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## Euro coin counterfeiting in 2007

*In 2007 the total number of counterfeit euro coins removed from circulation was 211 100. The number increased significantly from 2006 but is still marginal compared to the total number of 75 billion genuine euro coins in circulation. The competent authorities intensified and better co-ordinated their efforts in fighting counterfeiting while, at the same time, law enforcement continued successful action.*

In 2007, a total of 211 100 counterfeit euro coins were removed from circulation. This represents an increase of around 29% compared to 2006. The rate of increase slowed down compared to 2006, when figures were 63% higher than the preceding year.

The Commission considers that these counterfeit euro coins are, however, not a significant cause of concern for the public. Indeed, the overall number is very small by comparison to the total number of 75 billion genuine euro coins put into circulation and also when compared to the 14 billion circulating euro coins of the three highest denominations, with a resulting ratio of 1 to 66.000. The number of detected counterfeits is also lower than the sum of counterfeit coins in the euro area countries before the euro.

These counterfeit coins, while increasingly sophisticated, should generally be rejected by properly adjusted vending and other coin-operated machines.

<b>Counterfeit euro coins detected in circulation, 2005 - 2007</b>				
	<b>50-cent</b>	<b>1-euro</b>	<b>2-euro</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2007</b>	13 000	16 200	181 900	211 100
<b>2006</b>	8 300	14 100	141 400	163 800
<b>2005</b>	4 000	12 800	83 700	100 500

The most counterfeited euro coin denomination continues to be the 2-euro, accounting for over 85% of the total counterfeits in 2007. Overall, around 585 000 counterfeit euro coins have been removed from circulation since the introduction of the euro coins in 2002.

In addition, according to the competent national authorities, two more illegal mints were dismantled in 2007, in Italy and Spain. This brings to 14 the total number of illegal mints discovered since the introduction of the euro in 2002. In these and other operations by law enforcement, around 90 000 counterfeit euro coins were seized in 2007 before coming into circulation.

The rise in the number of counterfeit coins recorded in 2007 reflects, to a large extent, stronger efforts by the competent authorities to remove counterfeits from circulation in line with the relevant Commission Recommendation of 27 May 2005. The rules recommended by the Commission make even safer the use of euro coins for the public. It is recalled that the Commission has recently presented a legislative proposal for strengthening the efforts to protect the euro against counterfeiting. If adopted, it would oblige banks and other professional cash handlers to ensure that euro banknotes and coins are authentic before putting them back into circulation.

As far as counterfeit euro banknotes are concerned, around 561 000 pieces were withdrawn from circulation in 2007, as announced today by the [European Central Bank](#).

## **Background**

In protecting the euro against counterfeiting the Commission collaborates closely with its partners: the European Central Bank (ECB), Europol, Interpol and the national competent authorities.

In line with Regulation (EC) 1338/2001, the European Technical & Scientific Centre (ETSC) carries out the analysis and classification of new stamped counterfeit euro coins. The Council decided, in December 2003, that the [Commission](#) ensures the functioning of the ETSC and the co-ordination of the activities of the competent technical authorities to protect the euro coins against counterfeiting. In October 2004, the Commission decided to establish formally the ETSC in the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF), using the technical equipment and installations of the Monnaie de Paris.

Against the background of an increasing number and sophistication of counterfeit euro coins, the Commission issued on 27 May 2005 a Recommendation concerning the authentication of euro coins in order to ensure that circulating euro coins are genuine. The Recommendation provides technical procedures for removing from circulation counterfeit euro coins and other euro coin-like objects and the handling of unfit coins. More recently, the Commission adopted on 17 September 2007 a proposal for amending Council Regulation 1338/2001. If adopted, the protection of the euro will be facilitated by allowing the transport of counterfeits among competent authorities. Also, it would make it mandatory for financial institutions to ensure that euro coins and banknotes are authentic before putting them back into circulation.

The Commission is responsible for the implementation of the 'Pericles' programme for training and technical assistance for the protection of the euro banknotes and coins against counterfeiting. The Commission prepares legislative initiatives and monitors the implementation of the relevant legislation.

The [European Central Bank \(ECB\)](#) performs a technical analysis of counterfeit euro banknotes of a new type at the Counterfeit Analysis Centre located on the premises of the ECB, stores the technical and statistical data on counterfeit banknotes and coins in a central database, also located at the ECB, and disseminates the relevant technical and statistical information to all those involved in combating counterfeiting.

[Europol](#) supports the Member States' law enforcement services in combating serious organised crime by facilitating the exchange of information and providing operational and strategic analysis. In addition, it provides expertise and technical support for investigations and operations carried out by the Member States' law enforcement services within the EU. Europol maintains a central database for law enforcement information relating to euro counterfeiting and also uses the technical database located at ECB. Europol provides the means for financing police investigations in the domain of euro counterfeiting and will become the EU central office for combating euro counterfeiting, when Member States formally assign this responsibility.

[http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud/pages\\_euro/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/pages_euro/index_en.html)

See also [IP/07/1353 of September 2007](#)