Consultation on the market structure of European equity markets

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1. – Target participants

All interested stakeholders are invited to respond to this consultation paper. In particular, ESMA welcomes responses from all financial market participants, including trading venues and investment firms, as well as to asset management, data reporting service providers, trade associations and other stakeholders involved in financial regulation, investor education, and retail investment market developments.

2. - Information Note

It can be observed that the structure of European equity markets have experienced relevant changes in recent years. Some of them refer to the increase in dark trading, a decrease in lit continuous trading and a rise in bilateral trading arrangements such as those involving systematic internalisers.

Several studies have addressed this matter. **Oliver Wyman**, in collaboration with the **Federation of European Securities Exchanges (FESE)** in July 2025, concentrated on the decline in lit continuous trading and the growing fragmentation of markets, particularly the intramarket fragmentation, i.e. liquidity on a single stock split across venues and execution channels; this study raised concerns about the possible negative consequences of this trend (potential impairment of efficient price formation and difficulty for investors to access the best available prices). A second document, published jointly by **Goldman Sachs and New Financial** in October 2025, also acknowledged a decrease in lit continuous trading but found benefits arising from increased competition and evolving trading patterns, such as an enhanced choice and flexibility for market participants; it also challenged the prevailing perception of a lack of liquidity in European equity markets, suggesting it is just a perception.

Given these diverging perspectives, **ESMA's study** aims to provide an objective and data-driven analysis of the current structure of European stock markets based on transaction reporting data available under MiFIR. ESMA's assessment focuses on how liquidity is evolving, how it is distributed across different types of liquidity pools, and what this means for the functioning of the market, both in the short- as well medium-term.

The findings of this study are presented in this Call for Evidence (CfE), through which ESMA invites input from stakeholders and solicits views on whether any regulatory reforms or adjustments may be necessary.

ESMA will consider the feedback it received to this consultation and expects to publish a feedback statement in Q3 2026.

3. - Submission of comments

The deadline for submitting comments is **30 June 2026**.

Respondents may send their comments through ESMA's website: **www.esma.europa.eu.** Both the consultation papers and the response forms are available on ***ESMA's website*** (all respondents should use the relevant reply form in docx format).

Likewise, please send a copy of your answers to the CNMV to the following email address: **documentosinternacional@cnmv.es**

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