

Press release

22 January 2021

Euro banknote counterfeiting at historically low level in 2020

- 460,000 counterfeit euro banknotes withdrawn from circulation in 2020, a historically low level in proportion to banknotes in circulation
- About two thirds of the total 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Some 460,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in 2020 (220,000 in the second half of the year), a decrease of 17.7% when compared with 2019. €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes, jointly accounting for about two thirds of the total. 94.5% of counterfeits were found in euro area countries, while 2.8% were found in non-euro area EU Member States and 2.7% in other parts of the world.

The likelihood of receiving a counterfeit is very small, as the number of counterfeits remains very low compared to the over 25 billion euro [banknotes in circulation](#). In 2020, 17 counterfeits were detected per 1 million genuine banknotes in circulation, a historically low level (see the chart below).

Low-quality reproductions are continuously withdrawn from circulation. All are easy to detect as they have no security features, or only very poor imitations of them. 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 [dedicated section of the ECB's website](#) and on the websites of the national central banks. The Eurosystem also helps professional cash handlers ensure that banknote-handling and processing machines can reliably identify counterfeits and withdraw them from circulation.

Using counterfeits for payments is a criminal offence that may lead to prosecution. If you receive a suspect banknote, compare it directly with one you know to be genuine. If your suspicions are

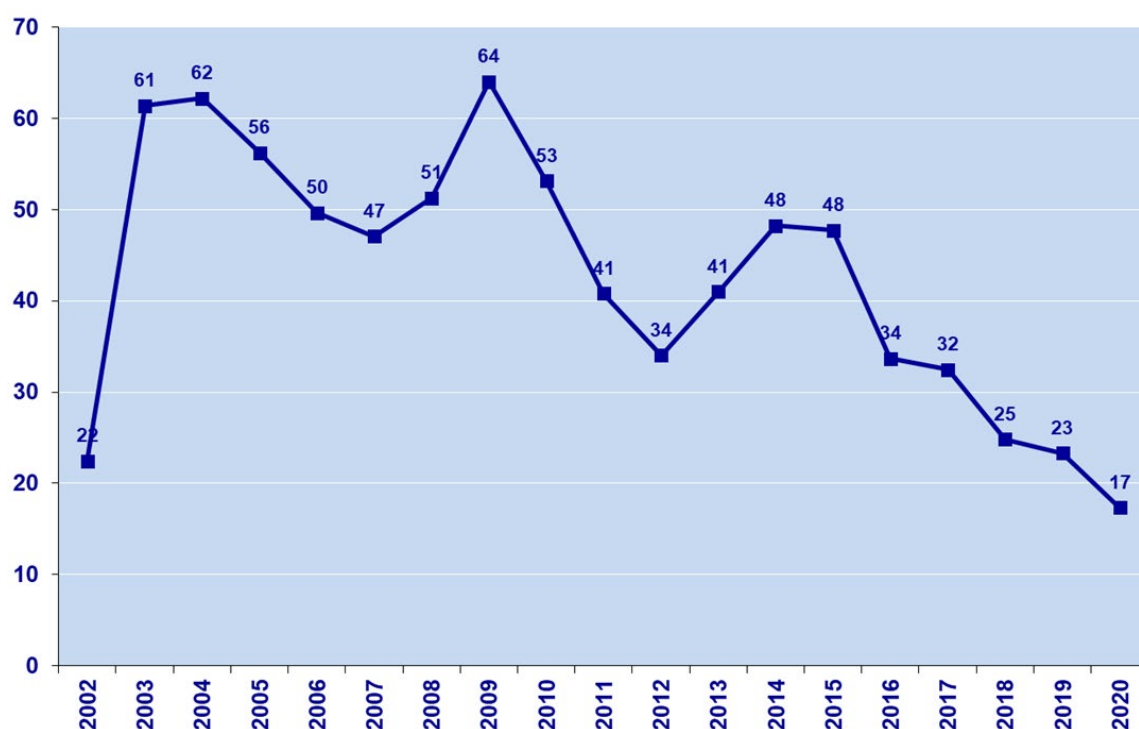
European Central Bank

Directorate General Communications, Global Media Relations Division
Sonnemannstrasse 20, 60314 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
Tel.: +49 69 1344 7455, email: media@ecb.europa.eu, website: www.bankingsupervision.europa.eu

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 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.

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



Half-yearly figures:

Period	H2 2017	H1 2018	H2 2018	H1 2019	H2 2019	H1 2020	H2 2020
Number of counterfeits	363,000	301,000	262,000	251,000	308,000	240,000	220,000

Breakdown by denomination in 2020:

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Denomination	€5	€10	€20	€50	€100	€200	€500
Percentage of total	2.3%	16.0%	36.3%	30.9%	10.3%	3.0%	1.2%

For media queries, please contact [Esther Tejedor](#), tel.: +49 69 1344 95596.

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