

Information release

European bank accounts are valid across the EU

The SEPA Regulation guarantees that any European IBAN must be accepted in all EU countries. Companies refusing them may face penalties.

Madrid, 4 June 2025 – The refusal by companies or public bodies to accept bank accounts with IBAN codes from other EU countries is an illegal practice known as IBAN discrimination. This conduct may constitute a serious infringement of consumer rights. It occurs when a provider, professional, or company rejects payments or direct debits simply because the customer's account is registered in another country within the European Economic Area (EEA).

Such practices breach Article 9 of [Regulation \(EU\) No. 260/2012](#), which ensures the seamless operation of the banking system within the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA). The IBAN (International Bank Account Number) uniquely identifies bank accounts across Europe. Although each IBAN starts with a country-specific prefix (e.g., “ES” for Spain or “FR” for France), all European IBANs have the same legal standing for making payments, receiving transfers, and setting up direct debits throughout the SEPA zone.

What to do in case of IBAN discrimination

Consumers who experience IBAN discrimination can take the following steps:

1. Inform the service provider of their legal obligation to accept IBANs from any EU country.
2. File a formal complaint with the company or entity involved.
3. If the response is unsatisfactory or absent, report the violation to the competent authority.

Where to file a complaint

- If the discrimination involves a payment service provider (such as a bank or payment institution), or occurs between businesses and professionals, complaints should be sent to the [Bank of Spain](mailto:paymentsystems@bde.es) (paymentsystems@bde.es).
- If the case affects a consumer and the infringing party is a business, the complaint should be submitted to the regional consumer protection authority in the relevant autonomous community.
- The European Commission publishes a full [list](#) of national enforcement bodies responsible for ensuring compliance with the SEPA Regulation across EU member states.

The SEPA system: enabling fair banking access

The proper functioning of SEPA allows European consumers to operate their bank accounts freely across EU and EEA member states. If a user is unable to make a transfer or pay a direct debit due to the origin of their European IBAN, they have the right to file a complaint and demand compliance with EU banking rules.

Source of information: [Banco de España](#)