The global acceptance of the euro as a stable currency with low rates of inflation makes it an attractive currency for counterfeiters.

Euro banknotes, the common currency of the 19 euro area countries, are produced with sophisticated printing technology. They also have a number of prominent security features. These make them easy to distinguish from counterfeit notes without the use of special equipment, and thus deter counterfeiters.

Genuine banknotes can be recognised by means of the simple “feel, look and tilt” method promoted by the European Central Bank (ECB) and the central banks of the 19 Member States that use the currency.

However, the EUR 20 banknote remains the most popular denomination for counterfeiters, followed by the EUR 50. Together, they account for 83.3% of the counterfeit notes detected in the first half of 2015, according to the ECB.

The ECB is confident that the introduction of a new series of banknotes will hamper the activities of counterfeiters. (The new EUR 20 note went into circulation in late 2015, and the revised EUR 50 is due in April 2017.) The enhanced security features, especially the window, make these new notes among most sophisticated in the world.

A GLOBAL FIGHT

As Europol is the EU’s central office for combating euro counterfeiting, one of Europol’s key functions is to act as the worldwide contact point for the subject.

In the EU, Europol works closely with the ECB and Member State law enforcement authorities in all major euro counterfeiting investigations. Through its Analysis Project SOYA, Europol provides:

- intelligence
- joint investigation teams (JITs)
- financial, technical, statistical and forensic support
- on-the-spot assistance.

In 2015, Europol financed the specialised tracking equipment used by Italian authorities in an operation that netted counterfeit banknotes with an approximate face value of EUR 53 million.

With its technical expertise, Europol can quickly provide requesting countries relevant information on what equipment is being used by counterfeiters. The forensic analysis of counterfeit notes also includes the technical examination of raw materials and of printing devices used for counterfeiting.

The forged currency unit also provides intelligence to partners on illegal trading platforms on the darknet. Criminals use these platforms to sell all kinds of illicit goods, including counterfeit euro banknotes.

Some recent successful operations in Bulgaria and Slovenia led to the arrest of various suspects and in the dismantling of their illegal workshops. Their forged notes were detected in circulation in nearly all EU Member States. In another operation in Bulgaria the seizure of fake banknotes is considered one of Europe’s most significant in recent years on account of the quality of the forged notes detected in circulation in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Europol also has a mobile toolkit to provide on-the-spot technical support and expertise in dismantling illegal print and mint shops.

It has established effective partnerships in South America, such as with Colombia, in the fight to protect the euro. The United States Secret Service, which has expertise in fighting US dollar counterfeiting, is a valued partner.
NO CRIME GOES UNPUNISHED ON THE DARKNET: 11 ARRESTED FOR BUYING COUNTERFEIT EUROS

EURO COUNTERFEITING RING SUCCESSFULLY DISMANTLED IN SPAIN

SPANISH EURO COUNTERFEIT PRINT-SHOP BUSTED

EU-WIDE ACTION AGAINST BUYERS OF COUNTERFEIT MONEY ON THE DARKNET

TWO EURO COUNTERFEIT RINGS IN FRANCE AND ITALY CAUSE MILLIONS IN DAMAGE CIRCULATING FAKE BANKNOTES ACROSS EUROPE

ONE OF THE BIGGEST AND THE MOST MODERN COUNTERFEITING PRINT SHOPS IN EUROPE DISMANTLED
DARKNET EURO COUNTERFEITER ARRESTED IN POLAND

COUNTERFEIT EURO PRINT SHOP DISMANTLED IN PORTUGAL WITH SUPPORT OF EUROPOL

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JOINT ACTION DAY TARGETS COUNTERFEITERS ON THE DARKNET

ANNUAL REVIEW

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING