



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROSYSTEM

PRESS RELEASE

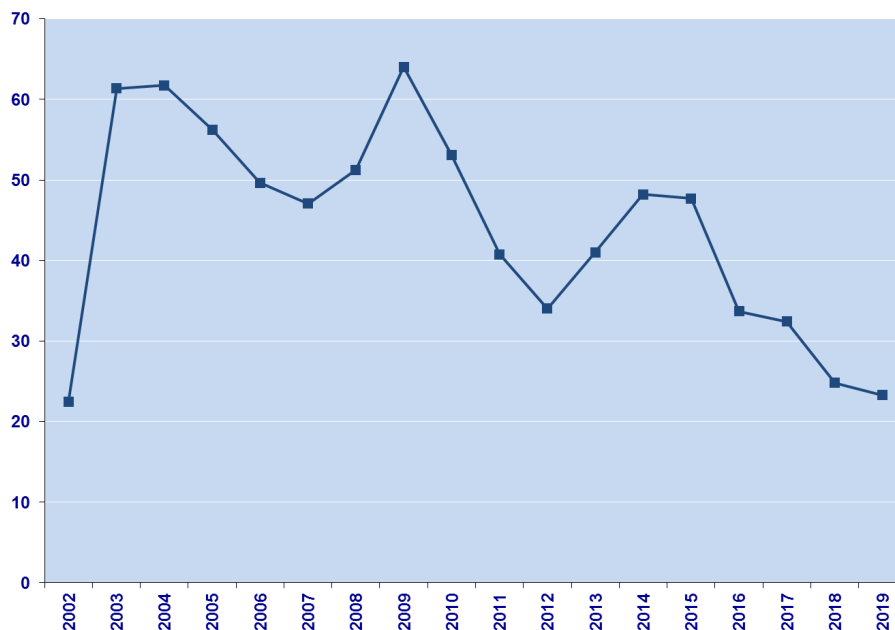
24 January 2020

Euro banknote counterfeiting remained low in the second half of 2019

- 308,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2019
- Over 70% of those counterfeits were €20 and €50 banknotes
- Euro banknotes continue to be a trusted and safe means of payment
- All euro banknotes can be verified using the “feel, look and tilt” method

Some 308,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the second half of 2019, an increase of 22.7% when compared with the first half of 2019 and 17.6% more than in the second half of 2018. 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 first introduced (see the data on [euro banknotes in circulation](#)). The number of counterfeits detected annually per 1 million genuine banknotes in circulation is at a very low level (see the chart below). There are around 24 billion euro banknotes in circulation, with a total value of close to €1.3 trillion.

Number of counterfeits detected annually per 1 million genuine notes in circulation



Half-yearly figures:

| Period | H2 2016 | H1 2017 | H2 2017 | H1 2018 | H2 2018 | H1 2019 | H2 2019 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of counterfeits | 353,000 | 331,000 | 363,000 | 301,000 | 262,000 | 251,000 | 308,000 |

Breakdown by denomination for the second half of 2019:

| Denomination | €5 | €10 | €20 | €50 | €100 | €200 | €500 |
|---------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Percentage of total | 2.4% | 13.5% | 34.2% | 36.5% | 9.6% | 1.4% | 2.4% |

In the second half of 2019:

- The €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes, jointly accounting for over 70% of all counterfeits.
- Most counterfeits (96.4%) were found in euro area countries. The rest were found in non-euro area EU Member States (3.0%) and in other parts of the world (0.6%).

Check your banknotes!

There has been an increase in the number of low quality counterfeits withdrawn from circulation. All are easy to detect as they have very poor imitations of security features. Using counterfeits for payments is a criminal offence that may lead to prosecution. 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 trust in the currency.

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