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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

**TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN
CENTRAL BANK**

**concerning the implementation and the results of the Pericles IV programme for the
protection of the euro against counterfeiting in 2024**

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1. General

The Pericles IV programme is an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting. It replaces the Pericles 2020 programme that ran from 2013 to 2020, and the Pericles programmes that ran during the period 2002-2013. The programme was established by [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/840](#)¹. Its application was extended to the non-participating Member States by [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1696](#)². Regulation (EU) 2021/840 establishes the duration of the programme until 31 December 2027. Article 12(3) of **that Regulation** requires the Commission to provide annual information on the results of the programme to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Central Bank. This is the annual report for 2024. The report provides information on the commitments and implementation of the Pericles IV programme in 2024, as well as on the implementation in 2024 of actions committed to in previous years.

2. Commitments under the 2024 annual work programme

The annual budget for the implementation of the Pericles IV programme for the year 2024 was set at EUR 884 755 and was financed from budget line 06.030100-C1³ of the general EU budget for 2024. A total of EUR 884 755 was committed in 2024, which is 100% of the total budget. The programme is implemented through co-financed actions (grants) originating from the competent authorities of the Member States and through ‘Commission actions’ organised directly by the Commission. The total commitment amount also includes a commitment of EUR 37 225 to cover the annual costs of using the eGrants tool, a fully electronic (paperless) grant management system⁴. In addition to the operational budget line, EUR 81 896.64 was made available on the budget line including the internal assigned revenue (budget line 06.030100-C4 of the general EU budget)⁵. Of this amount, EUR 66 456.34 was committed in 2024 for two grants⁶.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/840 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting for the period 2021-2027 (the ‘Pericles IV’ programme), and repealing Regulation (EU) 331/2014.

² Council Regulation (EU) 2021/1696 of 21 September 2021 extending to the non-participating Member States the application of Regulation (EU) 2021/840 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting for the period 2021-2027 (the ‘Pericles IV programme’).

³ Budget line 06.030100-C1: Protection of the euro against counterfeiting. C1: Appropriations voted by the Budgetary Authority for the current budget.

⁴ The full amount for the use of the eGrants tool was EUR 44 941.

⁵ Budget line 06.030100-C4: Protection of the euro against counterfeiting – assigned revenue. C4: The assigned revenue comes from a recovery order (amount returned by a beneficiary to the Commission resulting from unspent pre-financing) in respect of Article 21 of [the financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union \(recast\)](#).

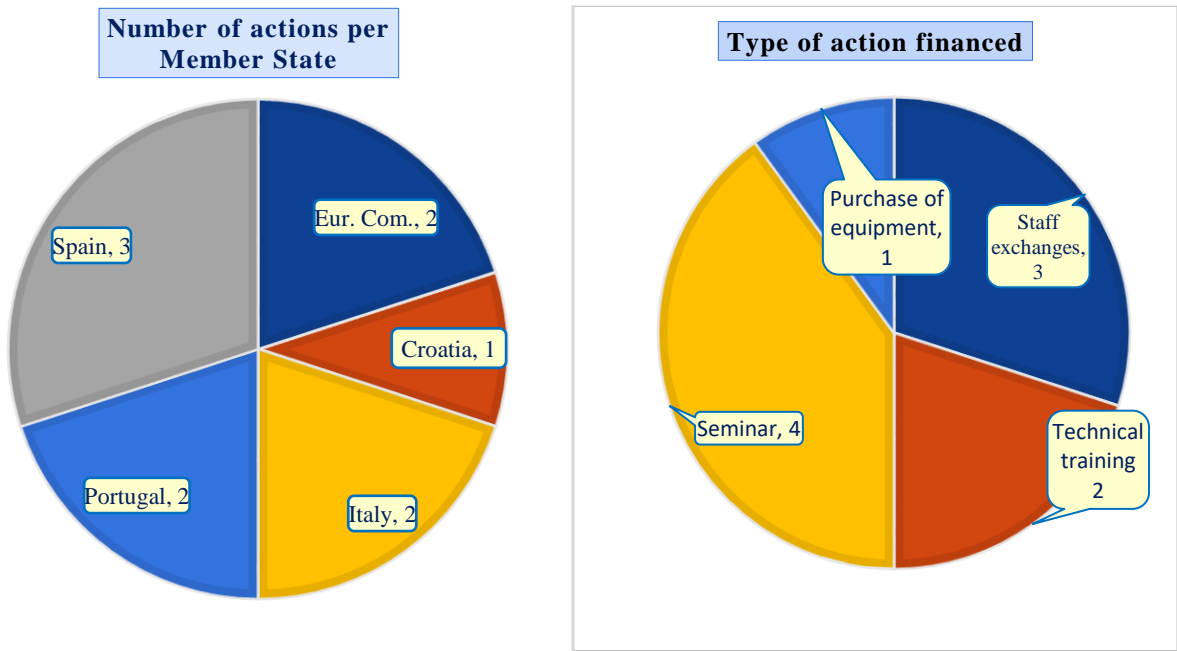
⁶ The remaining EUR 15 440.30 will be made available for 2025 Pericles implementation (budget line IAR2/2/2025|ECFIN|E.06030100|PERICLES_21_27)

The implementation of the programme reflects the commitment of Member States and the Commission to protect the euro against counterfeiting. Discussions of the annual strategy at the meetings of the Euro Counterfeiting Experts Group (ECEG) made it possible to identify and address the main threats and commit 100% of the overall budget in 2024.

The programme committed to funding 10 projects in total⁷: eight grants were awarded to applications originating from Member State competent authorities and two Commission actions were funded.

The two Commission actions were implemented in 2024 and two grants were partially implemented in 2024, while the remaining grants will be implemented in 2025 and thereafter.

Chart I and Chart II: Type of action financed and number of actions per Member State (actions committed to in 2024, see Annex I)



Italy and Spain, two of the Member States most affected by euro counterfeiting, this year again received Pericles grants. In addition, Portugal and Croatia received grants under the programme in 2024. All these efforts enhance the protection of the euro, which benefits all other Member States.

The actions for which commitments were made in 2024 consist of four seminars, three staff exchanges, two technical training sessions, and one equipment purchase.

The actions are set to take place both inside and outside the EU, depending on specific needs. Since its inception, the programme has consolidated its regional approach by implementing actions involving regions of the world which are particularly important in the fight against counterfeiting, such as south-eastern Europe, China, Türkiye and South America.

⁷ A comprehensive overview of Pericles actions committed to in 2024 can be found in Annex I.

3. Implementation of actions in 2024

Overview

This section analyses the implementation of all Pericles-funded actions in the calendar year 2024. It therefore includes actions committed to under the 2023⁸ and 2024⁹ Pericles IV budgets (11 grants and 2 Commission actions).

2024 saw the implementation of 13 Pericles-funded actions overall, including:

- the partial implementation by Croatia and Portugal of two grant actions committed to in 2024;
- the implementation by Member States of nine grant actions committed to in 2023: these actions were implemented by Italy (four actions), Spain (four actions) and France (one action);
- the implementation of two procured Commission actions (committed to in 2024).

The actions above consist of five staff exchanges, four technical training sessions, three seminars and one equipment purchase. An estimated 415 experts participated in the actions¹⁰.

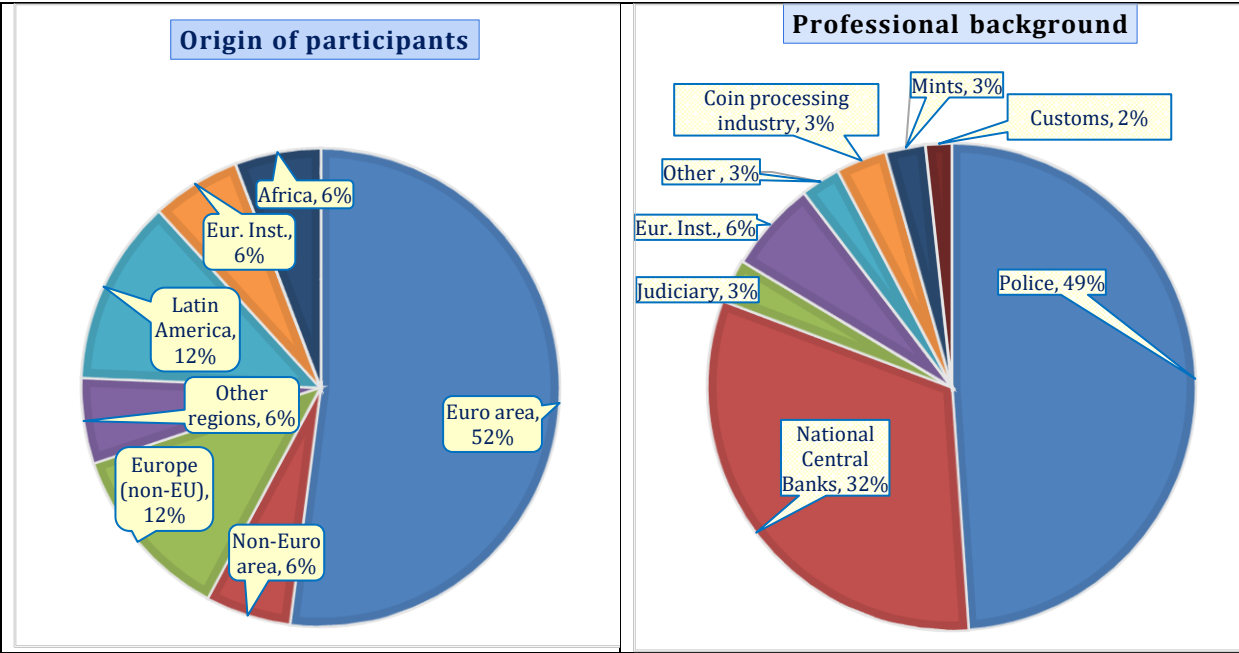
Finally, 2024 saw the mid-term evaluation of the Pericles IV programme. The evaluation (covering 2021-2023) assessed, amongst others, the achievement of the programme's objectives against the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.

⁸ A comprehensive overview of actions for which funds were committed prior to 2024 and implemented in 2024 can be found in Annex II.

⁹ A comprehensive overview of Pericles actions committed to in 2024 can be found in Annex I. Please note that this chapter only refers to those actions found in Annex I that have been (partially) implemented in 2024.

¹⁰ Estimate based on the final technical report (when already received) and on application forms sent by beneficiaries

Chart III and Chart IV: Origin and professional background of participants (actions implemented in 2024)



Origin of participants

Participants came from 51 countries. The majority of those attending training (70%) were European: 52% from euro area Member States, 6% from non-euro area Member States and 12% from non-EU countries in Europe. Of the remaining participants, 12% were from Latin America, 6% from European institutions, 6% from Africa and 6% from other regions.

Professional background of participants

Members of police forces represented 49% of participants. That prominent presence is due to the fact that police authorities represent the frontline in the fight against euro counterfeiting, and police staff include both investigators and technicians. Experts from the national central banks represented 32% of participants, making them the second largest group. As in 2023, several actions in 2024 involved the participation of central banks. Staff of the European institutions (6%), national mints (3%), the judiciary (3%), customs (2%) and other categories (3%) also participated, reflecting a full range of professional backgrounds. Finally, the 5th ‘Platform 1210 meeting’ was attended by representatives from the coin processing machine industry (3%) for the fifth year. This continues to affirm the private sector as a significant stakeholder in the fight against counterfeiting. As a result, the implementation of the programme meets the transnational and multidisciplinary dimensions required under Regulation (EU) No 2021/840 with a high degree of diversification in terms of professional background.

Highlights from 2024

The programme succeeded in maintaining and further strengthening regional international cooperation in south-eastern Europe and Latin America in 2024:

- 2024 saw the implementation of several Pericles actions focusing on encouraging and maintaining strong cooperation among national authorities in south-eastern Europe. This included staff exchanges organised by the Italian Comando Carabinieri Antifalsificazione Monetaria (CCAFM), two staff exchanges organised by the Italian Guardia di Finanza (GdF), and technical training organised by the Croatian National Bank (CNB) with participants from nine south-eastern European countries, that will be finalised in 2025. These actions also included study visits to and/or participation of experts from Türkiye, which is a key priority country as it is a potential hotspot for the production and transit of euro counterfeits.
- The Spanish Brigada de Investigación del Banco de España (BIBE) organised a currency counterfeiting course for experts from Latin American countries, bringing together the authorities of 10 Latin American countries in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The action promoted measures to protect the euro against counterfeiting in Latin American countries that are potentially susceptible to it. Furthermore, the action strengthens the links between specific recently established national central offices in this region.

The implementation of the programme in 2024 was also characterised by actions focusing on topical developments in the fight against currency counterfeiting:

- A priority addressed by several actions was the fight against high-quality classes of counterfeits, implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1210/2010 and handling of euro coins unfit for circulation. Actions with this focus included the training activity on counterfeit coins analysis for technical experts and technical training on best practices for handling euro coins unfit for circulation, both organised by the Banco de España. The 6th Platform 1210 meeting, organised as a Commission action, also brought together stakeholders from the coin processing machine industry and coin national analysis centres.
- The priority for fostering cooperation with authorities of non-EU countries where there is a suspicion, or evidence, of counterfeit euro production was reflected in the 3rd EU-China platform on the protection of currencies against counterfeiting. Organised as a Commission action, the event was a follow-up to events which had previously been organised under the EU-China platform in Brussels (2017) and Beijing (2019). The meeting allowed the EU and Chinese authorities to continue cooperation at both an operational and administrative level, and it emphasised the need to enhance communication channels and facilitate the exchange of information. In-depth discussions were held on mutual challenges in the field of anti-counterfeiting, such as the problem of altered design banknotes, counterfeit euro security features and counterfeit euro coins imported from China. This enabled progress to be made towards enhancing cooperation at an administrative level.

Finally, 2024 saw the delivery of several technical training courses with a more innovative design. In particular, the French OCRFM organised ‘technical and operational training on the protection of the euro against counterfeiting’ (TOTP), which consisted of several simulation workshops which put participants in situations modelled on actual anti-counterfeiting investigations. Furthermore, the Portuguese Policia Judiciaria partially implemented the

‘Capacity-building initiative for detection, analysis and reporting of counterfeit euro banknotes by Cape Verdean police authorities’ (COUNTERACT), which consisted of purchasing the equipment necessary for Cape Verdean authorities to carry out anti-counterfeiting investigations and training them on how to use it.

4. Monitoring of the quantitative and qualitative indicators

Article 12(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/840 requests that this report should take into account the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the Pericles IV programme. The data on these indicators for 2024 is as follows:

1. **Number of counterfeit euros detected (banknotes: 554 000, coins: 416 276):** The target for this indicator is to keep the number of counterfeit euro banknotes and coins detected under control within a range of +/- 5% of the average for the period 2014-2020 (671 000/174 112). The number of counterfeit euro banknotes detected is lower than the target but is gradually increasing. The number of coins detected exceeded the set target. However, there is only an indirect link between the programme and these indicators, as a variety of external factors also play an important role. These external factors include the progress of police investigations and the amount of counterfeit production.
2. **Number of illegal workshops dismantled (9):** The target for the number of illegal workshops dismantled is to keep the number under control within +/- 10% of the figure for 2019 (22). The number of illegal workshops dismantled in 2024 is lower than the target. As explained under indicator 1, the link between the programme and this indicator is only indirect, as a variety of external factors play an important role.
3. **Number of unique competent authorities applying to the programme (9):** This indicator aims to measure interest from competent national authorities in the programme. The goal for 2024 is 12 and for 2027 it is 24. While the number of unique applicants to the programme is increasing, it remains lower than the target.
4. **Satisfaction rate of participants in the actions financed by the programme (99.36%):** This indicator measures the quality of the training as perceived by participants. The target is 75%. The rate of positive feedback is significantly higher than the target.
5. **Feedback from participants who have already taken part in previous Pericles actions on the impact of the programme on their activities in protecting the euro against counterfeiting (98.78%):** This indicator measures the sustainability of the programme’s actions. The target is 75%. The percentage of positive feedback is significantly higher than the target.

5. Conclusions and way forward

The Pericles IV programme, like its predecessor, remains an important and efficient tool in the fight against counterfeiting. The programme supports studies, maintains and develops cooperation, and supports the exchange of best practice among all the stakeholders involved in the fight against euro counterfeiting. The fact that in 2024, 100% of the overall budget was committed, reflects the interest from Member States in the programme.

The Commission regularly disseminates the results of projects supported under the programme to the experts in the Euro Counterfeit Experts Group (ECEG). In 2024, three ECEG meetings took place. The programme shows a high degree of consistency and complementarity with other relevant programmes and actions at EU level because it is dedicated exclusively to protecting the euro by preventing and fighting a specific form of organised crime, namely euro counterfeiting. Examples include DG NEAR's **Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)** instrument, which is most often used in support of accession negotiations, and DG HOME's Internal Security Fund – Police¹¹, which covers the prevention and combating of crime in general. Following the inclusion of forgery of money as one of the priorities in the EMPACT¹² operational action plan, the Commission is coordinating closely with the EMPACT driver in order to maximise the complementarity between the two sources of financing.

Based on the results of the programme so far and the continuous analysis of emerging threats discussed in the ECEG, the priorities for 2025 are the following¹³:

- supporting activities aimed at improving cooperation among those Member States which are particularly affected by the production and distribution of counterfeits;
- fostering cooperation with authorities of non-EU countries where there is a suspicion of, or evidence for, counterfeit euro production;
- maintaining an efficient framework for the protection of the euro in south-eastern Europe;
- topical developments:
 - distribution of counterfeits and high-quality components on the darknet, and 'movie money' and 'prop copy' products online (including altered design notes);
 - support for the establishment/reinforcement of national central offices;
 - euro coins: fight against high-quality classes of counterfeits, implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1210/2010 and handling of euro coins unfit for circulation.

¹¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund (OJ L 251, 15.7.2021, p. 94).

¹² EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) is a security initiative driven by EU Member States to identify, prioritise and address threats posed by organised and serious international crime. In 2021, EMPACT became a permanent instrument, as set out in the Council conclusions on the permanent continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime. The driver Member State for the EMPACT priority covering 'intellectual property crime, counterfeiting of goods and currencies' is Bulgaria.

¹³ The priorities of the programme for 2025 are an essential part of the annual work programme, which is annexed to the Commission Decision of 18.2.2025 on the financing of the Pericles IV programme and the adoption of the annual work programme for 2025, C(2025) 972 final.