

Press release

28 January 2022

Euro banknote counterfeiting at historically low level in 2021

- 347,000 counterfeit euro banknotes withdrawn from circulation in 2021, a historically low level in proportion to banknotes in circulation
- About two-thirds of total withdrawn counterfeits were €20 and €50 banknotes
- Euro banknotes remain a trusted and safe means of payment
- Authenticity of euro banknotes can be verified using “feel, look and tilt” method

Some 347,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in 2021 (180,000 in the second half of the year), a decrease of 24.6% when compared with 2020. €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes, jointly accounting for about two-thirds of the total. 95.4% of counterfeits were found in euro area countries, while 4.2% were found in non-euro area EU Member States and 0.4% in other parts of the world.

There is little likelihood of receiving a counterfeit, as the number of counterfeits remains very low in proportion to the number of genuine euro [banknotes in circulation](#). In 2021, 12 counterfeits were detected per 1 million genuine banknotes in circulation, which is a historically low level (see the chart below).

Low-quality reproductions are continuously withdrawn from circulation. Counterfeits are easy to detect as they have no security features, or only very poor imitations of them. The public does not need to be concerned about counterfeiting, but should nevertheless remain vigilant. 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 of the euro area. The Eurosystem also helps professional cash handlers by ensuring 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 confirmed please contact the police or – depending on national practice – your national central bank or

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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.

Chart 1

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

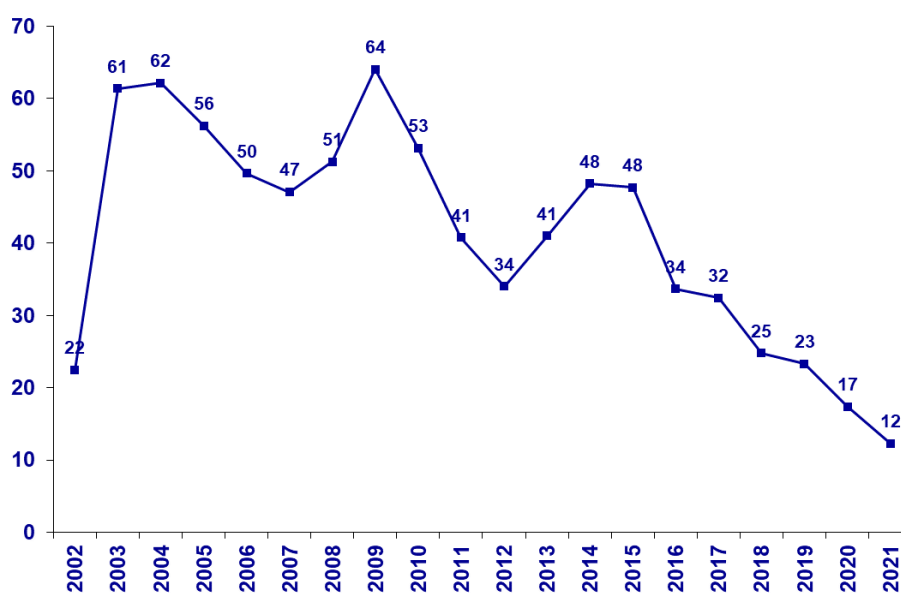


Table 1

Yearly figures in comparison

Period	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of counterfeits	684,000	694,000	563,000	559,000	460,000	347,000

Table 2

Breakdown by denomination in 2021

Denomination	€5	€10	€20	€50	€100	€200	€500

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Percentage of total	2.4%	15.7%	32.1%	33.8%	9.5%	5.5%	1.0%
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