



## **NEWS ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST**

-----  
*Information newsletter published by the European Commission.  
Articles of immediate interest to readers, ready for publication.*  
-----

Weekly No 27/99

26 July - 2 August 1999

**EUROFOCUS is taking a break in August, as it does every year.**

**We're back in September. Have a good holiday!**

### **INDEX**

### **Page**

<u>THE EURO: The first euro banknotes have been printed</u> 8% of the new coins are ready; preparations for 2002 are going well.	2
<u>MONEY: Detecting and combating all kinds of "dirty money"</u> ...and all forms of money laundering. A European proposal.	5
<u>JUSTICE: Access to justice for the victims of cross-border crimes</u> Suggestions for ensuring adequate legal protection for the victims.	6
<u>THE MEDIA: Television is the preferred source of information</u> <u>for all Europeans...</u> ...while the Internet is more widely used in the northern EU countries.	8

**REPRODUCTION IN FULL OR IN PART AUTHORISED**

**The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the institutions of the European Union.**

**THE EURO: The first euro banknotes have been printed****8% of the new coins are ready; preparations for 2002 are going well.**

Euro\* coins and banknotes will not be in people's pockets until 1 January 2002, but they are already being minted and printed in several of the 11 countries\*\* that adopted the single currency on January 1 of this year. The first euro banknotes were printed on July 15, while some 8% of the 56 billion euro coins that will be needed were ready by the end of May, production having begun more than a year ago.

There are seven euro banknotes, in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euros respectively. They are identical on both sides, regardless of the country in which they are being printed. Each of them shows the architectural style of a period in Europe's cultural history, from classical to modern times. One side shows a bridge, the other a window or gateway. The reverse side of the banknote carries the signature of the European Central Bank's president, at present the Dutchman Wim Duisenberg. The ECB manages the monetary policy of the euro area. It is concerned above all to prevent inflation, or an excessive rise in prices.

The banknotes were chosen by both a jury of experts and a survey involving some 2,000 European Union (EU) citizens, following a competition between banknote designers from the EU countries. The winning designs were produced by Mr. Robert Kalina of the National Bank of Austria.

The new banknotes have been designed with the specific needs of the 2% or so of the EU population that is blind and partially sighted in mind. Each banknote is of a dominant colour and varies in size, according to its value, which is printed in large numerals. In addition, some elements of the design are printed in relief.

Five euro area countries - Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain - began printing the euro banknotes in July. Printing will begin in the remaining euro area countries in the coming months.

.../...

In some countries the banknotes are being printed by the national central banks themselves, in others by public or private companies. Nearly 13 billion banknotes in all will be printed, 9 billion of which will replace national banknotes, while some 4 billion will be held in stock.

In order to prevent counterfeiting, the paper on which the banknotes are printed contains fluorescent fibres, a security thread and special foils. These and other features will make the task of forgers extremely difficult while making it easy for shopkeepers to detect counterfeit banknotes.

Euro coins will be put into circulation at the same time as the banknotes, that is, on 1 January 2002. There will be eight coins in all, in denominations of one and two euros, and of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents. Unlike the banknotes, the designs on one side of the euro coins are common to all euro area countries, while the other side reflects the national identity of each country. It goes without saying that you will be able to use euro coins throughout the euro area, regardless of their national side.

The European side, which shows the EU in outline and gives the value of the particular coin, was designed by Mr. Luc Luycx, of the Royal Belgian Mint, and selected on the basis of a competition.

As for the national side of the euro coins, some countries have decided on the same design for all eight coins. They are Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Some have divided the coins into three groups, each with its own design; they include Finland, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. Austria and Italy have opted for a different design for each of the eight coins.

Countries which are monarchies, including Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain, have put the image of their head of state on some or all of the coins. The others have used a national symbol, like the harp in Ireland or the eagle in Germany, or a famous son, like Dante in Italy and Mozart in Austria.

.../...

The technical features of the euro coins - their size and weight, and the metals used in their manufacture - are identical in all euro area countries. This means that vending machines throughout the euro area will accept all euro coins. Even so, each country has been allowed a measure of freedom in designing the national face. In order to prevent unpleasant surprises, the national Mints are testing the coins they are producing, while six testing centres at the European level are centralising this work. Two are located in Germany, the others in Finland, France, the Netherlands and Spain.

As in the case of the banknotes, the blind and partially sighted will be able to recognize the different denominations, as each of the eight coins has a different edge. To prevent counterfeiting, special alloys have been used in making the coins.

Finally, there is a special mechanism to ensure the continued quality of the one- and two-euro coins. Each national Mint will check the quality of its production according to European rules. At the same time the European Central Bank will not only examine the reports of the national bodies but also inspect the national mints and other production centres annually. If the ECB uncovers problems regarding quality, it will at once notify the euro area finance ministers.

\* 1 EUR - UK £0.66 or IR £0.79

\*\* Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

**MONEY: Detecting and combating all kinds of "dirty" money...****...and all forms of money laundering. A European proposal.**

If drug traffickers put their ill-gotten gains in a bank in the 15-nation European Union (EU), the authorities in all the member states can detect this "dirty" money, thanks to a directive agreed by the EU in 1991. But if gun runners launder their pile by investing it in office blocks, action cannot be taken against them in all EU countries. It is this loophole which the European Commission has tried to fill, by proposing changes to the 1991 directive to the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers in mid-July.

The present directive requires banks, savings banks, financial firms, including "bureaux de change," and security firms engaged in the transport of large sums, to ask anyone wanting to open an account or safe-deposit facilities, or when transactions exceed EUR 15,000\*, for proof of identity. In addition, they must keep suitable records, and notify the national authorities of any operation, regardless of the amount involved, which could be connected with drug trafficking. What is more, under the 1991 directive banking secrecy can be suspended whenever necessary.

Money laundering is not limited to gains from drug trafficking, of course; in fact criminals use other techniques to invest the funds they accumulate. While the 1991 directive is being properly implemented in practice, this clearly is not enough. Several EU countries in fact are doing more than is required under the directive, but each in its own way.

If the Commission's proposal was to be adopted, the measures provided for in the 1991 directive would cover all forms of organized crime, as well as fraud and corruption in connection with the EU budget. The obligations to which banks and other financial institutions are subject at present would likewise be extended not only to notaries, estate agents and accountants but also casinos and exclusive jewellers.

The Commission's proposal covers all financial institutions, including insurance companies and stockbrokers. It also makes it quite clear that the directive applies to "bureau de change" and firms engaged in the transport of funds, something which is not obvious in practice in all member states.

.../...

The European Commission has not overlooked the fact that the fight against money laundering has a global dimension. It takes part in the activities of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which makes recommendations. Task Force members, in addition to the EU, are the 11 leading countries from a financial viewpoint. The Commission's proposal is more comprehensive than the Task Force's latest recommendations.

\* 1 EUR = UK £0.66 or IR £0.79.

### **JUSTICE: Access to justice for the victims of cross-border crimes**

#### **Suggestions for ensuring adequate legal protection for the victims.**

Should you have the misfortune to be robbed this summer, while vacationing in another European Union (EU) country, a nasty experience may be made worse because of the additional problems facing you. The situation is far worse, of course, for people who are physically attacked, wounded, kidnapped or raped. In order to provide help to the victims of such crimes, throughout the EU, the European Commission released in mid-July a consultation paper containing its own views and suggestions. While the paper is addressed primarily to the European Parliament and EU Council of Ministers, the Commission has asked all interested persons and organs for their views.

Some 200 million Europeans, or more than half the total population of the EU, spent their holidays in another EU country than their own in 1997. Each year roughly 200,000 young people leave home to study elsewhere in the EU, while the number of people moving within the EU in connection with their work is rising steadily. Some of these people are the victims of theft or other criminal act. The consultation paper stresses that the EU must not neglect them, if it wants to create "an area of freedom, security and justice within the EU," as promised by the Amsterdam Treaty, in force since May 1.

.../...

It is precisely in order to create just such an area that EU heads of state or government will meet in the Finnish town of Tampere in October. The aim of the consultation paper is to remind them of the problems faced by people who are victims of a crime when working, studying or living in another EU country than their own.

Crime prevention makes a good starting point, and the Commission calls on member states and relevant industries, such as tourism, to share information and best practices. Spain's national police force and the police in Amsterdam in particular already do so.

Assistance to victims is essential, the consultation paper points out. They could be given immediate material help, provided with temporary accommodation, or be allowed to lodge their complaint in their own language. An EU-wide telephone network would help.

Once the theft or other criminal act has given rise to proceedings, the national authorities could make it easier for the victims to take part in them, when they are resident in another country or have language problems.

A great deal remains to be done when it comes to compensation for the victims of a crime committed in an another EU country than their own. There is a European convention dealing with such matters, but only 8 of the 15 EU countries are parties to it. Cooperation between member states could help victims effectively.

Individuals and organs can send their reflections and suggestions to the following address until December 31:

The Deputy Director-General, Justice and Home Affairs Task Force, General Secretariat, European Commission, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium. Fax: 00 32 2 296 7481

E-mail: [Adrian.Fortescue@sg.cec.be](mailto:Adrian.Fortescue@sg.cec.be)

**THE MEDIA: Television is the preferred source of information for all Europeans...**  
**...while the Internet is more widely used in the northern EU countries.**

Television remains the key source of news for Europeans. It is their preferred source of news about the European Union (EU), and the one they trust the most. These are among the results of the public opinion poll which was carried out in all EU countries this spring and published in early July by the European Commission in "Eurobarometer No. 51." The poll also revealed that the Internet is gaining ground more quickly in the northern EU countries than elsewhere.

Nearly seven Europeans out of 10 turn to television when looking for information on the EU. This is true of the great majority of people in all member states except Ireland, where just 49% look to television for news. Daily newspapers are in second place in the EU with 46% (those taking part in the survey could name more than one source of information). Radio was in third place, with 35%.

More than seven Europeans out of 10 watch the news on television on a daily basis; indeed, a majority of people do so in all EU countries without exception, with the Finns, Greeks and Italians in the lead, with a score of over 80%. However, just 41% of Europeans read the news in daily newspapers every day. The same proportion listens to the news on the radio every day. Far more people read a newspaper on a daily basis in the north of the EU than in the south. This is also the case when it comes to listening to the news on radio.

Some two-thirds of Europeans tend to trust television as a source of information. Radio scores equally high in this respect, but the press does rather less well: just half of those polled tend to trust the written media. The level of trust in television is highest in the Netherlands, with the southern members of the EU at the other end of the spectrum in this respect.

The level of trust in the press is highest in the Netherlands (73% of those polled), and the lowest by far in the UK (24%, up 9 percentage points since the autumn of 1997).

.../...



A majority in all EU countries has trust in radio. A mere 6% of Europeans turn to the Internet for information on the EU. In any case, just 14% of Europeans have access to the Internet. The fact is that of all the information technology tools, the Internet is one of the least used in the EU, far behind the video recorder (74%) and computer (35%).

Even fax machines (18%) and satellite dishes for picking up TV programmes (also 18%) are in more widespread use. Only the decoder for pay-TV programmes (11%) ranks below Internet access. The use of video recorders is most widespread in the UK, where 9 people out of 10 claim to own one. Greece is at the opposite end of the spectrum, with fewer than one person in two owning one. As for computers, the Danes, Dutch and Swedes are in the lead - two-thirds of them have one - followed by the Finns (one Finn in two owns one).

Access to the Internet is more widespread in the northern parts of the EU. Sweden is in the lead; 55% of those polled in Sweden have access to the Internet. Countries above the 20% mark include Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the UK. Below the EU average are Italy, followed by Ireland, Austria and Belgium - all are above the 10% mark. Germany, France, Spain and Portugal are next, with Greece bringing up the rear, with just 5% connected to the Internet.

The gap between the different EU countries may widen, given that the better equipped countries are accessing the Internet at a faster rate than the others. Between the spring of 1998 and this spring the proportion of people claiming to have access to the Internet rose sharply in Sweden and the Netherlands, but remained unchanged in Spain and Portugal.

*Please contact us by fax or e-mail if you would like copies of the documents used in the preparation of Eurofocus articles.*

Mailed from Brussels X

Rue de la Loi 200 Wetstraat • VM-2 5/55 • B-1049 Brussels • Belgium • Tel.: +32-2-296.01.80 • Fax: +32-2-296.95.92  
email: eurofocus@dg10.cec.be