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ICA key messages on cash and the coronavirus

- Banknotes and coins do not pose a particular risk of infection for the public.
- Several central banks, the experts on cash, see no evidence for banknotes transmitting the virus (e.g. [Deutsche Bundesbank](#)).
- The same goes for medical experts, e.g. Prof Jürgen Haas, the head of infection medicine at the University of Edinburgh or Dr Christine Tait-Burkard, an expert in infection and immunity at the Roslin Institute at the University of Edinburgh. Their view is being confirmed by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and the German Robert-Koch-Institute, both of which say that no reports of infections from contact with dry surfaces are known for corona viruses.
- The risk of picking up coronavirus via cash is extremely minimal. The probability of becoming ill from handling cash is smaller than from many other objects used in everyday life.
- There is no evidence that banknotes are more strongly contaminated than any other surface and the dominating opinion among medical experts is that the virus is not being transmitted by banknotes. To single out banknotes is random.
- The ICA is concerned by the rise of misinformation regarding the use of banknotes and coins as the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continue to unfold. Despite some reports that they could risk spreading the virus, the dominating opinion among experts is that cash does not transmit COVID-19.

ICA key references on cash and the corona virus

- Bundesbank Executive Board member Johannes Beermann has indicated that the risk of picking up coronavirus via cash is extremely minimal. In a press briefing at the Bundesbank, Mr Beermann noted that “the probability of becoming ill from handling cash is smaller than from many other objects used in everyday life”. “Banknotes and coins do not pose a particular risk of infection for the public.”
(<https://www.bundesbank.de/en/tasks/topics/cash-poses-no-particular-risk-of-infection-for-public-828762>)
- René Gottschalk, infectiologist and head of the Frankfurt am Main Health Office, does not consider there to be any risk of transmitting coronavirus via banknotes. “In principle, it is entirely irrelevant how long pathogens can survive on surfaces. What is decisive is whether it is an infection channel,” he explained at the press briefing. He saw no such infection channel as existing for banknotes. In addition, banknotes’ physical properties meant that they did not particularly lend themselves to transmitting pathogens. “Coronavirus is mainly spread by infected droplets transmitted by coughing, sneezing or also talking,” Mr Gottschalk added.
(<https://www.bundesbank.de/en/tasks/topics/cash-poses-no-particular-risk-of-infection-for-public-828762>)
- So far, there is no evidence that the corona virus is being transmitted via banknotes,” said an ECB spokesperson when asked by the German daily, the Tagesspiegel

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wirtschaft/coronavirus-durch-bargeld-uebertragbar-china-zieht-wegen-covid-19-geldscheine-ein/25588432.html>).

- The German Bundesbank points out that the Euro system regularly carries out investigations into whether the production or circulation of euro banknotes may have an impact on public health – also in the virus related. It said there is no evidence of cases of coronavirus being spread via euro banknotes and added that ‘the probability of contagion with a virus via a banknote is very low in comparison with other surfaces’, and that door handles, hand rails, light switches and shopping baskets are more likely to spread viruses (<https://metro.co.uk/2020/03/03/avoid-cash-stop-coronavirus-spreading-world-health-organisation-warns-12344199/>)

Medical experts:

- The primary transmission route is via droplets,” says Prof Jürgen Haas, the head of infection medicine at the University of Edinburgh. “These droplets are generated by coughing, and can directly infect another person via airborne infection, or by transmission via hands or other surfaces.”
(<https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2020/mar/03/from-banknotes-to-handrails-10-objects-that-help-spread-coronavirus>)
- Although coronavirus can be transmitted via inanimate objects, the odds of contracting it in this way are low. “The amount of virus that is potentially on an inanimate object is usually very small,” says Dr Christine Tait-Burkard, an expert in infection and immunity at the Roslin Institute at the University of Edinburgh in the Guardian. She explains that there typically wouldn’t be much coronavirus on a person’s fingertips, and it would still have to get past your respiratory system to infect you. “Your respiratory system is very good at filtering out viruses,” Tait-Burkard says. According to her, the risk of contracting the virus is small “unless someone is using a bank note to sneeze in,” Tait-Burkard says. And she says “Coins are actually very bad environments for viruses to survive.” (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2020/mar/03/from-banknotes-to-handrails-10-objects-that-help-spread-coronavirus>)
- The German Robert Koch Institute, the government’s central scientific institution in the field of biomedicine and one of the most important bodies for the safeguarding of public health in Germany) states that transmission via inanimate surfaces has not yet been documented. The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) confirms that no reports of infections from contact with dry surfaces are known for other corona viruses <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wirtschaft/coronavirus-durch-bargeld-uebertragbar-china-zieht-wegen-covid-19-geldscheine-ein/25588432.html>

Other resources:

- ICA: <https://currencyassociation.org/article/who-banknotes-do-not-carry-the-coronavirus/>
- ICA: <https://currencyassociation.org/article/deutsche-bundesbank-cash-poses-no-particular-risk-of-infection-for-public/>
- Cash Matters: <https://www.cashmatters.org/blog/no-cash-does-not-carry-the-coronavirus/>