

Euro banknote counterfeiting decreased further in the first half of 2019



PRESS RELEASE

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- 251,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the first half of 2019
- Over 80% 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Some 251,000 counterfeit euro banknotes were withdrawn from circulation in the first half of 2019, a decrease of 4.2% when compared with the second half of 2018 and 16.6% less than in the first half of 2018.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. In 2018 the number and value of [euro banknotes in circulation](#) grew by around 5.6% and 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	H1 2016	H2 2016	H1 2017	H2 2017	H1 2018	H2 2018	H1 2019
Number of counterfeits	331,000	353,000	331,000	363,000	301,000	262,000	251,000

Breakdown by denomination:

Denomination	€5	€10	€20	€50	€100	€200	€500
Percentage of total	1.6%	3.0%	27.9%	54.2%	10.4%	1.4%	1.5%

In the first half of 2019:

- The €20 and €50 notes continued to be the most counterfeited banknotes, jointly accounting for over 80% of all counterfeits.
- Most counterfeits (97.2%) were found in euro area countries. The rest were found in non-euro area EU Member States (2.1%) and in other parts of the world (0.7%).

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 €uro”](#) 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.

New €100 and €200 banknotes with enhanced security features entered into circulation on 28 May 2019. This marked the completion of the Europa series, which has involved many years of preparation and cooperation within the Eurosystem.

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