

Documentation

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Instruction sheet on the reproduction of banknotes

1. Provisions governing the sixth, eighth and ninth banknote series

1.1 Legal basis

Banknotes are protected by various provisions in the Swiss Criminal Code. Under arts. 240 et seq., it is forbidden to counterfeit money in order to pass it off as genuine or to falsify it to create a higher value. Importing, procuring, storing and putting into circulation counterfeit or falsified money are also prohibited.

In addition, the reproduction of banknotes without the intent to commit forgery (e.g. for advertising purposes) is restricted. The relevant article of the Swiss Criminal Code (art. 243) reads as follows:

1. Any person who, without the intention of committing the offence of forgery, reproduces or imitates banknotes and thus creates the risk that persons or machines will confuse such notes with genuine notes, in particular if the overall appearance, one side or the greater part of one side of a banknote reproduces or imitates a material and a size that is identical or similar to the material and size of the original,
[...]
any person who imports, offers or puts into circulation such objects,
is liable to a custodial sentence not exceeding three years or to a monetary penalty.
2. If the person concerned acts through negligence, he is liable to a fine.

Furthermore, according to art. 249 para. 2 of the Swiss Criminal Code, banknotes that have been reproduced, imitated or produced without the intent to commit forgery, but which create a risk of confusion, are also forfeited and rendered unusable or destroyed.

1.2 Admissible reproductions

Criminal acts according to arts. 240 et seq. of the Swiss Criminal Code are subject to federal (criminal) jurisdiction. The Swiss National Bank (SNB) is not in a position to make a binding determination as to when banknote reproduction is free of risk.

As the issuer of Swiss franc banknotes, however, the SNB generally does not see any risk of confusion with genuine banknotes in cases in which the word 'SPECIMEN' is printed diagonally across the reproduction. The dimensions of the word 'SPECIMEN' must be at least 75% of the length and 15% of the width of the reproduction and the word must be printed in a colour that provides an obvious contrast to the predominant colour of the reproduction.

In addition to the use of the word 'SPECIMEN', the SNB considers the fulfilment of at least one of the following criteria imperative in avoiding the risk of confusion with genuine banknotes:

1. Reduced-size reproduction whose length does not exceed 66% of the original banknote.
2. Enlarged reproduction whose length is at least 150% of the original banknote.
3. Partial reproduction of any size provided less than 40% of one side of the original banknote is reproduced.
4. Reproduction on a material which can unambiguously and easily be distinguished from paper (reproductions on foodstuffs and hard products such as metal, glass, stone, wood, etc.).
5. Reproduction of a colour which is readily distinguishable from that of any banknotes currently in use as legal tender.

Furthermore, whether or not there is a risk of confusion with genuine banknotes depends on the overall circumstances (quality of print, printing on both back and front, manner in which note reproduction is put into circulation, etc.).

1.3 Banknotes for digital processing

For advertising and educational purposes, the SNB will supply, on loan, digital images of banknotes (resolution: 150 dpi), with the word 'SPECIMEN' printed in accordance with the aforementioned specifications.

Should the banknote images be used in an electronic medium that is freely accessible by third parties, the resolution may not exceed 72 dpi.

2. Provisions governing the first to the fifth and the seventh banknote series

These banknotes are not legal tender and also cannot be exchanged for current banknotes. Reproductions therefore do not have to bear the word 'SPECIMEN' and can be printed at a higher resolution.

3. Copyright

Banknotes are not protected by the Swiss Copyright Act. However, individual works reproduced on banknotes are subject to copyright protection provided they have not been reproduced recognisably as a part of the banknote. They may therefore only be reproduced and adapted with the permission of the copyright holder.

4. Illustration credit

Publication should include an illustration credit (cf. 'Permission for reproduction' form).

5. Reproduction permission and contact

Enquiries should be addressed to the SNB's Archives unit, which will provide the relevant 'Permission for reproduction' form.

Before reproductions can be made available, the form must be completed, signed and sent to SNB Archives.

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