

6897/97

LIMITE

ENFOPOL 71

NOTE

from : Presidency

to : Police Cooperation Working Party

No. prev. doc.: 9318/96 JAI 50, 10287/96 ENFOPOL 147, 12944/96 ENFOPOL 231

Subject: Combating the counterfeiting of euro banknotes

Introduction

A letter dated 22 July 1996 from Mr Lamfalussy, President of the European Monetary Institute (EMI), addressed to the K.4 coordinator at the time and subsequently forwarded to the Police Cooperation Working Party (9318/96 JAI 50), featured on the agenda for the September meeting of the said Working Party under the Irish Presidency. This letter requested the K.4 Committee to give a formal mandate to the informal Euro Working Group so as to lend greater authority to the EMI's activities. At the meeting of the Police Cooperation Working Party on 16 September last, the EMI decided to seek more detailed information regarding the precise aims.

This information was received by the Presidency in a letter dated 19 February 1997 and the proposal contained in this note is in response thereto.

SEMDOC

Statewatch European Documentation &
Monitoring Centre on justice and home
affairs in the European Union

PO Box 1516, London N16 0EW, UK
tel: 0181 802 1882 (00 44 181 802 1882)
fax: 0181 880 1727 (00 44 181 880 1727)

EMI and the Working Group on Printing and Issuing a European Banknote (BNWG)

The EMI Working Group on Printing and Issuing a European Banknote (BNWG), which was (formally) set up at the time by European national banks, is studying the organization, classification, handling and storage of suspect and counterfeit euro banknotes. These matters are dealt with very differently in the various Member States. In some Member States responsibility in this area lies with the national bank, while in others it lies with the police. In Germany, for example, the national bank is responsible for investigating and classifying counterfeits, whereas in Greece it is the police which has certain powers in this field. In connection with the future introduction of the euro, the BNWG is planning, at the behest of the EMI, to establish a centre to study and classify all new forms of counterfeit. The data pertinent thereto would have to be stored in a database accessible to national police departments and banks. The standardization of data is, naturally, a first requirement.

Informal Working Group on Combating Euro Counterfeiting

At the request of the German Ministry for Internal Affairs, a police working group was set up in 1994 to combat the counterfeiting of future euro banknotes. This working group, comprising four subgroups, processes advice on legislation (1), computerization (2), forensic investigation (3) and tactical research and investigation (4). These subgroups are chaired by the United Kingdom, Germany, France and the Netherlands respectively. Heads of national counterfeit offices (except Finland) are represented in the group and Interpol has also been involved in its activities. Europol too is involved through a liaison group. Formal contact with this police working group was established by the BNWG in May 1995, in connection with the aforementioned organization of action to combat and advise on the counterfeiting of euro banknotes. Ad hoc consultations between the EMI working group and the Euro Working Group have already proved useful, although the latter, as an unofficial group, has no official mandate to advise the BNWG in this area. In order to improve the efficiency of the BNWG's work, the EMI has requested the K.4 Committee to fuse the Euro Working Group with a formal (police) working group.

Proposal

1. In the light of the foregoing, the Presidency proposes offering the informal Euro Working Group, as a group of police experts operating in the field of counterfeiting, the opportunity to advise the Police Cooperation Working Party. If desired, the latter can relay the advice to the K.4 Committee with the request that it be passed on to the BNWG. It should be emphasized that this in no way involves institutionalizing a new group.

Since the primary consideration here is not to combat the counterfeiting of euro banknotes as such but to establish a centre and database *for the purposes of combating such practices*, it is not the Working Party on Drugs and Organized Crime but, rather, the Police Cooperation Working Party which provides the appropriate forum.

2. The task of the informal Euro Working Group is to:
advise on legislation, computerization, forensic investigation and tactical research and investigation in connection with the setting up of a centre for investigation and a Community database for the purposes of combating the counterfeiting of euro banknotes.
