

PRESS RELEASE

## Euro banknote counterfeiting decreased further and remained low in the second half of 2018

25 January 2019

[Updated on 28 January 2019]

- 262,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2018
- Over 80% of those 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Some 262,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2018, a decrease of 13.0% when compared with the first half of 2018 and 27.8% less than in the second half of 2017. The likelihood of receiving a counterfeit is very small indeed as the number of counterfeits remains very low compared with the number of genuine banknotes in circulation, which has risen steadily at rates in excess of GDP growth since they were introduced. In 2018 the number and value of [euro banknotes in circulation](#) grew by around 4.0%5.6% and 3.7%5.2%, respectively. There are now over 22 billion euro banknotes in circulation, with a total value of around €1.2 trillion.

The half-yearly figures are shown below:

| Period                 | H2 2015 | H1 2016 | H2 2016 | H1 2017 | H2 2017 | H1 2018 | H2 2018 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of counterfeits | 445,000 | 331,000 | 353,000 | 331,000 | 363,000 | 301,000 | 262,000 |

### Breakdown by denomination:

| Denomination        | €5   | €10  | €20   | €50   | €100 | €200 | €500 |
|---------------------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Percentage of total | 1.6% | 2.6% | 22.7% | 61.8% | 9.0% | 0.9% | 1.4% |

In the second half of 2018:

- The €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes, jointly accounting for over 80% of all counterfeits.
- Most counterfeits (96.7%) were found in euro area countries. The rest were split between EU Member States outside the euro area (2.2%) and other parts of the world (1.1%).

Check your banknotes!

Ever since the first series of euro banknotes was issued, the Eurosystem – i.e. the European Central Bank (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 “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 to be genuine. If your suspicions are confirmed please contact the police or – depending on national practice – your national central bank or your own retail or commercial bank. The Eurosystem supports 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 counterfeits and withdraw them from circulation.

The Eurosystem has a duty to safeguard the integrity of euro banknotes and to 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.

New €100 and €200 banknotes with enhanced security features were unveiled on 17 September 2018. These are the last two denominations of the [Europa series](#) and will enter into circulation on 28 May 2019. The Eurosystem is conducting an information campaign to inform professional cash handlers and the general public about the introduction of these new banknotes, both of which have a number of 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.

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