

LISTENING: The euro

Listen to an interview about the euro. Decide if the following statement and True or False and correct the false ones.

1. The epsilon was used for the euro symbol because the designer was Greek.
2. The epsilon in the symbol has two lines to show cooperation among the nations.
3. People have used simple methods to counterfeit the euro.
4. The colours of the notes were chosen for their beauty.
5. It is a problem for the blind to tell the coins apart.
6. The coins vary whereas the notes are identical everywhere.
7. If you toss a euro coin, it will probably come down heads, not tails.



ANSWER KEY: 1 F / 2 F / 3 T / 4 F / 5 F / 6 T / 7 T

SOURCE: *Update for FCE*, Unit 2 (CD 1, Track 4)

SCRIPT:

Interviewer: Marion Becker is an independent financial correspondent who has been watching the developments in the switch to the euro. Marion, how have people adjusted, all in all?

Marion: Well, I'd say people are getting quite used to it by now, but it wasn't easy at first: people walking around with calculators, prices shown in 2 currencies, paying in euros and getting your change in local currency.

Interviewer: Yeah, we're glad to be past that stage. Now, let me ask you about the word 'euro' itself. I know that it's always with a small 'e', but where does the word come from? I assume it comes from Europe.

Marion: Yes, but do you know where the word Europe comes from?

Interviewer: You've got me there!

Marion: It comes from Greek mythology. Europa was the daughter of the king of Phoenicia. She must have awfully pretty because according to the myth, Zeus fell in love with her. The symbol for the euro is also Greek, by the way. It comes from the Greek letter epsilon. The commission decided to use a Greek letter because the importance of ancient Greek culture and the great influence it still has in Europe.

Interviewer: But as I recall, an epsilon has only one line.

Marion: Yes, the two lines are to make it look more stable, to show that the currency will be stable.

Interviewer: We hope so, anyway. Marion, perhaps you can fill our listeners in on whether there have been any attempts at counterfeiting the euro.

Marion: Oh, all over. You know, when a new currency comes in, there are always people who try to take advantage of the confusion and the fact that people aren't familiar yet with the new money. On New Year's Day 2002, for example, a customer at a pub in France paid for a drink with Monopoly money! It was from the new version of the game that has euros.

Interviewer: Monopoly money?

Marion: Yes, the server didn't notice; it was the first day, after all. And there were some other people: a woman was arrested for using a 50-euro note she has scanned and printed on her computer...and a fellow in Germany used a 500-euro note that was actually a picture he had cut out of the paper!

Interviewer: Was he ever caught?

Marion: No, he's still at large... but that was at the beginning. But any true forgery or counterfeit won't be so simple. The notes have over 90 security features including raised print, a special thread, a hologram and a shiny strip that changes colour when moved.

Interviewer: The notes and coins are really quite attractive if you look at them closely.

Marion: Yes, aren't they? But the bright attractive colours of the notes are not there only for aesthetic reasons. There was close cooperation with the European Blind Union. They wanted to make sure that people with visual

impairments, with weak vision, would be able to tell the notes apart easily. About the coins, there was quite a protest about the first design of the coins. Several of them were quite similar in size and weight, a real problem for the blind.

Interviewer: So were they changed?

Marion: Yes, they were. And there are also various edges and textures to help distinguish among them.

Interviewer: Is the euro exactly the same everywhere?

Marion: The notes are. It was decided that differences would be confusing. Their design is actually very interesting, if you take a close look. They show pictures of the architectural styles of 7 periods in Europe's history, starting from classical Greek up to modern 20th century. Windows and gateways are shown on the front of the notes and bridges on the back.

Interviewer: What about the coins? Are they also identical?

Marion: No, the coins have national symbols on one side that differ from country to country.

Interviewer: Really, like what, for example?

Marion: Oh, a lot of them have portraits of kings, queens and the like. There are some interesting ones: the Irish have the Irish harp, Italy has classical designs by Leonardo da Vinci and others. Some of the Greek ones are interesting, like the Athenian owl from an ancient coin. By the way, I wouldn't want to make a bet by tossing one of those coins.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Marion: It's been proven by a Polish mathematician that the coins are not symmetrical. They're a bit top-heavy.

Interviewer: So what happens?

Marion: So it's a bit more likely to fall on the heads side than on the tails side.

Interviewer: Right. I suppose I'll have to find another way of making important decisions since I can't toss a coin any longer ...!