the objections most often raised against A2A when compared with cards. How do you address them?

A2A launched without the post-payment layer, so merchants were right to hesitate to adopt it. Xryma's PaidBy® built in post-payment from day one: a card equivalent with full or partial refund management, dispute handling, and FX-hedged currency buffering, all native to the platform. Domestically, PaidBy® holds both the merchant account and settlement chain, so refunds are one system's instruction, not a request routed across multiple providers. Cross-border, our 'refund reserve' manages currency fluctuations. →

PaidBy® | Mastercard

“ The Xryma Group is a direct participant in the Eurosystem’s T2 RTGS and TIPS via Latvia’s and Lithuania’s central banks.

“ Mastercard brings Open Finance connectivity and global reach; PaidBy® brings orchestration, FX, and direct settlement on central bank rails.

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Instant payments demand instant controls. Behavioural analytics and transaction profiling run on the rails in line with Verification/Confirmation of Payee requirements. For merchants, this means speed, higher conversion, fewer disputes, and a refund process they can operate.

What does implementation involve for merchants, PSPs, and platforms considering A2A, and where do you see the strongest early use cases? What is next on the roadmap?

Implementation requires one relationship. The platform is API-first, with merchant-branded checkout and automated onboarding via Paydentity™, for remote verification. A merchant account, settlement, FX, payouts, and reconciliation sit within the same regulated ecosystem.

The strongest early fit is wherever consumer trust or settlement certainty is a commercial advantage: cross-border ecommerce and travel; regulated verticals, like FX and trading platforms, where payout speed matters; marketplaces that need embedded collection and disbursement; and PSPs that want to offer A2A without building proprietary settlement infrastructure.

We’re working on inbound initiation currencies from Q4 2026 and expansion with Mastercard into new verticals and regions, including push-to-card payouts. We’re also preparing for Bank of England RTGS and CHAPS access, which extends the central bank settlement model to GBP.

Outdated architecture created fragmentation, regulatory pressure, and real-time expectations. The future needs a unified, real-time, cross-border infrastructure where initiation, FX, settlement, refund management, and reconciliation operate as one system. PaidBy® | Mastercard offers exactly that. **Visit the PaidBy® | Mastercard website here**.

Use Cases in Ecommerce and Beyond

Open Banking-Based A2A Payments: Enabling High-Value Billing and Transactions



Sylvain Fourny

Head of Products, Digital & Fraud

Worldline

Sylvain Fourny is Head of Products within Worldline's Digital & Fraud division. A critical infrastructure and payment services operator, Worldline brings expertise in processing and securing payments, promoting their growth. Worldline leverages its 2030 strategic plan and its technological innovation capabilities to build the European reference payment partner for merchants and FIs, with over 1.2 million customers.

Open Banking-enabled account-to-account (A2A) payments are increasingly considered a dedicated channel for high-value, cross-border, or recurring bill payments. Rather than replacing cards outright, the stance on A2A is of a complementary solution able to handle larger transactions and complex workflows more efficiently than traditional bill payment methods. The Bank Transfer by Worldline solution exemplifies this very approach, integrated into our broader payments suite.

How A2A payments fit high-value billing

A2A payments' main appeal in the bill-pay space is the ability to directly initiate a payer's funds transfer from their account to the acquirer or merchant's collecting account, with settlement (typically a short window) aligned to contractual terms. For merchants, this can lead to more predictable cash flow, improved payment visibility, and less of the operational complexities typical of manual bill-processing workflows.
A2A is particularly relevant for large, non-card-centric verticals with high-value or recurring payments.

Implementing A2A for bill-pay – most discussed benefits and features

- Open Banking payment initiation service (PIS) with funds collection and currency conversion for cross-border use cases;
- Integration within a payment suite, including branding options and a payer experience customisable to the merchant;
- End-to-end processing support, from fraud monitoring, reporting, and reconciliation, to both internal and external gateways compatibility;
- Real-time payments (RTPs) status notifications for either initiation or collection accounts;
- Coordination with account initiation services (AIS) to simplify new market entry, including country-specific licensing requirements; ➔

“ The stance on A2A is of a complementary solution able to handle larger transactions and complex workflows.

“ A2A can align with known payment behaviours and support high-value transactions, with lower friction and better reconciliation than traditional bill payments.

- Operational efficiencies (e.g., multiple collecting accounts to reduce cross-border friction, mobile-, web-, or app-optimised flows).

A2A payments – billing target verticals, use cases, and market potential

For large billers, A2A is often attractive in sectors where cash and bank transfers are standard, and card acceptance is not the primary channel. Relevant verticals include government and public services, tax payments, educational institutions, insurance, civic and charitable organisations, and related large public bodies. In these contexts, A2A can align with known payment behaviours and support high-value transactions, with lower friction and better reconciliation than traditional bill payments.

Where cross-border bill payments are common, A2A has additional regulatory and licensing requirements. Cross-border flows may require complementary AIS alongside PIS in certain markets, particularly where local payment behaviours and tourism intersect. Regulations, like PSD2 and related framework elements, influence A2A payment initiation, processing, and reporting, including authentication and risk controls; merchants and providers must comply for A2A’s full cross-border potential.

A2A payments – regulation and compliance

PSD3 and the PSR framework will reshape Open Banking and A2A payments by tightening licensing, API standards, and risk controls. Implied upgrades include harmonised AIS/PIS access and governance across markets, stronger, more prescriptive Secure Customer Authentication (SCA) requirements for payment initiation and data access, and expanded reimbursement obligations for authorised push payment (APP) scams. Liability rules also tighten, making third-party providers more accountable for payments failures or fraud. →

> *Merchants must assess regulatory readiness, licensing implications in cross-border contexts, and the integration required to harmonise A2A with existing card and other payment rails.*

> *A2A payments, including Bank Transfer by Worldline, fit a merchant payments niche focused on large, high-value bill payments and cross-border settlement workflows.*

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PSD3 also broadens data sharing with issuers, enabling signal monitoring (e.g., location, timing, devices, transaction history, session data, and IP) to support risk-based decisioning and potentially increase approval rates and data privacy. For merchants, regulatory readiness is a central milestone, affecting cross-border pilots, currency handling, and the ability to deploy A2A in multiple regions within a unified, Open Banking–driven payments ecosystem.

A2A and bill payments: implications for merchants and the payments ecosystem

Adopting A2A as a bill-pay channel implies changes to how high-value payments are initiated, tracked, and reconciled. While A2A benefits translate into better cash visibility and potentially less manual administrative overhead, merchants must assess regulatory readiness, licensing implications in cross-border contexts, and the integration required to harmonise A2A with existing card and other payment rails.

Conclusion

A2A payments, including Bank Transfer by Worldline, fit a merchant payments niche focused on large, high-value bill payments and cross-border settlement workflows. While cards remain dominant for most everyday spend and in-store transactions, A2A offers a channel-specific solution for bill-driven use cases where traditional methods lag in efficiency and cost. As regulatory environments evolve and cross-border capabilities mature, A2A payments' relevance to merchants will be more defined, particularly in sectors where cash and direct bank transfers are the norm, and high-ATV transactions are essential.

CBDCs and Blockchain

The Digital Euro and A2A Payments: How Will Europe's Payment Landscape Change?



Milko Filipov
Senior Manager
valantic



Christian Hartmann
Partner
Roland Berger

Milko Filipov is a Senior Manager and payments & fintech expert at valantic, a digital transformation and AI consulting firm. Christian Hartmann is a Partner and payments, fintech & innovation expert at Roland Berger, a global strategy consulting firm driving business and digital transformation.

An interview with Christian Hartmann, Partner at Roland Berger, and Milko Filipov, Senior Manager at valantic, on the digital euro in the context of account-to-account (A2A) payments.

The digital euro seems quite close to A2A payments. How far would you say this comparison holds when we look at the underlying payment architecture?

Milko Filipov: It's a common assumption that the digital euro is simply another A2A payment because, from a user perspective, it will likely feel very similar: you initiate a payment through your bank or payment service provider (PSP), and it settles digitally, potentially in real time.

The key difference is the type of money being used, not the payment rail. In A2A schemes, payments move between commercial bank deposit accounts. Those deposits are private banks' liabilities, essentially commercial bank money. A digital euro would be different, acting as central bank money in digital form, a direct Eurosystem liability, available to citizens and businesses.

The distinction is relevant because central bank money anchors a monetary system. A digital euro would preserve that role as payments become increasingly digital. While A2A systems define how money moves, the digital euro is defined by what kind of money it moves and why that matters for the monetary system.

→

Christian Hartmann: Building on that, from a payment rail perspective, the digital euro would be designed to complement existing A2A solutions, not be a replacement.

European PSPs and A2A schemes could voluntarily integrate it into their existing products (wallets, banking apps, or co-badged cards) through open standards. The private scheme would remain the preferred brand wherever accepted, while the digital euro is the fallback where it's not.

By establishing a common acceptance standard, the digital euro could even help European A2A solutions scale across the euro area, reduce fragmentation and reliance on external card rails, and lower dependence on international card schemes.

As Europe already has mature A2A payment systems, which use cases will demonstrate the digital euro's unique value?

Milko Filipov: The discussion becomes particularly interesting here. In my view, the digital euro is not intended to compete on a single use case. Indeed, Europe already has highly efficient payment infrastructures, including A2A payments and established card networks. However, it's not about the digital euro replicating existing payment journeys, but about adding value in ways current solutions cannot. That is, of course, on top of its role as risk-free central bank money.

The Eurosystem is already exploring several scenarios with the digital euro pilot, like peer-to-peer (P2P) payments using aliases or access numbers, NFC-enabled offline P2P payments, merchant payments at the point-of-sale using SoftPOS-enabled devices, as well as ecommerce and mobile commerce payments.

> *Milko Filipov: Central bank money anchors a monetary system. A digital euro would preserve that role as payments become increasingly digital.*

Technology-wise, one of the most discussed capabilities is the offline functionality. Being able to complete a payment without an internet connection could introduce a level of resilience difficult to achieve with most existing digital payment methods. The offline functionality would bring some cash characteristics into the digital world and, on top of that, include its inherent privacy.

Beyond privacy, I also think consumers will appreciate the free access to basic functionalities and the inclusive design of the digital euro, which is particularly relevant for unbanked and vulnerable groups. →

Christian Hartmann: I find the opportunity to create true pan-European interoperability particularly compelling. The ECB hopes to create a digital payment instrument that works consistently across the euro area, regardless of the bank, PSP, wallet provider, or country involved.

A successful digital euro could provide a common payment layer across Europe, reducing fragmentation and ensuring that consumers and merchants can access a consistent payment experience. Merchants would also benefit from the digital euro's cost-effective design.

Ultimately, the digital euro will succeed if it can deliver additional trust, resilience, sovereignty, accessibility, and European-wide interoperability while integrating seamlessly into everyday payment experiences. In that sense, the digital euro aims to improve individual payment use cases and to strengthen the long-term foundations of Europe's digital payments ecosystem.

If the digital euro is about more than just payments, where do you see its greatest strategic value for Europe?

Milko Filipov: Here, I believe the discussion moves beyond individual payment transactions into the future of European payments.

Digital payments across the continent remain fragmented and differ significantly from country to country, both in terms of solutions and acceptance. The digital euro could address this by providing a common European payment layer fully available across the euro area.

Standardisation is the strategic element. Through common standards and a shared infrastructure, the digital euro could simplify how banks, fintechs, and payment providers offer truly pan-European solutions. In a market shaped by closed, platform-based ecosystems, it would provide an open, interoperable alternative.

> *"The discussion […] is not about the digital euro replicating existing payment journeys, but about adding value in ways current solutions cannot.*

Christian Hartmann: At the same time, many everyday digital payment experiences rely on a relatively small number of global, non-European providers.

The digital euro is an opportunity to introduce a European-governed solution, delivered through European banks and PSPs. For autonomy, this move is strategically important, reducing Europe's dependency on non-European payment infrastructures while ensuring that a core part of the ecosystem stays aligned with European interests and regulations. In that sense, the digital euro is less →

a new payment product and more a shared infrastructure – a common acceptance layer that banks and PSPs can use to scale their own solutions.

How would the digital euro be different from stablecoins?

Milko Filipov: The digital euro would be quite different from stablecoins, mainly because of its legal nature and the guarantee behind it. As Eurosystem-issued central bank money, the digital euro is a direct liability of the central bank and always redeemable at par, which, simply put, means that one euro is always one euro.

Stablecoins, by contrast, are issued by private companies, and their value depends on the quality of the issuer's reserves and how they are managed. Ultimately, stablecoins' stability depends on private arrangements. It's not a public guarantee.

> *Christian Hartmann: The digital euro is an opportunity to introduce a European-governed solution, delivered through European banks and PSPs.*

So, the key difference is that, by design, the digital euro is risk-free public money, while stablecoins rely on private issuers and reserve management to maintain their value.

Christian Hartmann: I would add that, from a more forward-looking perspective, the interesting aspect of the digital euro is not only how it currently compares to stablecoins, but also how it could evolve within the broader payments and digital asset landscape.

If built on open and interoperable standards, I think the digital euro could, in principle, be integrated into more emerging settlement environments, including the tokenized, DLT-based infrastructures associated primarily with stablecoins. The main idea is that it would bring the core feature of central bank money (risk-free and trusted nature) into whichever technical setup the market evolves towards. To be clear, this is not a design decision the ECB has taken – it is my personal view of how future technology-neutral public money could interact with emerging settlement technologies.

How will the role of banks and PSPs evolve in a digital euro ecosystem?

Milko Filipov: In the ECB's view, banks and PSPs would clearly remain at the centre of the ecosystem. The digital euro is designed to be intermediated, so customers would continue to access it through their bank or payment provider, via existing apps, wallets, or merchant solutions. In that sense, it builds on the current structure rather than changing it. →

Banks and PSPs remain the main interface for customers, while the digital euro is integrated into their existing services. In-app integration may also help them regain access to customers who switched to third-party wallet providers.

The intermediated model also allows the ecosystem to build on existing processes and infrastructures, helping avoid duplication and enabling PSPs to consolidate and modernise payment flows while adding value to the core payment rail. The model also preserves the role of regulated private intermediaries.

Looking ahead, a pilot phase is planned with selected PSPs that took part in the call for expressions of interest. It starts in H2 2027 with 36 selected PSPs and is expected to run for around 12 months, allowing real-world integration and use-case testing in a controlled setup.

Christian Hartmann: I agree and would add that PSPs will actually help shape how the digital euro works in everyday payments. Banks and PSPs should be strategic and ask not whether the digital euro competes with them, but how to use it to compete better. Even now, ahead of the pilot (whether they participate or not), they can start analysing how to integrate it into their systems, align with emerging standards, and how it fits into their current payment flows or merchant solutions.

The timing matters, as the European Parliament's ECON committee adopted its position on the digital euro regulation in June 2026, trilogue negotiations started, and the co-legislators aim to conclude the framework before 2026 ends. The legal basis is taking shape, so integration is no longer a hypothetical scenario for banks and PSPs. It needs planning.

> *Banks and PSPs should be strategic and ask not whether the digital euro competes with them, but how to use it to compete better.*

And then, over time, the real opportunity is in how they use the infrastructure to build (for example, integrating it into wallets, checkout experiences, or merchant acceptance solutions, or connecting it to the EUDI wallet for identity-enabled services) so they can compete on user experience and services, not just on access. Of course, PSPs will also be able to provide and charge for value-added services, such as e-receipts and customer loyalty programmes.

I see PSPs as essential implementation partners and the ones who will truly define how the digital euro feels for end users. For this reason, apart from their role as distribution and acceptance intermediaries, they can also be key in shaping the service layer built on the core payment infrastructure.

A2A Payments Interoperability and Cross-Border Scaling

A2A Payments Interoperability: How Regional Rails Are Starting to Connect



Estera Sava
Senior Writer
The Paypers

> *In 2026, cross-border A2A interoperability is advancing at the governance, technical, and settlement layers, but not enough for banks and PSPs to support it.*

Domestic instant payment rails have largely solved what they were meant to address: settlement delays for localised commerce, high transaction costs, and payment friction. However, by default, they don't communicate with each other for cross-border transactions. A transfer that settles in seconds in Brazil, India, or the Eurozone still needs an intermediary the moment either party is in another country, be that a wallet alliance, a QR standard, a multilateral platform, or a correspondent relationship. In 2026, cross-border A2A interoperability is advancing at the governance, technical, and settlement layers, but not enough for banks and PSPs to support it.

> *Built for domestic applications, instant payments' technical approaches reflect that, and despite their growth, they don't fully comply with the messaging standards meant to unify them.*

Regional models for cross-border A2A payments interoperability

Each region is solving cross-border A2A interoperability differently. Europe is taking a wallet-based approach. **EPI Company and EuroPA's Bancomat, Bizum, SIBS and Vipps MobilePay signed a memorandum of understanding** (MoU) in February 2026, committing to advance cross-border goals through a shared interoperability hub. Instead of merging into a single system, they're preserving each wallet's brand and UX, rolling out interoperable cross-border P2P payments in 2026, and ecommerce and point-of-sale (POS) payments in 2027. The goal is payment sovereignty and reduced reliance on non-European card networks by connecting solutions that together reach around 130 million users. →

Africa is also working toward wallet-based connectivity, but its approach is structurally different from Europe's, since African cross-border payments typically use different rails. In February, the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and Onafriq announced a **Nigeria-to-Ghana instant, wallet-based, outbound payments pilot, without currency conversion, in partnership with banks and mobile money operators**. The collaboration builds on the successful **instant payments corridor** between the two countries, launched in 2025.

> *Multilateral platforms aim to decrease the technical connections RTPs need to build, but this approach doesn't work for liquidity.*

Another approach involves bilateral and multilateral QR linkages. **Brazil's Pix crossed into Argentina in March 2026, letting users pay by scanning a QR code**, part of a wider pattern of LATAM markets adopting the same instant payment model instead of building rival infrastructure.

Asia is approaching cross-border payment linkage in two ways: QR payments and fund transfer connectivity. For QR, the first such linkage was between Thailand and Japan in 2018, with eight other economies following later. In April 2021, Singapore and Thailand set up the first cross-border fund transfer connectivity, a model that has since been replicated throughout the region. In addition to bilateral approaches, Asia is also working on multilateral standardisation. **Nexus Global Payments (NGP)**, the entity launched in 2025 by Project Nexus member central banks (India, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore), aims to establish and manage a multilateral instant payments scheme. The ECB and Bank of Indonesia serve as special observers, as they participated in previous Project Nexus phases.

ISO 20022 fragmentation and G20 targets: why instant rails interoperability is behind

Built for domestic applications, instant payments' technical approaches reflect that, and despite their growth, they don't fully comply with the messaging standards meant to unify them. Most instant rails describe themselves as ISO 20022-based. However, specific message versions, field requirements, and address formats differ enough between schemes that payments between two rails typically need translation.

This impacts the **G20's cross-border payments targets, and a BIS December 2025 assessment admits that the end-2027 goal will not be achieved**, even if most policy actions assigned to international bodies have technically been finalised. ➔

Interoperability also poses liquidity difficulties. Domestic rails typically settle on a **prefunded, real-time gross settlement (RTGS) basis**. The sending institution's funds sit in a dedicated account with the central bank or scheme operator before a payment is sent, and do not settle on a delayed net basis. Extending the model across a corridor connecting several countries' RTPs multiplies the prefunding burden across every currency pair a bank wants to reach instantly. Multilateral platforms aim to decrease the technical connections RTPs need to build, but this approach doesn't work for liquidity. Someone must prefund each currency pair, and participants must decide how to address distribution. Until then, this remains an open issue for scaling platforms beyond founding members.

"To accomplish interoperability successfully, banks involved in the payments chain must resolve fragmentation.

Multi-rail orchestration and fallback logic: the integration aspects behind interoperability

For PSPs and banks, orchestration is the main issue. Supporting instant, multi-currency A2A payments means routing a transaction across card rails, Open Banking payment initiation, and RTP schemes like SCT Inst, Pix, or UPI (depending on which corridor and currency it reaches), with fallback logic like network tokenisation built in so a declined or unsupported route doesn't result in failed payments.

To accomplish interoperability successfully, banks involved in the payments chain must resolve fragmentation.

A2A Payments Were Never About Replacing Schemes



Gabriel Lucas
Director, Payments Advisory
Redbridge Debt and Treasury Advisory

Leading the European team at Redbridge Payments Advisory, Gabriel has been providing strategic advice to international and multichannel merchants in their payment transformation and optimisation journeys since 2020. Redbridge Debt and Treasury Advisory is a leading financial management partner to corporations around the globe.

A2A payments vs cards: a mis-framed debate

The debate around account-to-account (A2A) payments is usually framed as a contest between A2A payments and card schemes. It is a tidy story of new rails, lower costs, faster settlement, and fewer intermediaries, in which A2A payments slowly displace cards and schemes fade.

I think the framing is wrong. A2A payments were never really about replacing schemes. They were about improving how money moves, which is only one part of making a payment system work at scale, and a relevant distinction to keep in mind.

As I argued in '**A2A payments: the missed opportunity**?', account-based payments offer merchants genuine benefits: faster settlement, lower cost, better control over cash flow. This is not a theory. Open Banking, instant rails, Pix, UPI, iDEAL, SEPA Instant, and Pay by Bank all show that A2A creates real value in the right markets and use cases.

So, the question is not whether an A2A payment works. It does. The harder question is: can the system around A2A payments generate the trust, governance, incentives, and value needed to scale beyond domestic, low-margin payments? →

What card schemes really provide

Card schemes are often dismissed as rails. That is too narrow. Their strength is structural, not just technical: common rules, acceptance standards, dispute and chargeback mechanisms, liability models, fraud frameworks, settlement, and, crucially, a commercial model that gives every participant a reason to keep investing, something most people underestimate.

A scheme is not a network of participants. It is a system of incentives, including: interchange, scheme fees, processing revenue fund resilience, security, innovation, rewards, risk management, and global acceptance. The model is expensive, often criticised, and imperfect, but it is proven self-sustaining.

A2A payments have not yet become the equivalent, but it's interesting to look at what happens when they try.

Scale is not the same as sustainability: the proof is already here

Take the two systems most often cited as evidence that A2A payments are winning:

India's UPI has reached an extraordinary scale. However, its zero-MDR economics are a policy paid for by the state, not a market outcome. The government allocated around EUR 135 million to incentivise low-value UPI transactions for 2024-25, after roughly **EUR 325 million** in 2023-24, and industry bodies have lobbied since 2023 to introduce an MDR. A 'free' rail that depends on a recurring, contested government subsidy is not a sustainable economic model. It is a political one, and the moment credit enters UPI, scheme economics reappear: RuPay credit on UPI already carries an MDR of roughly 1.1% to 2% above about EUR 18. The free rail stays free, while the value-added layer gets monetised, which is not a coincidence.

> *Can the system around A2A payments generate the trust, governance, incentives, and value needed to scale beyond domestic, low-margin payments?*

Brazil's Pix tells the same story even more clearly. Pix is one of the most successful instant payment systems in the world. But it is no longer staying a simple rail. The Central Bank launched **Pix Automático for recurring payments** in 2025; banks are now offering instalments over Pix as an interest-bearing alternative to credit cards; and the Central Bank is developing a mechanism, expected in 2026 or 2027, to let businesses **pledge future Pix receivables as collateral for credit**. Recurring billing, instalments, credit overlays, receivables financing: that is Pix rebuilding, piece by piece, exactly the layers that make a scheme a scheme. →

The UK makes the point most explicitly of all. Variable Recurring Payments (VRPs) already work for 'sweeping' between a customer's own accounts, and they are free. **VRPs now account for around 16% of Open Banking transactions**, with much of that growth through sweeping. But the moment the industry tried to extend them to commercial use, recurring bills, subscriptions, and eventually ecommerce, it ran into the obvious problem: free funds no one.

> *A 'free' rail that depends on a recurring, contested government subsidy is not a sustainable economic model.*

So, in 2025, 31 firms came together to establish the UK Payments Initiative (UKPI) to drive commercial VRPs and agreed to a first-phase commercial model, with the first live payments expected in early 2026. At its core sits a centralised access fee, **which the regulator has chosen not to challenge**, and a purchase-protection model for ecommerce VRPs, explicitly benchmarked against debit cards. A central body, a shared commercial model, an access fee, and dispute protection, modelled on cards – they are not replacing the scheme model, but instead rebuilding it, in the open, and calling it Open Banking.

This is what often gets missed: flagship A2A systems are not scheme economics replacements but reconstructions.

The system profitability of A2A payment rails

There is a second reason the 'A2A payments replace cards' story breaks down: it targets the wrong profit pool.

As we explored in '**Why Pay by Bank is the Hottest Trend in Global Payments**', merchants have strong reasons to push A2A payments: cost, settlement speed, lower fraud exposure, and cash flow. For high-ticket or low-margin sectors, this is compelling.

But today, A2A competes mostly with domestic debit and bank transfers, the thinnest margin market corner. The real economic value comes from international, credit, premium, and rewards-led spending, where interchange, FX, lending, and loyalty stack up. This is the pool that schemes defend hardest, and it is precisely where A2A payment has made least progress.

Which is why understanding card economics, including interchange, still matters, especially in markets like the US, where rewards and credit are deeply embedded. We covered that complexity in '**Understanding US interchange fees: a guide for European merchants**'.

Simply put, cheaper doesn't mean better. A2A can be cheaper because it strips out parts of the card economics, but removing them is not the same as replacing them with something that works. →

The future is built on A2A rails

A sustainable payment system needs governance: clear rules, trusted brands, consistent dispute and refund processes, liability allocation, and fraud controls. And it needs value creation that reaches everyone in the chain, from merchants, banks, and PSPs to consumers and infrastructure providers. Without that, A2A is a very efficient rail with an incomplete ecosystem around it. For this reason, schemes or scheme-like models will stay central.

So, the future is not A2A versus schemes, but A2A plus the network model that makes it work. In the markets that matter most, this is being built on top of A2A, not instead of it.

> *Understanding card economics, including interchange, still matters, especially in markets like the US, where rewards and credit are deeply embedded.*

Who builds it? My call is that the winning overlay will not come from a new A2A-native challenger trying to dethrone the schemes. Rebuilding trust, rules, and economics from zero, at the same time, is the hardest job in payments, and very few have the balance sheet or the patience for it. Domestically, the winners will be public rail operators and banks that layer credit and value-added services on A2A. Pix is the template.

Cross-border and in high-value pools, incumbent schemes will extend downward and absorb A2A into their own networks rather than be replaced by them. The closest thing to a genuine new entrant will be a wallet or super-app with distribution it already owns, but that, too, is just scheme-like economics rebuilt by someone with reach. The 'scheme killer' is the least likely outcome of all.

> *The closest thing to a genuine new entrant will be a wallet or super-app with distribution it already owns, but that, too, is just scheme-like economics rebuilt by someone with reach. The 'scheme killer' is the least likely outcome of all.*

A2A means building better rails, while the economics are being rebuilt right behind them, mostly by players who already understood how they worked.

Understanding the Pain Points of A2A Payments Interoperability



Nick Maynard
VP of Research
Juniper Research

As the VP of Research at Juniper Research, Nick Maynard leads analysis and insight across fast-moving digital markets, with a focus on fintech and payments. Juniper Research is a global tech-strategist firm providing research, data, and forecasting across the fintech, telecoms, and IoT sectors.

Of all the payments developments we track at Juniper Research, it is hard to find a market which we predict will have a bigger impact than account-to-account (A2A) payments. Providing faster and lower-cost payments at scale, A2A payments are unlocking benefits for existing and new financial services users alike. Indeed, we forecast A2A payments transaction value will reach USD 195 trillion globally in 2030, an 113% increase from 2025.

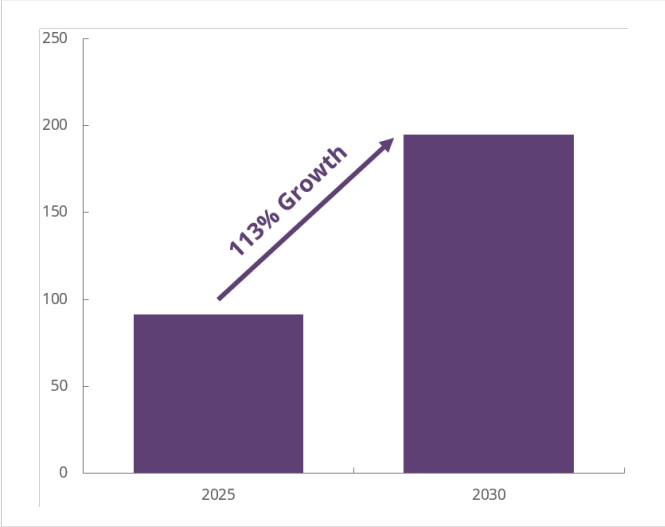
However, while A2A payments are undoubtedly on a growth path, the development is not without challenges, as interoperability is now a major buzzword in payments. Ensuring that systems are interoperable is vital – it's the difference between initiated payments and actually accepted ones – and for A2A payments, interoperability is a problem. Why is this, what does it involve, and how can the industry fix it?

Why do A2A payments struggle with interoperability?

It is fundamentally important to understand the path to A2A payments developments if we want to uncover why interoperability is challenging. A2A payment systems are typically built domestically and reflect the cultural, technical, and regulatory requirements of each country that builds them. There is an understandably high level of divergence between systems. Consequently, interoperability is not necessarily a given. Often, it's available internationally only via SWIFT or third-party payment networks, making effective cross-border payments complex.

While we have seen some interoperability efforts, such as Project Nexus in Asia, these typically benefit only regional blocs. Of course, to an extent, some payments, for example in the EU, are harmonised within the shared SEPA framework. However, other payment methods, such as the pan-European digital wallet Wero, are developing across countries at a relatively modest pace. Therefore, the overall state of payments →

Figure 1: Global A2A Payments Transaction Value (USD tn), 2025 vs. 2030



Source: Juniper Research

interoperability remains lower than it could be. Even in the Eurozone, interoperability applies only to intra-EU payments. A payment to a non-EU destination often falls short of this interoperable experience.

Why does a lack of A2A payments interoperability matter?

In **recent research conducted with cross-border payments specialist Thunes**, we found that poor interoperability comes with a real cost. In siloed markets, it traps liquidity and creates delays, with the worst affected being those on the lowest incomes and reliant on remittances.

A lack of interoperability is also a problem for user expectations. Domestic payments have moved quickly in recent years, and users now want payments to be fast, convenient, and secure, which simply makes cross-border payments look worse. As domestic payments offer progressively better experiences, the gap between cross-border payments expectations and reality has increased.

Competition is another challenging aspect. The number of payment methods available to consumers is growing consistently, and several existing and new methods are pursuing interoperability. Cards, for example, are interoperable by design. The EMVCo standards ensure a certain level of commonality, providing a similar experience worldwide. Even digital wallets are increasingly interoperable, as seen with initiatives such as Alipay+ or PayPal World, which are driving interoperability and could significantly alter the market's direction.

In comparison, A2A payments look out of place due to their lack of interoperability, threatening their growth at a time when they are otherwise very much in the ascendancy. While national governments and regulators look at A2A payment systems as sovereign and highly beneficial to national payment strategies, interoperability must be a primary focus to ensure these systems are as successful as possible. ➔

> *A2A payments look out of place due to their lack of interoperability, threatening their growth at a time when they are otherwise very much in the ascendancy.*

> *The consumer payments interaction depends on the corridor it follows, namely the originating and receiving country. This fragmentation is a limiting factor that must be addressed at an A2A scheme level.*

What can the payments industry do to address the need for interoperability?

At a basic level, the industry needs to acknowledge interoperability as a challenge worth addressing. We need to consider it at the design stage, and regulators and governments must include interoperability-related aspects in their roadmaps.

The wider payments industry is already addressing this. Cross-border specialists are building systems that operate as an additional layer on top of payments, providing simplified connectivity and enabling payments to flow from one system to another. While this improves the user experience, it still cannot change the fact that it differs across payments. As a matter of fact, the consumer payments interaction depends on the corridor it follows, namely the originating and receiving country. This fragmentation is a limiting factor that must be addressed at an A2A scheme level.

The outlook on A2A payments

In the end, it's all about what kind of payments market we want to see. Currently, despite efforts to the contrary, fragmentation is increasing. As payments become more complex, this challenges the entire ecosystem. Unless key stakeholders, including payments system operators, banks and financial institutions, payments companies, and regulators, agree on interoperability standards, more fragmentation will plague the market.

Wero – The Future of Pan-European A2A Payment Interoperability



Ludovic Francesconi
Chief Member and Strategy Officer
EPI Company

Ludovic Francesconi is the Chief Member and Strategy Officer of Wero, a European-led consortium founded by 18 European banks and PSPs, committed to delivering a unified mobile payment service to all European companies and citizens through the Wero wallet.

For readers who haven't followed it closely, what problem is Wero solving, who's behind it, and how does it fit into the European payments landscape? What's the current country reach and usage?

Wero is a European payments solution, backed by 18 shareholders (banks and PSPs) who have supported us since our 2024 launch. Wero is live in Germany, Belgium, and France for peer-to-peer (P2P), and ecommerce in Germany and Belgium. It launched in Luxembourg in September 2026 and is migrating Payconiq to leverage its user base.

In October 2026, we will start migrating iDEAL in the Netherlands; co-branding happened already in early 2026. The next operational phase focuses on migrating merchants and is critical, as iDEAL is the preferred solution, accounting for over 70% of ecommerce transactions. Austria will follow and could enable Wero's expansion to other European countries.

We focus on consumers, as a direct account-to-account (A2A) solution for all use cases: P2P, ecommerce, and point-of-sale (POS). Live in Belgium and Luxembourg, POS is planned for Germany and other markets and includes QR code functionality. By the end of 2027, it will feature contactless payments with near-field communication (NFC).

Our goal is a full omni-channel, all-in-one, pan-European payments solution. Live in multiple markets, Wero can address Europe's payment fragmentation. Its scale can attract large players, acquirers, merchants, and surrounding local ecosystems, and is especially relevant for acquirers and merchants, who find implementing national solutions cumbersome. Wero requires only one integration, helping cover several markets simultaneously. →

We have 60 mln users, and with iDEAL's ~15 mln users, Wero will reach 75 mln and grow further. Transaction figures aren't public, but we are happy with our P2P and ecommerce market momentum. For ecommerce, merchant appetite is strong. In Germany, we have onboarded ~4,000, including large enterprises (e.g., Lidl, Eventim, Decathlon, and DM) and international ones like Dott. France is next, where Veepee, Decathlon, E.Leclerc, Orange, Fnac Darty, and others want to offer Wero.

Which merchant use cases and verticals does Wero support today, and which are you actively building toward?

Wero for ecommerce includes single, immediate payments and refunds. It also offers pre-disputes, dispute management, and fraud detection, all essential to trust.

We will open subscriptions and subscription management so consumers can see and monitor merchants with active subscriptions in-app, starting in Germany in 2027, and Belgium, France, and other markets next. One-click, frictionless payments without SCA will follow – a particularly relevant development for in-app, in-store POS payments. Default capture for click-and-collect is also planned and important for merchants.

How does Wero handle disputes and chargebacks?

If transaction issues occur, consumers can use the Wero app to file claims: for fraud, if they believe a transaction is fraudulent; for technical issues, if an incident caused a failure or duplicate payments; or for commercial disputes, where the objective is to facilitate consumer-merchant communication.

As best practice, we first advise consumers to contact the merchant, particularly for issues it can solve directly (e.g., missing/damaged parcel). If it can't, we facilitate the pre-dispute flow. In exceptional cases, we can settle chargebacks as cards do. We escalate with the bank, which prompts the merchant's acquirer to settle it. But as most transactions are strongly authenticated, consumers will have difficulty claiming this. We do this in all markets, except the Netherlands. iDEAL doesn't have dispute management, and we postponed it until migration finalises.

Each European market largely has its A2A scheme – Bancomat in Italy, Bizum in Spain, MB WAY in Portugal, Vipps MobilePay in the Nordics. How does the newly announced European Network for Payments (ENP) build on the MoU signed in February 2026, and what will it mean for a merchant working across markets?

For A2A interoperability, we have announced the creation of the new entity named 'European Network for Payments (ENP)' with Bizum, SIBS–MB WAY, Bancomat, and Vipps MobilePay. The network could extend to other European payment solutions over time, subject to the partners' agreement and its technical and operational requirements. →

EPI Company

“ If transaction issues occur, consumers can use the Wero app or the banking app to file claims.

“ For A2A interoperability, we have announced the creation of the new entity named ‘European Network for Payments (ENP)’ with Bizum, SIBS–MB WAY, Bancomat, and Vipps MobilePay.

Click here for the company profile

Europe has no cross-border service for transactions between all countries. Although expansion is possible, we are building this interoperability hub in markets with well-established solutions.

Our objective is to enable, for example, a German user vacationing in Spain to pay with Wero using Bizum’s acceptance network – through a partnership where interoperable solutions communicate without building bilateral connections. We’re aligning scheme processes, technical setups, and rules. If issues occur, solutions must work flawlessly together so claims can be managed on both sides.

Interoperability will cover all use cases, but we are yet to decide whether it will have a new label or an umbrella brand. The core message is that users can pay with Wero wherever they see Bizum. Interoperability will also be transparent for merchants. They might need to sign a contract addendum (details still to be defined), but the bottom line is that if they accept Bizum, they can accept Wero.

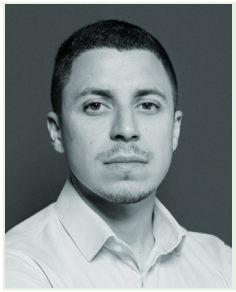
Which value-added services do you plan to offer, and how do you see Wero evolving in the future?

Our roadmap is ambitious. Today, Wero is more of a P2P and ecommerce payment method, used with a button. For POS, you also need a wallet; this is our priority. The app is live in Germany, France, and Luxembourg (where all banks have adopted it), and is planned for Belgium, with new services (cards, NFC integration) and contactless payments via NFC.

We will also offer value-added services, starting with loyalty. What’s challenging with contactless payments is that users choose a default wallet. To reach our objective, Wero needs to be their preferred method. This requires additional services (loyalty, tickets, boarding passes, etc.) and work on digital identity, which is our next focus. This is the 2027/2028 roadmap and the key to the Wero app’s future adoption.



Ugnė Buračienė
Group CEO
payabl.



Breno Oliveira
CPO
payabl.

Ugnė Buračienė is the Group CEO, and Breno Oliveira is the CPO of payabl., a fintech provider of payments and business accounts, helping merchants accept payments through card acquiring and 300+ local and alternative payment methods, manage money through multi-currency business accounts, and issue virtual and physical cards.

Making Europe's Mix of A2A Schemes More Manageable for Merchants

The world has woken up to the potential of account-to-account (A2A) payments. For merchants, A2A payments can help reduce chargeback exposure, lower acceptance costs in certain use cases, and accelerate settlement. For consumers, they offer a convenient and secure, bank-authenticated checkout experience, often supported by biometric verification and multi-factor authentication (MFA). Brazil's Pix is perhaps the most compelling example of A2A payments adoption at scale, while India's UPI system has created a comprehensive, nationwide A2A payments infrastructure. These two services share a commonality: strong systemic cohesion in their core design, operating as state-backed real-time payment (RTP) systems to drive financial inclusion, eliminate intermediaries, and lower costs. Things are different in Europe, with the A2A industry being a mix of fragmented approaches.

Ugnė Buračienė, Group CEO at payabl., states that *'Europe isn't a singular A2A payment market. There are national schemes in the South, direct bank rails in the North and Baltics, with Wero rapidly rising in Western Europe. Payment Initiation Service Providers (PISPs) bridge any gaps, bringing disparate banking APIs into more user-friendly Pay by Bank checkout flows. In short, it's a little messy, and merchants operating across the continent need an acquirer that's plugged into everything.'*

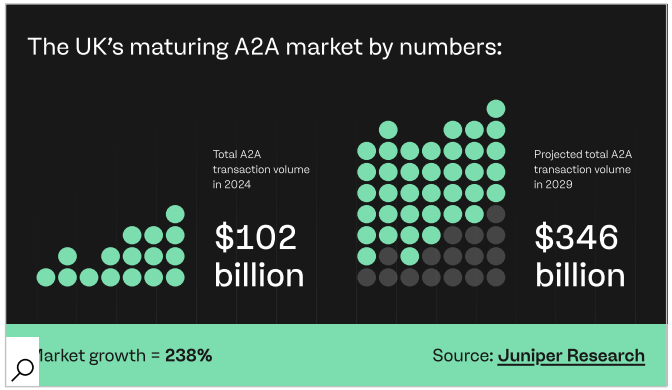
A quick review of Europe's A2A payments offering

Let's start with the North. Sweden's popular mobile payment system Swish, launched in 2012 by the country's banks, is **now used by around 8.8 million** Swedes for online shopping. Vipps MobilePay leads in Norway →

and Denmark, although Open Banking players like Trustly and Zimpler dominate a growing share of cross-border volume, and in specific ecommerce sectors, such as iGaming and travel.

A2A adoption in the Baltics is disproportionately high relative to its population of roughly six million, with Pay by Bank becoming the default way people pay. Regional heavyweights like Trustly compete with local specialists, such as banklinq, which has scaled rapidly by bundling banks across Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into unified checkout options.

Graph 1



Meanwhile, the UK's A2A market is growing, with the Faster Payments System providing real-time settlement rails for PISP propositions. **According to Juniper Research**, the total A2A transaction volume will reach USD 346 billion in 2029, driven by expanded commercial Pay by Bank use and high consumer trust in bank-app authentication.

Turning West, our **report on how Europe likes to pay** highlighted how cross-border transactions across the continent are set to rise 58% by 2028, fuelled by Western Europe's powerhouse economies.

Despite this growth, payment preferences are fragmented. To help address the lack of interoperability, the European Payments Initiative (EPI) conceived Wero, a digital wallet to drive the next generation of A2A payments. Live for P2P payments since 2024 in Belgium, France, and Germany, **Wero had around 53 million users as of Q2 2026**. Its ecommerce features launched in Germany in 2025 and are expanding progressively across Belgium and France in 2026.

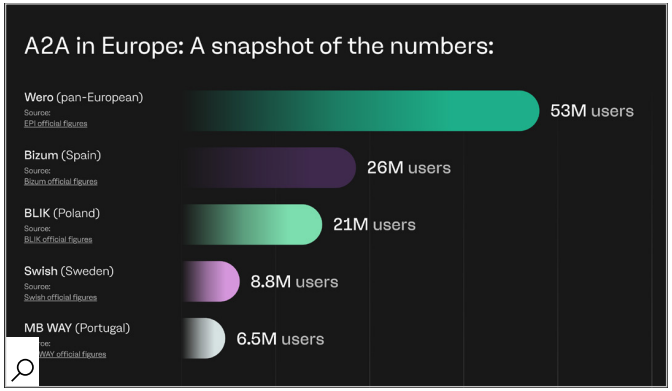
EPI acquired iDEAL, which holds a 70% market share of ecommerce in the Netherlands, and Payconiq to help facilitate a smoother transition to Wero, with major migrations underway in Luxembourg and the →

Netherlands, and more markets to join. In June, EPI announced Erste Bank and Raiffeisen as shareholders, working to bring Wero to Austria, and it has also **approached British banks to discuss UK expansion**.

Moving to Southern Europe, A2A payments propositions have evolved largely within national borders rather than as a unified cross-border network. In Spain, Bizum boasts **26 million active users**, while MB WAY and Multibanco are deeply entrenched in Portugal. A2A payments in Italy are split between established scheme-based networks, like MyBank, and a host of PISPs.

Finally, a glance to the East shows how A2A can replace cards at scale in a single market, with the Polish mobile payment system, BLIK, amassing **2.9 billion transactions** worth EUR 109.4 billion in 2025 alone.

Graph 2



Removing A2A payments complexity

Fragmented A2A systems force merchants to juggle multiple local options, whether it's Bizum in Spain or Swish in Sweden. This creates costly overheads, inconsistent checkout experiences, and complicated cross-border reconciliation. payabl. is easing these operational headaches through twin solutions offered via a single payments engine – the payabl.one platform, designed to help merchants manage their entire money flow.

Breno Oliveira, CPO of payabl. shares: *'Instant Bank Transfer is our Pay by Bank product, now live in 15 markets across Europe. It's been built in phases, leveraging third-party solutions as well as our own direct XS2A connections in the Baltics. Merchants benefit from faster, more reliable payments at a lower cost per transaction, as well as greater control over the checkout experience. Meanwhile, Wero will help Europe establish a new benchmark for seamless, secure, and inclusive commerce. That's why we became a licenced EPI member last October, and one of the first Wero-enabled acquirers. Our two-solution architecture is a key part of our product roadmap – a merchant contracts it once to bypass cross-border complexities as the A2A ecosystem evolves.'*

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Global A2A Market Landscape – Local and Regional Developments

Global A2A Market Landscape: Local and Regional Developments Shaping A2A Payments



Estera Sava
Senior Writer
The Paypers

A2A payments are progressing differently worldwide, with each region approaching development in its own way. Some markets built their rails through central bank mandates, others through bank-led wallets and domestic schemes, and several are now working to connect those systems across borders.

European wallets and A2A payments adoption

Europe wants its own payment network, free of dependence on non-European card schemes. The European Payments Alliance (EuroPA) gained more members: Poland's BLIK joined it in 2025, as did Greece's IRIS and the Nordics' Vipps MobilePay, and by November 2025, the alliance had reached 10 countries and over 100 million users across Europe. EuroPA members are enabling mobile, cross-border payments interoperability as part of the wider **European Mobile Payment Systems Association (EMPSA)** collaboration. Moreover, the **EuroPA and EPI Company's MoU, announced in June 2025**, completed a **joint proof of concept for retail payments** in April 2026 through Bancomat, SIBS-MB WAY, and EPI.

> *EuroPA members are enabling mobile, cross-border payments interoperability as part of the wider European Mobile Payment Systems Association (EMPSA) collaboration.*

However, a gap between A2A payments availability and adoption still exists, as seen in Greece. Since **December 2025**, Greek shops and websites must accept instant payments. **But in-store adoption is still low, at around 55,000 payments a month**, with the finance minister attributing this to poor checkout visibility and a lack of rewards to match card loyalty schemes. Romania is a step behind: **RoPay launched in October 2024**, but most banks only joined in 2025 and 2026. →

North America: FedNow, RTP in the US, and Canada's Real-Time Rail (RTR)

In the US, the core problem remains the lack of interoperability between FedNow and RTP. Both added **Request for Payment**, a way to ask for money that the payer approves in their banking app. Meanwhile, Visa and Mastercard did not try to build competing rails, focusing instead on protection layers.

> *In the US, the core problem remains the lack of interoperability between FedNow and RTP.*

Canada shows how much longer instant payment rail development can take. Payments Canada's plan for an RTR was initially set for 2019, but it was delayed to 2022, 2023, and then to 2026. **The legal rules were published in July 2026** and effective on 24 August, ahead of the Q4 2026 launch. Even so, the **RTR will launch in three phases**, the last planned for Q3 2027. One reason behind this is that Interac e-Transfer Clearing and Settlement participants need to migrate to the new rail.

LATAM's instant rails built by central banks

Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia all have real-time A2A rails, enforced and built by central banks, not the market. Brazil keeps adding new features to Pix and has grown enough that the central bank is weighing letting businesses borrow against money it collects. In Mexico, SPEI is positioning itself as an everyday retail payment method, whereas Colombia's Bre-B is scaling at an incredible pace. Launched in **October 2025**, Bre-B links services that couldn't communicate before, and **registered users reached 87% of the adult population within six months** of availability.

APAC: UPI's new roadmaps, Project Nexus, and Australia's BECS decommissioning

India is expanding UPI capabilities, moving into the CBDC space and supporting the digital rupee pilot, with **the central bank routing it through UPI's QR codes** functionality. QR linkages between A2A schemes are the common approach across the region, and Project Nexus is trying to standardise the pattern. Singapore is leading developments in this area and is currently exploring **upgrades to its national instant payment infrastructure as part of the PayNow Gen2 study**. This includes enhancing QR interoperability and the online checkout experience, enabling larger-value public-sector PayNow transactions, and expanding payment capabilities for Request-to-Pay, structured data for automated reconciliation, cross-border connectivity, and new functionalities for agentic commerce.

In contrast, Australia's developments warn what happens when new infrastructure doesn't include a plan to replace the old one. →

In 2023, the industry agreed to decommission its batch system, BECS, in favour of the New Payments Platform by 2030. But **in December 2025, AusPayNet announced it removed the target end date** to avoid disorderly migration, as a clear roadmap for what A2A payments should look like had not been developed. **PayTo, meant to replace BECS direct debits, lacks adoption, sitting at 0.1% of BECS's direct debits' 2025 total value**. Even the NPP itself needs upgrades, and the RBA's Risk Assessment Update highlights persisting risks, as well as new ones. If participants fail to coordinate progress on modernising A2A payments, the RBA will need to intervene to ensure public interest outcomes.

> *Australia's developments warn what happens when new infrastructure doesn't include a plan to replace the old one.*

MEA shows how fast a new instant payment rail can grow

The UAE's instant payments platform, **Aani, surpassed 12.5 million users and 774,000 merchants** just three years after launch, recording a sixfold year-on-year increase in transfers. Aani is domestic only for now, but future planned upgrades include cross-border payments, electronic direct debit, e-cheques, and B2B payments.

Similarly, Nigeria's payment system has greatly progressed, driven by central bank regulation and NIBSS' tech innovation. Launched in 2011, NIBSS Instant Payments (NIP) **became the first system in Africa to hit the 'mature' level on the AfricaNenda Inclusivity Spectrum**, which scores function, governance, and consumer protection. Its track record makes Nigeria a natural hub for linkage with other African instant payment systems, as already shown in **the pilot connecting it to Ghana**.

> *NIBSS Instant Payments (NIP) became the first system in Africa to hit the 'mature' level on the AfricaNenda Inclusivity Spectrum, which scores function, governance, and consumer protection.*

Different as their paths are, these markets share a goal: moving money directly between bank accounts without depending on card networks. The rails that have scaled fastest, from Pix to Bre-B and Aani, had a central bank setting the pace. Progress has stalled where there was no plan for moving users off the old rails, as seen with Australia's PayTo. Either way, as Chapter 3 argued for the EU, the UK, and the US, the rail is only the beginning: adoption depends on giving merchants and consumers a reason to switch.

A2A Payments: Five Different Regional Approaches to One Technology



Francesco Burelli
Partner
Arkwright Consulting

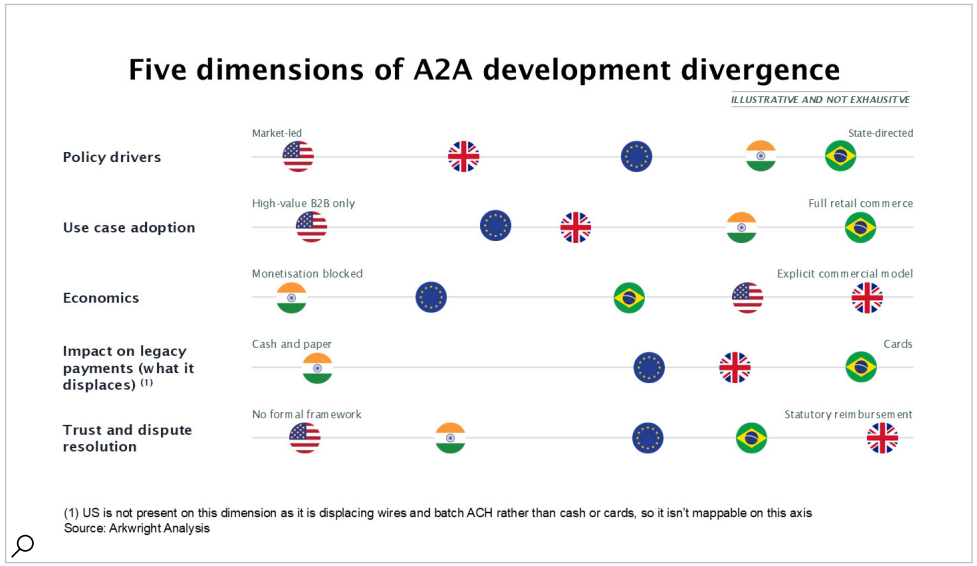
Francesco Burelli is a Partner at Arkwright Consulting, a payments and digital financial services strategy boutique. Founded in 1987 in the Nordics as a spin-off from a major strategy brand, Arkwright operates globally and works at the intersection of fact-based analysis and deep industry knowledge.

Account-to-account (A2A) tech will likely keep gaining share, although unevenly across markets and use cases. At the same time, A2A payments are evolving along different paths, despite relying on similar real-time payment (RTP) infrastructure. The main differences come from policy models, use case adoption, economics, legacy payment method displacement, and approaches to trust and dispute resolution. As a result, the competitive question, once related to the fastest rail owner, is now: who can build the most sustainable operating model around it.

Account-to-account (A2A) payments are value transfer solutions that keep evolving. Built on now widely available RTP infrastructure, they are changing payment use cases in terms of who gets paid and who is liable when things go wrong. Over the last couple of years, A2A evolved from a primarily technology focus to one on operating rules and payment economics.

> *“ Commercial VRPs offer consumer-set limits, duration, and cancellation, effectively bringing mandate-based payments into a more flexible digital environment.*

However, we are seeing fragmentation in development approaches. Despite resting on similar technological foundations, A2A is evolving very differently across geographies. As shown in Fig. 1, five dimensions explain much of that divergence.
→



Policy drivers: who is pushing A2A and shaping much of what happens

The EU has legislated A2A payments capability. The Instant Payments Regulation (IPR) prompts Euro-area payment service providers (PSPs) to receive instant transfers from January 2025 and to send them from October 2025, at price parity with ordinary credit transfers, with Verification of Payee (VoP) included. Therefore, basic capability adoption is largely a compliance outcome, not a commercial one. Similarly, PSD3 and the Payment Services Regulation (PSR), agreed politically in November 2025, extend the same strategic goals into fraud liability, consumer protection, and API quality. However, their final application timetable depends on formal adoption and transition periods.

The UK has taken a different route for commercial A2A. Instead of mandating a universal commercial payment product, regulators pushed the industry to develop a sustainable scheme and commercial model. The UK Payments Initiative (UKPI) was the result, and its commercial variable recurring payments (cVRPs) scheme went live in June 2026. While slow to arrive, the underlying premise is that participants need a reason to invest in and maintain it.

Brazil and India are closer to a state- or institution-led product management model. Banco Central do Brasil, apart from regulating Pix, defines its features and publishes the product roadmap. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) plays a similar role for its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) service. Both systems have benefited from unusually strong institutional coordination and policy support, while mandatory participation requirements have been particularly important in Brazil.

The US has no single coherent driver, and FedNow and The Clearing House's RTP network operate in parallel. The CFPB's Section 1033 rule, the legal basis for the data access on which payment initiation depends, has been halted by the courts and reopened for reconsideration, while stablecoins have had considerable policy attention following the GENIUS Act. American consumer A2A payments remain largely market-led and, consequently, have developed slower than in several other major markets. →

In Europe, another driver overlaying all of this is sovereignty. Dependence on international card schemes, once primarily a competition-policy concern, is now a strategic consideration. This explains why the European Payments Initiative's (EPI) Wero has the political backing earlier bank-led initiatives often lacked.

A2A payments use cases: adoption is not consistent

A2A does not spread evenly across payment types, tending to move from easier use cases to harder ones.

Recurring and bill payments are a logical segment, as card-on-file has structural weaknesses here: expiry dates, involuntary churn, and limited consumer control over recurring mandates. The UKPI scheme started with utilities, government, charities, and financial services. Brazil's Pix Automático, **launched in June 2025**, targets much of the same segment from a different starting point.

High-value B2B payments are the other end of the spectrum, and an increasingly important source for US momentum. Both the RTP and FedNow raised their transaction limits to USD 10 million in 2025, enabling greater use in corporate treasury, payroll, property transactions, and other payments that previously relied more on wires or batch ACH.

Ecommerce checkout is a partially contested middle. Amazon and eBay both launched Pay by Bank in the UK in early 2026, importantly signalling demand that had not existed before. However, availability stopped being the only constraint. Consumer familiarity and trust are important aspects to consider, and UK research suggests Pay by Bank awareness lacks consistent growth.

Point-of-sale is the newest front A2A payments are trying to conquer. Pix por aproximação brought NFC-initiated A2A payments to Brazil in 2025, and Bizum has been preparing an in-store wallet in Spain. These are among the first serious attempts to challenge cards on their strongest territory.

> *Despite resting on similar technological foundations, A2A is evolving very differently across geographies.*

Interface design is a less obvious determinant. Proxy addressing (paying to a phone number or handle rather than an account number) helped make Pix, UPI, Swish, Bizum, and BLIK feel native to consumers, and its absence is conspicuous in markets with slower A2A payments adoption. Conversely, the redirect journey that European Open Banking inherited from PSD2 remains an important source of checkout friction.

While A2A payments are positioned as a card competitor, challenges for A2A that continue in most markets include impulse purchases, credit-funded spending, rewards-driven behaviour, and cross-border payments. Therefore, the more →

realistic framing is which aspects of card usage are replaced first, and what remains in the card stack afterwards.

> *While A2A payments are positioned as a card competitor, challenges for A2A that continue in most markets include impulse purchases, credit-funded spending, rewards-driven behaviour, and cross-border payments.*

Economics: the biggest differentiator and a key driver of investment sustainability

A price parity mandate comes with monetisation challenges. This is seen with the IPR, which requires European banks and PSPs to build and operate instant payment capability while preventing them from charging more than for an equivalent ordinary transfer. Although the approach ensures payment method availability, it risks producing compliance-led differentiated investment, rather than commercial-led. Zero Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) furthers this issue. UPI's volumes are the largest in the world and generate no direct merchant revenue through MDR, which is why India is now debating whether to apply selective charges to higher-value transactions or larger merchants, while leaving most everyday payments free. The alternative is continued cross-subsidy by banks, payment apps, or government support. Scheme-led markets have a reversed approach: first establish a commercial model, then scale. UKPI exists, in part, because a decade of Open Banking-enabled payments demonstrated that a payment rail without a rulebook and a sustainable commercial model does not necessarily attract sufficient investment.

What remains unanswered is whether the fee stack on a 'cheap' A2A payment ultimately reaches that of card economics once disputes, guarantees, fraud tooling, consumer protection, and a scheme operator all need funding. If it does, the merchant savings case becomes less compelling.

Meanwhile, value is migrating from the transaction toward overlays: payment guarantees, credit, payment orchestration, and reconciliation data. In the US, some of that value has moved directly to the data layer: in 2025, **JPMorgan decided to charge aggregators for account data access**, arguing that most traffic was not tied directly to customer action. 'Who pays for the infrastructure' is the same argument (shaped differently), and its resolution will directly affect Pay by Bank economics in the world's largest card market.

Impact on legacy payment types: A2A and what it displaces depends on previous market preferences

Where cash and cheques dominated, A2A payments became the substitute at extraordinary speed. Pix and UPI are just as much about inclusion and digitisation as about disruption. →

In a direct debit context, A2A may be better understood as an upgrade and not a complete replacement. Commercial VRPs offer consumer-set limits, duration, and cancellation, effectively bringing mandate-based payments into a more flexible digital environment.

Where cards dominate, displacement is partial. Cards still bundle payments with credit, rewards, fraud protection, and dispute resolution, making some use cases considerably harder for A2A payments than others.

“ Cards still bundle payments with credit, rewards, fraud protection, and dispute resolution, making some use cases considerably harder for A2A payments than others.

Brazil remains particularly interesting because the market has experimented with Pix-based instalment and credit propositions that could, over time, compete with *parcelamento* (card-based instalment credit and one of the central features of Brazilian card economics). Banco Central do Brasil had explored standardising **Pix Parcelado**, although it stepped back from creating a formal standardised scheme in late 2025. Competitive pressure from credit-funded Pix propositions remains, nevertheless, relevant.

Wholesale payment rails are affected too. In the US, higher instant payment limits are allowing some volume to migrate from wires and batch ACH. However, this receives far less attention than the retail use case.

Incumbents have not stood still. Visa launched Visa A2A in the UK, adding card-style protections and dispute mechanisms on top of bank payment rails. Mastercard has also expanded its Open Banking and A2A infrastructure capabilities across Europe. Both networks increasingly position themselves as rail-agnostic service providers, not just card networks. This strategically challenges pure-play Open Banking providers, whose original assumption was that the networks were being disrupted. If Visa and Mastercard can provide scheme, trust, and dispute services on top of bank rails, the distinction between incumbent and disruptor is considerably less obvious.

Trust and dispute resolution: the hardest dimension due to diverging merchant and consumer interests

Cards have mature frameworks to allocate fraud and dispute losses, supported by scheme rules, issuer and acquirer liability, merchant obligations, and the broader card system economics. Historically, push payments lacked an equivalent standardised consumer-choice framework, particularly once a payment was authorised and settled. Now, every market is building its own version, and the choices differ significantly. →

The UK has gone furthest on reimbursement, making authorised push payment (APP) scam reimbursement mandatory from October 2024, and splitting the cost between sending and receiving payment providers. The PSR's independent evaluation found that APP losses over Faster Payments fell by roughly a fifth in the first year following implementation, alongside a modest positive net economic benefit. This is important evidence of how liability allocation can change provider behaviour rather than redistribute losses.

The EU has combined fraud prevention with expanded liability. VoP checks the payee's name against the IBAN before authorisation. It is being implemented through competing national and pan-European solutions instead of through a single utility, which makes interoperability something to watch. The PSR also extends liability outward in defined circumstances, including to large online platforms that fail to act when notified of fraudulent content.

Brazil built dispute handling directly into Pix through the Special Return Mechanism, subsequently refining it with self-service contestation and other enhancements. It does not leave recovery entirely to bilateral bank negotiation.

The commercial fraud aspect remains unresolved. Many merchants prefer A2A payments partly because dispute and chargeback costs can be lower, if any, compared to cards. However, for larger purchases in particular, consumers appreciate the protections that make card payments more expensive.

Amazon's UK launch is rather informative: instead of depending entirely on the payment service, it extended its marketplace guarantee to cover Pay by Bank purchases. Visa's A2A approach is the opposite, adding recourse and protection to the underlying bank payment rail.

Who funds that recourse and at what price will help determine whether A2A payments remain a meaningfully cheaper alternative or evolve into something closer to card payment economics.

Conclusion

A2A payments are not developing within a single model. Although the underlying technology is increasingly common, each market shapes economics, governance, liability, and customer proposition very differently.

Market evolution and competition will not depend on who has the fastest rail. Those who can build a sustainable operating model around the rail, including incentives for participants, effective fraud and dispute mechanisms, and a customer experience strong enough to change behaviour, will impact A2A payments most. And while A2A payments will continue to take share from legacy payment methods, they will do so unevenly and by use case, with the eventual outcome depending as much on payment rules and economics as on technology.

The Next Phase of European Payments: Performance, Not Just Sovereignty



Konstantin Surkov
Co-Founder and CEO
Nopan

Konstantin Surkov is the Co-Founder and CEO of Nopan and a former Netflix payments leader with deep experience scaling payments for large digital merchants. Nopan is a performance platform that helps merchants, fintechs, and PSPs launch, optimise, and scale account and wallet payments to improve conversion, drive efficiency, and grow revenue.

Europe has spent years building the foundations for a more independent payments ecosystem. Instant payment infrastructure is becoming widely available, domestic account and wallet payment methods have scaled significantly, and initiatives such as Wero are working towards broader European reach. This momentum matters. A stronger European ecosystem can improve resilience, increase competition, and give merchants and consumers greater choice. Payment sovereignty is therefore a strategic imperative. But sovereignty alone is not a merchant business case. Merchants do not prioritise payment methods because of where the infrastructure was built. They prioritise them because they improve conversion, extend customer reach, reduce costs, strengthen reliability, and support revenue growth. A method can be strategically important for Europe and still struggle to earn a place on a merchant's roadmap if it does not deliver measurable commercial value. This is where the next phase of account and wallet payments begins.

Availability is not the same as performance

Europe already has a rich landscape of account and wallet payment methods. Some are deeply embedded in local consumer behaviour, while others are expanding into new markets and use cases. Yet these methods do not perform equally by default.

The same payment method can produce very different results depending on the bank, customer journey, device, authentication flow, merchant category, transaction value, or integration. It can:

- have strong consumer recognition but inconsistent bank connectivity;
- offer lower processing costs but underperform at checkout;
- convert well for first-time payments but lack the recurring capabilities required by subscription businesses.

Connecting to a method is only the first step. Making it perform consistently at scale is the real challenge. →

“ Payment sovereignty is a strategic imperative. But sovereignty alone is not a merchant business case.

“ Connecting to a method is only the first step. Making it perform consistently at scale is the real challenge.

Merchants need to measure what really matters

For many years, account and wallet payment methods were assessed primarily through availability: is the method live, and can customers use it?

That is no longer enough. Merchants need to understand the full commercial and operational impact of each method. This includes completion rates, customer drop-off, bank and market coverage, cost per successful transaction, refund performance, fraud controls, reconciliation, support requirements, and repeat-payment capabilities. These metrics should not be viewed in isolation. A low-cost method that creates checkout friction may be more expensive than it appears. Strong local reach may deliver limited value if failed payments and manual operations offset conversion gains. Conversely, a method with a smaller headline market share may become strategically important if it performs particularly well for a merchant’s customers or use case. The objective is not simply to add more methods. It is to build the right payment mix and continuously improve how each method contributes to the business.

Go-live is only the beginning

Cards have benefited from decades of investment in acceptance, routing, risk, recurring payments, reporting, and operational tooling. Account and wallet payments now need a similar performance discipline. This means moving beyond one-off implementation projects towards ongoing measurement and optimisation. Merchants and payment service providers (PSPs) need visibility into where customers drop out, which banks or flows underperform, how results vary across markets, and whether technical or operational changes improve outcomes. They also need the ability to respond. This may involve improving the checkout experience, optimising payment flows, and continuously refining performance across different markets and use cases. →

Nopan

“ A dedicated performance layer complements PSP relationships and helps account and wallet payments perform consistently at scale.

“ The next phase of European payments will not be defined only by who owns the rails. It will be defined by measurable business impact.

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Without a dedicated operating layer, merchants are left managing a fragmented portfolio of local integrations, each with its own technical behaviour, reporting model, and operational requirements.

Account and wallet payments need a dedicated performance layer

Delivering consistent performance across account and wallet payments requires closer collaboration among schemes, banks, PSPs, specialist infrastructure providers, and merchants. Schemes must deliver strong consumer propositions and broad acceptance. Banks must provide intuitive in-app experiences and seamless authentication. PSPs must make methods easier to access and operate. Merchants must evaluate them through customer behaviour and business outcomes.

The market also needs a dedicated performance layer that connects technical payment behaviour with commercial results and helps merchants and PSPs optimise across providers, banks, methods, and markets. This is not about replacing existing PSP relationships. It is about complementing them with the specialised capabilities required to make account and wallet payments perform as a category.

Turning European preference into business impact

Europe has the infrastructure, regulatory momentum, and consumer payment habits required to build a stronger account and wallet ecosystem. Sovereignty can accelerate investment and alignment, but it will not guarantee adoption. The winners will be the methods and providers that combine European reach and trust with merchant-grade performance. They will make payments easy to launch, reliable to operate, transparent to measure, and valuable to scale.

The next phase of European payments will not be defined only by who owns the rails. It will be defined by who turns local payment preference into measurable business impact.

Regulations and Fraud in A2A Payments

A2A Payments: Regulatory and Fraud Prevention Frameworks



Estera Sava
Senior Writer
The Paypers

Account-to-account (A2A) payment volumes have advanced faster than the regulations governing them. Juniper Research projected **that global A2A transaction value will more than double**, from USD 91.5 trillion in 2025 to USD 195 trillion by 2030. Compared with A2A payments, cards have built fraud liability and dispute-resolution frameworks over decades. In 2026, regulators across major markets are moving to build the A2A equivalent, and the resulting rules will determine how A2A payments operate in 2027 and beyond.

EU's PSD3 and PSR and the UK's Payment Systems Regulator

The EU's PSD3 and Payment Services Regulation (PSR) are **in provisional political agreement** but not yet published in the Official Journal. Once published, core obligations, including provider liability for fraud losses and payee verification on every transfer, will roll out in phases over the following 18 to 21 months, finalising in late 2027 or 2028. In the interim, the European Payments Council's Verification of Payee (VoP) scheme rulebook 1.1, effective from 20 September 2026, is impacting day-to-day SEPA operations well before PSD3.

> *Compared with A2A payments, cards have built fraud liability and dispute-resolution frameworks over decades.*

The UK is restructuring, with the **Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) absorbing the Payment Systems Regulator**. Moreover, **HM Treasury's July 2026 consultation** on modernising payments regulation closes in October 2026.

The Americas: different paths to regulation and fraud prevention

In North America, the US federal Open Banking regulation remains stalled. The CFPB's **Section 1033 rule** is legally blocked, and it submitted a **revision proposal** in August 2026. However, this issue does not extend to the ACH network: **Nacha's fraud-monitoring rules** are in place, with amendments scheduled for 2027 and 2028, independent of federal Open Banking policy.

Canada's approach is the opposite, as it is developing the Real-Time Rail (RTR) and an Open Banking framework simultaneously. →

The **RTR** targets a Q4 2026 launch, while **Consumer-Driven Banking Regulations**, including payment-initiation-related aspects, target mid-2027.

In LATAM, Brazil's **central bank** continues to tighten Pix directly, introducing fraud holds and in-app dispute tools through 2026, while planning international interlinking. The latest development, announced in September 2026, is a **feasibility assessment of connectivity with TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS)**.

APAC: domestic payments reforms and regional interlinking

India's **two-factor authentication mandate** covers all digital payment channels (cards, wallets, net banking, and UPI alike) and took effect in April 2026.

Australia is expanding the **Consumer Data Right** to non-bank lenders, starting in November 2026, as part of its wider **Open Banking initiative**. Meanwhile, an anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML/CTF) reform applies directly to financial services. It must meet new **AUSTRAC rules** and international standards set by the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**.

Singapore's **Shared Responsibility Framework**, in force since December 2024, applies across payment channels. It splits liability for phishing/scam losses between financial institutions and telco operators, not just payment providers. As for **Project Nexus, it is designed to comply with the regulations and rules of participating countries**, and a possible oversight arrangement could involve a Joint Oversight Forum (JOF), comprising these countries' central banks/ jurisdictions.

MEA regulations reflect A2A payments expansion ambitions

Regulators across MEA are advancing national instant payment and Open Finance frameworks. The Central Bank of the UAE's Aani instant payments platform, operated by its subsidiary **Al Etihad Payments**, underpins Open Finance. Its design centres on ISO 20022 standards and local and international data sharing regulations.

> *"The European Payments Council's Verification of Payee (VoP) scheme rulebook 1.1, effective from 20 September 2026, is impacting day-to-day SEPA operations well before PSD3.*

Egypt's central bank issued licensing and registration rules for payment system operators and providers in June 2025, ahead of a planned Open Banking framework that remains under development. Additionally, in line with digitalisation efforts, it announced new electronic identity verification requirements in August 2026, establishing a **regulatory framework for the Digital Financial Identity (DFI) platform**. →

The **Central Bank of Nigeria's** instant-payments circular, effective 1 July 2026, requires opt-in/opt-out transfer controls, multi-factor authentication, and real-time fraud monitoring across all providers.

Global standards and cross-border infrastructure compliance requirements

Globally, **FATF's revised Recommendation 16** rewrites AML data requirements for cross-border transfers, applying the same obligations to fintechs and banks alike. This requirement depends on the shift in ISO 20022 messaging infrastructure. The Bank for International Settlements' Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures treats this structured data as a precondition for meeting the G20's targets. The **Financial Stability Board's 2025 assessment** pattern is consistent, suggesting that **fraud responsibility** is shifting toward financial institutions, while national RTP infrastructure is advancing faster than the cross-border layer set to enable interoperability.

For banks, fintechs, PSPs, and merchants operating on A2A payment rails, three trends recur across most regions: payment providers are liable for fraud, RTP infrastructure is an expected requirement, and Open Banking is progressing from read-only data access and payment initiation to value-added services, following the industry move to Open Finance.

A2A Payments Regulation in 2026: Gaps Between Mandates and Commercial Models



Vlad Macovei
Senior Writer
The Paypers

Vlad is a Senior Writer at The Paypers, working in the Commercial Team. He uses his research, content, and people skills for all editorial activities revolving around payments, banking, and fintech. Vlad has a degree in Biology and Molecular Genetics and an extensive background in creative writing. You can reach out to him on LinkedIn.

Over the last couple of years, three jurisdictions have addressed the same question about account-to-account (A2A) payments. The EU passed legislation for sending and receiving instant payments and is now waiting for a commercial model. The UK built the commercial model first and is now drafting the regulation around it. In the US, the instant payments rail limit has been raised, while the rule on governing access to bank data sits enjoined and is currently being rewritten.

For anyone building A2A propositions across these markets, the fragmented landscape matters more than any single rulebook, as it will determine if the main challenge for scaling is technical, legal, or commercial.

What did Europe's instant payments mandate deliver?

The Instant Payments Regulation (IPR) followed through on reachability. Euro area PSPs had to receive instant credit transfers from 9 January 2025, and send them from 9 October 2025, with charge equality and a free Verification of Payee (VoP) service included.

VoP represented the bigger challenge, as the go-live was a single event rather than a phased rollout. Around 2,650 participants served by 58 routing and verification mechanism providers went live together, with the ecosystem responding in an average of 692 milliseconds, in line with the European Payments Council's (EPC) 1-second recommendation. →

The Paypers

The **EPC's VoP scheme rulebook went into effect on 5 October 2025**, four days before the IPR. A month after the deadline, over 2,700 participant PSPs were live. It technically delivered, but operationally, things aren't as settled, and the consequences land directly on A2A conversion. The VoP scheme sets only high-level guidelines for name matching, leading to a wide variation between providers and low overall matching rates. For example, in the Netherlands, a mature market, match rates run as high as 80%, while results across the rest of Europe are well below.

A close match returned with diacritics the payer did not type, or a no-match triggered by a trade name instead of a registered name, lands in front of the payer when authorising. This friction doesn't happen with a card payment. For an A2A payment, which is irrevocable and has no chargebacks, friction impacts abandonment where it is most expensive. Industry experts had warned that **response times and the customer journey were top concerns** well before the deadline, while also advocating for timely compliance.

Corporates felt it first. According to the EPC's own go-live retrospective, they recorded a noticeable increase in client queries, driven by a lack of clarity and standardisation in the customer-to-bank space. Uncertainties included how to opt out of bulk payment files, how to integrate bulk VoP into existing flows, and the liquidity consequences of no-match responses when alternative names are used.

The fixes it proposes are unglamorous and specific: a consistent indicator in the incoming pain.001 to denote whether a file is subject to VoP, more flexible rules allowing files returning a match to process automatically and without manual intervention, and guaranteed pain.002 response delivery into the client's original payment channel and, eventually, into ERP and treasury systems.

> *"The fragmented landscape matters more than any single rulebook, as it will determine if the main challenge for scaling is technical, legal, or commercial.*

The work is not done, and a second cohort is set to repeat it. Non-euro area member states must receive instant payments and apply charge equality by 9 January 2027, send instant payments and offer VoP by 9 July 2027, and support sending outside business hours from accounts denominated in national currency by 9 June 2028. Payment institutions and EMIs in the euro area face their own 9 April 2027 deadline. Markets including Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Czechia are approaching those dates with domestic instant schemes already running in local currency, which makes the euro-denominated obligation an integration problem instead of one where they must build from scratch. The lesson learned in 2025 is that messaging and data hygiene work needed the most time, not the actual rail. →

How are PSD3 and PSR changing A2A payments?

The **payments package** is agreed but not yet law. Parliament and Council reached provisional political agreement on 27 November 2025, the **Council published final compromise texts on 23 April 2026**, and the ECON committee approved them on 5 May 2026. Formal adoption is **expected later in 2026, most likely not before December**. The PSR applies roughly 21 months later, and member states have the same period to transpose PSD3, with **EBA technical standards due within 12 months after publication**.

For A2A specifically, four key changes take place. The PSR (1) strengthens interface and performance requirements, (2) identifies prohibited obstacles, (3) reinforces non-discrimination, and (4) requires permission dashboards through which users can monitor and withdraw third-party access. The standing fallback interface obligation and its exemption regime disappear, replaced by a contingency mechanism that competent authorities can trigger. Banks will publish quarterly reports on API availability and performance, creating public accountability that didn't exist under PSD2. The PSR also introduces a harmonised enforcement framework, allowing national authorities more investigatory powers and minimum sanctions for certain infringements.

The quality complaints PISPs made over the last seven years become supervisable facts, a practical impact of the PSR. Set according to EBA technical standards, the new thresholds will be the very substance of the Open Banking regime.

Rather than being limited to SEPA or instant payments, **VoP extends to all intra-EU credit transfers**, with real-time transaction monitoring becoming obligatory for both payer and payee PSPs. The liability shift applies where fraudsters impersonate PSPs. Combined with IBAN and name checks, the EU is building this to protect consumers using A2A payments, and as an alternative to card chargebacks.

On licensing, PSD3 consolidates PIs and EMIs into a single framework, with authorisation and prudential rules transposed nationally. By contrast, the PSR's conduct rules apply directly. Existing institutions must reapply under the new regime to benefit from exemptions. For A2A providers operating through licenced subsidiaries in several member states, re-authorisation will compete for the same engineering and compliance capacity as the interface.

The new regulation will not change the economics. As with PSD2, institutions providing payment accounts cannot charge TPPs for access, and the PSR has no equivalent to the UK's commercial variable recurring payments (cVRP) scheme. Europe has dynamic recurring payments, but they operate under a voluntary scheme.

The gap in commercial A2A payments models

SEPA Payment Account Access **(SPAA)** was designed to overcome PSD2's limitations by introducing premium APIs with a business model that incentivises participation rather than treating access as a compliance cost. →

SPAA's rulebook included dynamic recurring payments. The logic behind it is clear: banks mandated to expose free APIs under PSD2 have no incentive to invest in better ones, so giving them something to sell is the solution.

However, years later, the scheme is stuck. As of the EPC's November 2025 status update to the Euro Retail Payments Board, only five demand-side participants had registered for SPAA, no applications had been received from the supply side, and the pilot crashed before take-off.

> *On licensing, PSD3 consolidates PIs and EMIs into a single framework, with authorisation and prudential rules transposed nationally.*

At its September 2025 meeting, the SPAA multi-stakeholder group discussed the future of the scheme in view of the lack of adoption, agreeing that SPAA, as a European Open Banking initiative, was highly needed, that some of the principles guiding its development need revising, and that a stable version of the PSR should be awaited. An earlier update recorded the same roadblock in plainer terms: several asset brokers (TPPs) were ready to pilot, but no asset holders (banks) had come forward.

Even if the PSR improves interface quality, the commercial model that would let European A2A payments compete with cards on functionality is currently stuck, waiting for the same legislation, with no banks, no premium APIs, and no dynamic recurring payments at scale.

In the UK, however, 31 companies created the UK Payments Initiative (UKPI) to encourage cVRP adoption for phase 1 use cases (utilities, financial services, and government payments), based on an industry-agreed commercial model. On 20 January 2026, the FCA and the PSR issued a joint prioritisation statement confirming they would not, at that time, prioritise a Competition Act investigation into the centralised access fee model, to allow the scheme to proceed. The design involves a multilateral agreement for a single, fixed pence-per-transaction fee instead of a value percentage, charged to the payment provider rather than the consumer, and intended to run for approximately five years. It is currently live.

The scheme launched at **Money20/20 Europe on 2 June 2026**, with a shared rulebook, commercial model, and operational standards covering the use cases mentioned above. To name a few implementations, GoCardless backed the UKPI launch after it **completed the first recurring Open Banking transaction under live testing in March 2026** on behalf of Jellyfish Energy, and Modulr has **added cVRPs to its Collections Hub**, citing UK direct debit failures that rose for a fifth consecutive year and were 9% higher year-on-year. →

The UK commercial model builds on a real base, albeit narrow. At the end of 2025, **VRPs accounted for 16% of Open Banking payments**, with most of that volume coming from sweeping between a customer's own accounts. The 37 million-plus monthly Open Banking payments remained overwhelmingly one-off. The real issue remains **moving from sweeping to commercial use cases**, and phase 1 deliberately picks flows where the payee is a utility, a regulated firm, or a public body.

The UK A2A payments regulation catches up

The Joint Regulatory Oversight Committee (JROC) has officially finished its job. Under the National Payments Vision, the committee concluded, and the FCA took sole regulatory responsibility for Open Banking, with the Vision explicitly pushing for rapid expansion of **cVRPs into ecommerce**.

The follow-up is now published. The Payments Forward Plan set out an FCA consultation paper on long-term regulatory framework interface rules for Q3 2026, a policy statement expected in Q1 2027, and a statutory instrument under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 in Q4 2026, conferring oversight powers on the FCA. By the end of 2026, the FCA will assess industry-led cVRPs' growth and include lessons from phase 1 into that framework, which is planned to serve as the foundation for expanding cVRPs into ecommerce.

The two regimes are approaching this from opposite directions. The EU is legislating interface quality and hoping a commercial layer will follow. The UK is licensing a commercial layer and will legislate afterwards. The EU seems to have the harder problem to solve, because a scheme cannot be forced into existence, and SPAA has shown what happens when adherence is voluntary, and the incentive sits on the wrong side of the transaction.

> *VoP matching runs on name and address quality, like sanction screening and reconciliation for high-value instant payments.*

The US A2A payment rails story

Steady progress is visible throughout the region. Effective 12 November 2025, the FedNow network transaction limit for customer credit transfers rose from USD 1 million to USD 10 million, and liquidity management transfers from USD 2.5 million to USD 10 million. The cap now matches the RTP network, which moved to USD 10 million at the end of 2024.

Adoption is following from a modest starting point. FedNow recorded 1,800 participants in Q2 2026, with volumes up 80% from Q1, against an original ambition to connect 8,000 institutions. One year after launch, only around →

900 institutions were connected, and only 40% of those had signed up for send capability. With many US banks outside the network, only a minority of transactions are sent instantly, a constraint that a raised cap does not address.

The US is most different from Europe at the data layer. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) Section 1033 rule, finalised in October 2024, is not in force: a federal court has enjoined enforcement, the Bureau is rewriting the rule, including reopening whether banks may charge for data access (surprise, **JPMorgan already does**), and the April 2026 compliance deadline passed without becoming a binding rule.

> *"The mandate-first approach produced access without a commercial end, while the scheme-first approach produced a business case before implementing a legal foundation.*

In August 2026, the CFPB submitted a notice of proposed rulemaking, the 'Personal Financial Data Rights Reconsideration', to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) for review, generally one of the final steps before publication for comment. This **cancellation, reversal, and reopening** sequence has been ongoing since late 2024, driven by **bank concerns about liability, access fees, and misuse**.

Originally, the rule applied specifically to payments, requiring data providers to share information with authorised third parties to initiate them. While the industry waits for the rule rewrite, Pay by Bank in the US scales through bilateral commercial agreements instead of a mandated access right. The fee question that the CFPB reopened will determine the economics of every US-based A2A proposition built in the future.

How does the ISO 20022 deadline delay impact A2A payments?

One deadline close to this report's publication has been recently moved. In August 2026, SWIFT listened to industry feedback and **agreed to extend the structured address migration for ISO 20022 payment messages**, deferring all payments changes under Standards Release 2026. The news broke after several communities said they couldn't meet the November deadline.

SWIFT's April figures showed roughly 61% of payments still carried unstructured addresses. The Fed has rescheduled its own release from November 2026 to November 2027, and SWIFT is expected to update by December 2026. →

In Europe, on 9 September 2026, the EPC's Payment Scheme Management Board decided to delay the ISO 20022 November 2026 end date across all five payment **scheme rulebooks, so support for unstructured addresses continues past 15 November 2026**. The Board reconvenes in October 2026 to set a new deadline, with revised rulebooks, implementation guidelines, and guidance expected by then. EPC Director General Giorgio Andreoli said the delay does not change the direction of travel and urged participants to keep to their existing migration plans.

Both deadlines moved within three weeks of each other, for the same reason: readiness data. How does this affect A2A payments? VoP matching runs on name and address quality, like sanction screening and reconciliation for high-value instant payments. This year, ISO 20022 was meant to be end-to-end, and while the delayed cutover creates a new deadline, the need remains.

A glance at the future

The next phase of payments depends on four dates. Official Journal publication of PSD3 and the PSR starts the 21-month clock and sets in stone the compliance dates. The FCA's Q3 2026 consultation and Q1 2027 policy statement will determine whether the regulator or the scheme sets UK Open Banking rules. The non-euro IPR deadlines in January and July 2027 extend the instant payments obligation to a third of the market, and the CFPB's new 1033 proposal will decide whether US Open Banking runs on a statutory floor or a commercial one.

In conclusion, the mandate-first approach produced access without a commercial end, while the scheme-first approach produced a business case before implementing a legal foundation. Whichever region first creates competitive A2A payments will solve the commercial layer, as the problem is not regulatory.

Payment Threats and Fraud Trends Impacting Agentic A2A Payments



Piotr Kozłowski

Head of Payments and Fraud Prevention

G2A.COM

Piotr Kozłowski is the Head of Payments and Fraud Prevention at G2A.COM, the world's largest digital entertainment marketplace. Users can choose from over 125,000 digital offerings, including games, DLCs, in-game items, and non-gaming items, such as gift cards, subscriptions, software, and e-learning, sold by sellers from all over the world.

Local payment methods, especially instant options, are must-haves for merchants, but so is fraud prevention. What threats come with these payments, especially for digital entertainment marketplaces, and what is the biggest challenge in fighting them?

Agent-to-agent A2A payments offer a high level of security, but like any payment method, they are not immune to fraud. As agent-to-agent A2A payments become more widely adopted, the primary fraud risk is moving away from compromised payment credentials to buyer manipulation.

Fraudsters nowadays increasingly rely on authorised push payment (APP) fraud, using phishing, social engineering, fake customer support, or account takeover (ATO) to convince buyers to approve the transactions themselves. From a bank perspective, these payments appear legitimate because the customer has successfully authenticated and authorised them. The challenging aspect is that the authorisation is obtained through deception and not genuine intent.

For digital entertainment marketplaces, instant payments combined with immediate access to digital offers leave very limited time to detect and stop possible fraudulent transactions. Once access has been granted, recovering the transaction or limiting its impact is significantly more difficult. The biggest challenge is preserving a seamless payment experience while identifying increasingly sophisticated fraud in real time. Achieving this requires behavioural analytics, risk-based authentication, and localised fraud models, as fraud patterns vary significantly across payment methods and markets. →

G2A.COM

At G2A.COM, we focus on minimising fraud without introducing unnecessary friction for legitimate users. We combine real-time risk assessment, behavioural analytics, and market-specific fraud controls to detect suspicious activity early, and continuously optimise the payment experience across different payment methods and regions.

How are fraudsters trying to bypass A2A payments security measures, and how can ecommerce players best prepare and stop these attacks?

As agent-to-agent A2A payments gain wider adoption, the biggest challenge won't be protecting payment credentials alone but identifying when a legitimate transaction has been deceptively authorised.

In practice, fraudsters rarely attack the payment infrastructure. Instead, they target people through AI-powered phishing, impersonation, and social engineering, aiming to convince customers to authorise payments. Addressing this means assessing risk before the payment happens by combining AI-powered risk detection with the expertise of anti-fraud specialists who continuously monitor emerging threats, analyse evolving fraud patterns, and adapt our defences in real time. However, technology alone won't be enough.

As agent-to-agent payments become more common, user awareness will become just as important as payment security. Businesses will need to invest both in advanced fraud prevention capabilities and education. At G2A, we continuously educate both our marketplace users and our own teams because we believe an informed user is one of the strongest defences against fraud attempts. This belief also underpins our broader 'Trust in Digital Commerce' philosophy, through which we advocate greater awareness and shared responsibility across the digital commerce ecosystem.

How do you employ AI in your fraud prevention and cybersecurity strategy, and what do you think A2A payment and tech providers need to do more to help in this fight?

Fraud prevention and its progress will be defined by more than AI. The quality of data, the ability to learn continuously, legal standards, as well as the industry's willingness to work together – all these aspects matter.

At G2A, AI and machine learning (ML) help us analyse thousands of signals across transactions, user behaviour, and marketplace activity in real time. This enables us to detect possible emerging fraud patterns faster, support more informed risk decisions, and continuously improve our detection models based on real-world investigations. What makes this particularly effective is the breadth of context a digital marketplace can provide, extending well beyond payments. →

G2A.COM

> *In practice, fraudsters rarely attack the payment infrastructure. Instead, they target people through AI-powered phishing, impersonation, and social engineering.*

> *AI becomes significantly more powerful when it's supported by diverse, high-quality signals rather than operating within isolated data sets.*

Today, every organisation sees only part of the fraud landscape:

- banks see payment activity;
- merchants understand customer behaviour;
- marketplaces have visibility across the entire user journey;
- fraud prevention partners contribute global threat intelligence.

Individually, each perspective is incomplete, but when combined, they create a much stronger foundation for detecting and preventing fraud. From our perspective, the real opportunity lies in connecting those insights more effectively.

AI becomes significantly more powerful when it's supported by diverse, high-quality signals rather than operating within isolated data sets.

Next, the industry should build better AI agent models and simplify the approach to combining intelligence across the payments ecosystem in a secure, privacy-conscious way. That's where I believe the greatest progress in fraud prevention will come from.

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Global Overview of the A2A Payments Ecosystem: Mapping A2A Schemes and Technology Providers

Introduction

A2A payments entered a new phase over the past year. In most banked markets, money can move between bank accounts directly, quickly, and cheaply. The question now is whether those payments can carry the commercial terms, liability rules, and consumer protections that merchants and consumers have come to expect from cards.

This is clearest in the UK. In June 2026, the UK Payments Initiative (UKPI) launched as the country's first new payment scheme since Faster Payments in 2008, owned by the largest UK banks alongside payment initiation service providers (PISPs). It introduced a rulebook on shared governance, a commercial model, and a clear liability allocation for commercial variable recurring payments (cVRPs). Visa A2A, live in the UK since 2025, approaches the same gap from a different angle, applying a card network's operating model and dispute framework to bank transfers. The FCA expects competition between commercial Open Banking schemes, suggesting that these two will not be the last.

The commercial layer became the constraint because volume stopped being one. UK Open Banking payments now exceed 37 million a month: Pay by Bank accounts for up to 17% of European ecommerce transaction value, with Amazon and eBay among the merchants accepting it. Most of those transactions are still one-off.

This year's edition of the Account-to-Account Payments Report maps the ecosystem across two categories:

1. Local and regional A2A schemes and rails,
2. Open Banking and Open Finance-based A2A payments and technology providers.

Players are further classified by activity region: North America, South America, Europe, APAC, MEA, and global.

1. Local and regional A2A schemes and rails

This category covers both layers of domestic payments infrastructure: the national systems that move funds, and the schemes that set the terms for use. Faster Payments in the UK, Pix in Brazil, and FedNow in the US belong to the first. Bizum in Spain, BLIK in Poland, and Swish in Sweden belong to the second, and are no longer emerging local payment methods but default ways to send and receive money. In several markets, the two are the same thing, with the rail itself carrying the brand consumers recognise.

Technology suppliers that operate a national system under contract to its owner are not listed separately, since that would count the same system twice.
The category is also no longer closed to Open Banking: UKPI and Visa A2A are →

built on Open Banking access yet belong here, because they set rules rather than supply connectivity. Their scope is local even where their ownership is global.

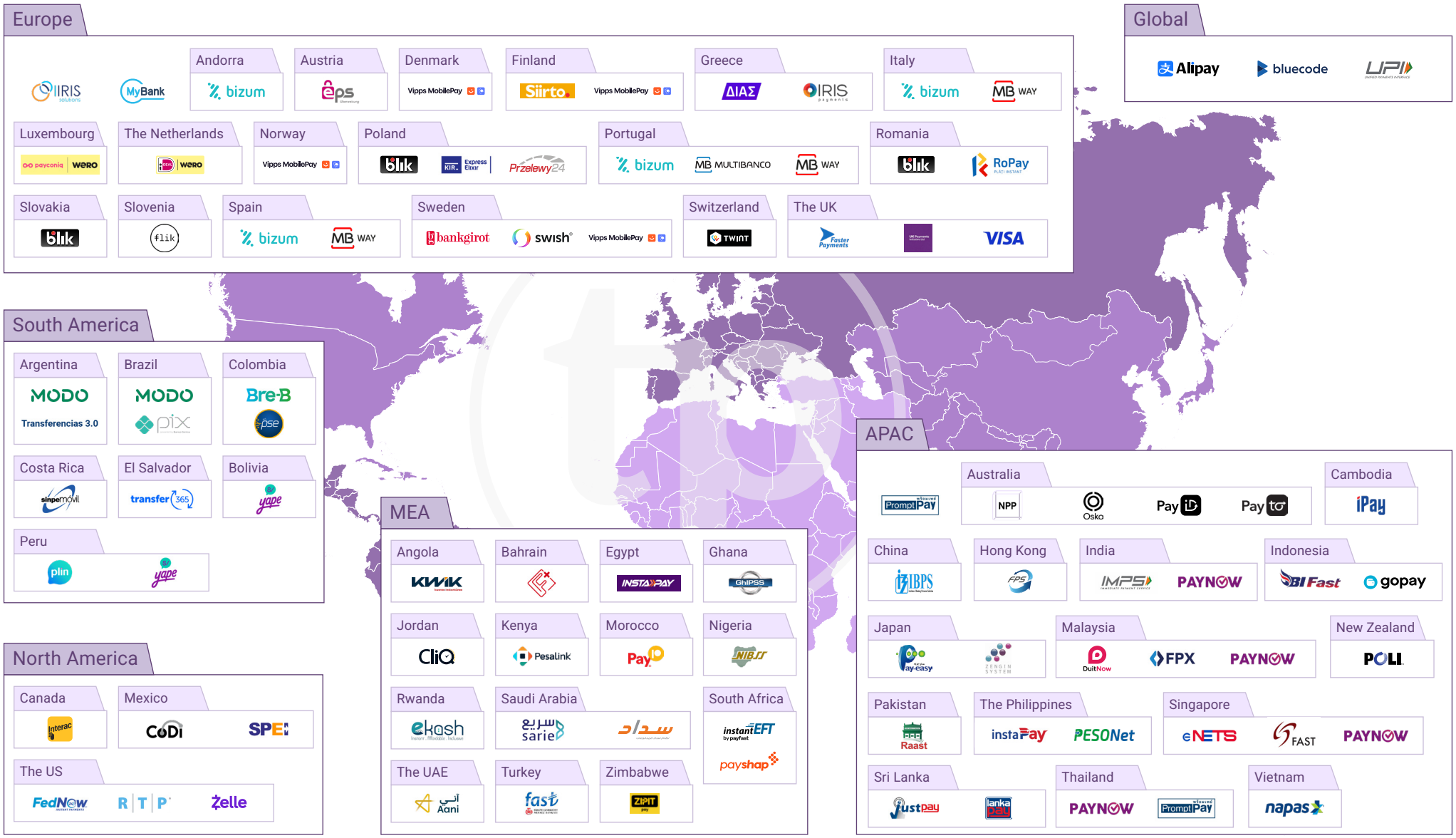
2. Open Banking and Open Finance-based A2A payments and technology providers

Open Banking is an access regime. It grants regulated third-party providers the right to initiate payments from bank accounts through APIs, and supplies a technical standard, but it sets no prices and allocates no liability. Providers in this category build on that access by selling connectivity, market coverage, and products, with liability set according to regulation and bilateral contracts.

Many of them are also members of the schemes above. The two categories describe roles in the same chain and should not be seen as rivals.

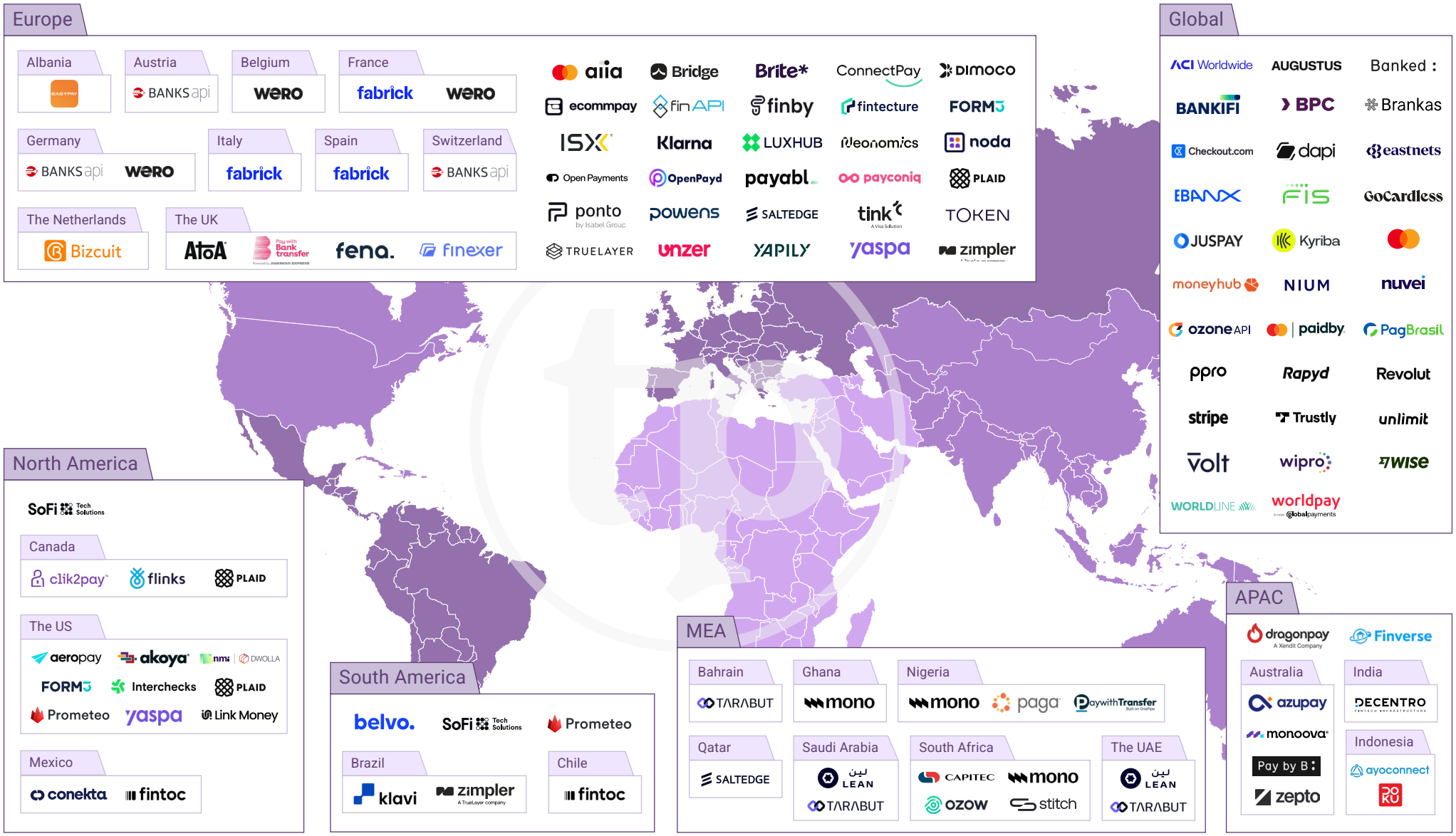
We invite you to browse our infographic and use the featured information as an educational resource or a starting point when seeking out a collaboration opportunity.

Local and Regional A2A Schemes and Rails



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Open Banking and Open Finance-Based A2A Payments and Technology Providers



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