

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 29 September 2003

on a common practice for changes to the design of national obverse sides of euro circulation coins ⁽¹⁾*(notified under document number C(2003) 3388)***(Only the Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish texts are authentic)**

(2003/734/EC)

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 211 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) According to Article 106(2) of the Treaty, Member States may issue coins subject to approval by the European Central Bank of the volume of the issue.
- (2) The Council has, in accordance with the second sentence of Article 106(2) of the Treaty, adopted harmonising measures in this field, by way of Council Regulation (EC) No 975/98 of 3 May 1998 on denominations and technical specifications of euro coins intended for circulation ⁽²⁾, as amended by Regulation (EC) No 423/1999. ⁽³⁾
- (3) According to Article 11 of Council Regulation (EC) No 974/98 of 3 May 1998 on the introduction of the euro ⁽⁴⁾, as amended by Regulation (EC) No 2596/2000 ⁽⁵⁾, coins denominated in euro and cent and complying with the denominations and technical specifications are to be the only coins which have the status of legal tender in all 'participating' Member States as defined in that Regulation. Since being brought into circulation on 1 January 2002, these coins have circulated throughout the whole euro area.
- (4) The informal Economic and Finance Ministers Council of Verona agreed in April 1996 that euro coins should have a common European reverse side and a distinctive national obverse side. The common designs for the different denominations were chosen by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States at the European Council in Amsterdam in December 1997, following a competition organised by the Commission. The designs on the national sides of the euro coins were decided by each Member State.
- (5) The Council agreed on 23 November 1998 that 'there should be a moratorium on issues of commemorative coins intended for circulation in the early years of the new notes and coins.' Commemorative euro coins are specific circulation coins and comply with the technical specifications laid down in Regulation (EC) No 975/98, but the standard national obverse design is replaced by a different national design in order to commemorate a specific event or personality.
- (6) An agreed common practice for changes to the design of national obverse sides of euro circulation coins would help, in particular, to ensure that parties handling coins on a professional basis and the public at large are informed sufficiently far in advance of future changes of that nature.
- (7) The Member States have been consulted on the common practice set out in this Recommendation, in order to take account of their different national traditions and preferences in this particular area. The common practice should provide sufficient leeway for Member States to maintain their traditions in this field.
- (8) Issues of commemorative euro circulation coins should only commemorate events or personalities of the highest relevance, since such coins will circulate throughout the euro area. Less important themes should rather be celebrated by way of collector coins, coins which are not intended for circulation and which must be easily distinguishable from circulation coins.
- (9) Limiting commemorative circulation coin issues to a single denomination corresponds to existing practice in a number of Member States and creates an appropriate framework for such issues. The 2-euro coin constitutes the most suitable denomination for this purpose, principally on account of the large diameter of the coin and its technical characteristics offering adequate protection against counterfeiting.
- (10) Certain volume limits for commemorative circulation coins are necessary, in order to ensure that such coins remain a small percentage of the total number of 2-euro coins in circulation. At the same time, the ceilings should allow for the issuance of sufficient coins to ensure that commemorative coins can circulate effectively, at least for a certain period.

⁽¹⁾ See also a communication by the Commission concerning this Recommendation (OJ C 247, 15.10.2003).

⁽²⁾ OJ L 139, 11.5.1998, p. 6.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 52, 27.2.1999, p. 2.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 139, 11.5.1998, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 300, 29.11.2000, p. 2.

(11) The Community has concluded monetary agreements with the Principality of Monaco, the Republic of San Marino and the Vatican City State, allowing them to issue certain quantities of euro circulation coins. The common practice should also be applicable to the circulation coins issued by those States,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS:

Article 1

Changes to the national sides of the normal euro circulation coins

Without prejudice to Article 2 of this Recommendation, the designs used for the national obverse sides of the circulation coins denominated in euro or in cent should not be modified until the end of 2008, except in those cases where a Head of State depicted on a coin changes. Before the end of this period, the Commission should prepare a review examining whether this moratorium should be extended or whether a different practice should be introduced.

Article 2

Issuance of commemorative euro circulation coins

As from 2004, the issuance of commemorative euro circulation coins showing a different national obverse design from that of the normal euro circulation coins should comply with the following rules:

- (a) the number of issues should be limited to one per issuing State per year, without prejudice to point (c)(i). This limit would not apply to possible commemorative euro circulation coins collectively issued by all euro-area countries;
- (b) the 2-euro coin should be the sole denomination used for such issues;
- (c) the total number of coins put into circulation for each individual issue should not exceed the higher of the following two ceilings:
 - (i) 0,1 % of the total number of 2-euro coins brought into circulation by all issuing States up to the beginning of the year preceding the year of issuance of the commemorative coin, this ceiling being raised to 2,0 % of the total circulation of 2-euro coins of all issuing States if a truly global and highly symbolic event is commemorated, in which case the issuer should refrain from launching another similar commemorative circu-

lation coin issue during the subsequent four years and should, moreover, set out the reasons for choosing the raised ceiling in the context of the prior-information rules provided for in Article 3(b);

- (ii) 5,0 % of the total number of 2-euro coins brought into circulation by the issuing State concerned up to the beginning of the year preceding the year of issuance of the commemorative coin.

Article 3

Design of the national sides and publication of future changes

The following rules should apply to all circulation coins denominated in euro or in cent:

- (a) in accordance with established practice, the national side should bear 12 stars surrounding the design and the year mark;
- (b) the Commission should be informed about intended changes to the national obverse designs of euro coins at least six months before the coins are issued; it will refer to the Economic and Financial Committee for approval of all commemorative circulation coin issues having an envisaged issuing volume exceeding the 0,1 % ceiling referred to in Article 2(c)(i);
- (c) all relevant information on new national coin designs will be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Article 4

Addressees

This Recommendation is addressed to the Kingdom of Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Hellenic Republic, the Kingdom of Spain, the French Republic, Ireland, the Italian Republic, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Republic of Austria, the Portuguese Republic and the Republic of Finland.

Done at Brussels, 29 September 2003.

For the Commission

Pedro SOLBES MIRA

Member of the Commission