

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2029/04  
by Ieke van den Burg (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Counterfeit euro banknotes

In recent months there have been further increases in the quantity and the quality of counterfeit euro banknotes. The Netherlands Finance Minister informed the Second Chamber of the Netherlands Parliament that the number of counterfeit euro banknotes intercepted and recorded during 2003 was 26 151 (KVR 19807). There has been an alarming increase in the number of counterfeit banknotes detected. The quality of the forgeries also gives cause for legitimate concern, particularly since they are often not detectable by routine checks. Shopkeepers and consumers suffer as a result and have to pay the price. According to the Minister, a large number of counterfeit notes come from Bulgaria and Lithuania ((KVR 19807).

1. Could the Commission indicate the number of counterfeit euro banknotes (per denomination) intercepted and recorded in 2003 and in the first six months of 2004 in each Member State, both in absolute and relative terms? How does the Commission account for variations between Member States? Could the Commission provide this information on a half-yearly basis?
2. Can the Commission confirm that Bulgaria and Lithuania are a significant source of counterfeit money? In the Commission's view, how is this to be accounted for? What is the situation in the other (candidate) Member States? Can the Commission provide figures to support its answer?
3. Could the Commission outline the penalties for counterfeiting imposed in the current 25 Member States and in the candidate Member States? What conclusions does the Commission draw from this? Is the Commission prepared to exert pressure so as to ensure that this crime is punished by more severe penalties in (candidate) Member States?
4. Could the Commission firmly indicate whether the quality of genuine banknotes is to be improved in future? If so, could the Commission outline the intended time schedule?
5. Could the Commission explain why the five-euro note is of such mediocre quality in terms of materials technology? What action is to be taken to improve quality?