



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROSYSTEM

PRESS RELEASE

26 January 2018

Euro banknote counterfeiting remains low in second half of 2017

- 363,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2017
- Around 85% of the counterfeits were €20 and €50 banknotes
- All euro banknotes can be verified using the “feel, look and tilt” method
- Euro banknotes continue to be a trusted and safe means of payment

Some 363,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2017, an increase of 9.7% when compared with the first half of 2017 and 2.8% more than in the second half of 2016. The likelihood of receiving a counterfeit is very slight. The number of counterfeits remains very low compared with the number of genuine banknotes in circulation, which has risen steadily, at rates above GDP growth, since they were introduced. In 2017, for instance, the number and value of [euro banknotes in circulation](#) grew by around 5.9% and 4.0% respectively. There are now well over 21 billion euro banknotes in circulation, with a total value of more than €1.1 trillion.

The half-yearly trend is shown below:

| Period | 2014/2 | 2015/1 | 2015/2 | 2016/1 | 2016/2 | 2017/1 | 2017/2 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of counterfeits | 507,000 | 454,000 | 445,000 | 331,000 | 353,000 | 331,000 | 363,000 |

Breakdown by denomination:

| Denomination | €5 | €10 | €20 | €50 | €100 | €200 | €500 |
|----------------------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Percentage breakdown | 1.0% | 1.8% | 35.2% | 52.5% | 6.5% | 0.8% | 2.2% |

During the second half of 2017:

- the €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes. Together, they accounted for around 85% of the counterfeits;
- most of the counterfeits (97.8%) were found in euro area countries. Around 1.7% were found in EU Member States outside the euro area and 0.5% were found in other parts of the world.

Check your banknotes!

Ever since the first series of euro banknotes was issued, the Eurosystem – i.e. the ECB and the 19 national central banks of the euro area – has encouraged people to be vigilant when receiving banknotes. You can check your notes by using the simple “feel, look and tilt” method described in “The Euro” section of the ECB’s website and on the websites of the national central banks. If you receive a suspect banknote, compare it directly with one you know is genuine. If your suspicions are confirmed, please contact the police or – depending on national practice – your national central bank or your own bank. The Eurosystem supports the law enforcement agencies in their fight against currency counterfeiting.

The Eurosystem communicates in various ways to help people distinguish between genuine and counterfeit notes, as well as to help professional cash handlers ensure that banknote-handling and processing machines can reliably identify and withdraw counterfeits from circulation.

The Eurosystem has a duty to safeguard the integrity of the euro banknotes and continue improving banknote technology. The second series of banknotes – the Europa series – is even more secure and is helping to maintain public confidence in the currency.

In the first half of 2019, the Eurosystem plans to issue simultaneously the new €100 and €200 banknotes, the last two denominations of the Europa series. The Eurosystem will conduct a campaign to inform the public and professional cash handlers about the introduction of these new banknotes, which both carry some new security features. Banknote equipment manufacturers and other suppliers will continue to receive support from the Eurosystem in adapting their machines and authentication devices to the new banknotes.

For media queries, please contact Eszter Miltényi-Torstensson, tel.: +49 69 1344 8034.