



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROSYSTEM

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PRESS RELEASE

BIANNUAL INFORMATION ON EURO BANKNOTE COUNTERFEITING

In the second half of 2009 a total of 447,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation. This is an increase of around 8% on the quantity recovered in the previous six months. The table below, which indicates the half-yearly trend in the number of counterfeits recovered, shows that the overall number of counterfeit euro banknotes has risen, although more slowly than in the previous six-month periods.

Period	2004/2	2005/1	2005/2	2006/1	2006/2	2007/1	2007/2	2008/1	2008/2	2009/1	2009/2
Number of counterfeit s	287,000	293,000	286,000	300,000	265,000	265,000	296,000	312,000	354,000	413,000	447,000

When compared with the increasing number of genuine euro banknotes in circulation (on average 12.8 billion during the second half of 2009), the proportion of counterfeits is still very low.

Nevertheless, the Eurosystem – i.e. the European Central Bank (ECB) and the 16 national central banks of the euro area – continues to advise the public to remain alert when receiving banknotes in cash transactions. The Eurosystem invests considerable effort in ensuring that the public is well informed about how to recognise a counterfeit banknote and, in the case of professional cash-handlers, that banknote-handling and processing machines can reliably identify and withdraw counterfeits from circulation. Genuine banknotes can be easily recognised using the simple “FEEL-LOOK-TILT” test described on the euro pages of the ECB’s website (www.euro.ecb.eu) and the websites of the Eurosystem national central banks. If there is doubt, a suspect banknote should be compared directly with one that is known to be genuine. Anyone who suspects that they may have received a counterfeit should contact either the police or – where national practice allows – the relevant national central bank.

The table below provides a percentage breakdown, by denomination, of the total number of counterfeits withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2009.

Denomination	€5	€10	€20	€50	€100	€200	€500
Percentage breakdown	0.5%	1%	47%	39%	11%	1%	0.5%

As in the previous half-year, the €20 banknote was the most counterfeited denomination, accounting for almost half of all counterfeits identified. The second most counterfeited denomination was the €50 banknote, which accounted for approximately one-third of the total. The three mid-range denominations (€20, €50 and €100) together accounted for 97% of all counterfeits. The proportion of high denomination counterfeits (€200 and €500) is very low.

The majority (more than 98%) of counterfeits recovered in the second half of 2009 were found in euro area countries, with only around 1% being found in EU Member States outside the euro area and less than 0.5% being found in other parts of the world.

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