International Post Corporation

Affordable postage

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Deutsche Post's recent comparative survey on letter mail prices in Europe shows that sending a letter in Germany is an inexpensive matter overall. Even accounting for major economic factors such as labor costs, purchasing power, inflation and the working hours that go into the price of posting a letter, the German postage rate of 80 cents for a standard letter is among the cheapest in Europe. The survey looked at letter mail prices in the 27 EU member states as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the UK, which left the EU in 2020.

A comparison of the purely nominal letter mail prices in Europe shows that at 80 cents for a standard letter sent within Germany, Deutsche Post offers postage well below the European average of €1.16 and thus ranks in the lower midfield. In 19 European states, including the large countries of France, Italy and the UK, letter mail rates are higher - quite significantly in some cases. In Italy, for example, the price for the "Posta1" service, which provides next-day delivery similar to Germany's standard letter rate, is €2.80. "Poste Italiane" advertises Posta1 to include basic tracking, but this is also available with the matrix code stamp that Deutsche Post launched in February this year at the usual standard rate. At €3.88, the most expensive letter mail price is still charged in Denmark, while the cost of posting a letter in Malta remains unrivalled at just 30 cents. The Estonian post office has raised its postage rate particularly drastically from 65 cents to €1.50, making for an increase of 130%.

Nominal letter mail prices have increased by 53% over a five-year period in Europe overall. Finland leads the field, having increased the price of its standard letter by 179% since 2016. But in contrast, no price adjustments have been introduced in Italy, Croatia, Cyprus or Switzerland in the last five years. Germany raised its letter mail rate by just 14% over the same period, which gives it the fifth cheapest rank along with Luxembourg.

Even after adjusting for differences in labor costs and purchasing power, only in the four far smaller European countries of Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and Switzerland the postage is still below the German letter price. In addition to the price of a standard letter, sending cross-border mail to another country in Europe has also become more expensive when compared with prices last year. 16 countries have increased their rates for letters within Europe, raising the average price to €1.73. In Germany, letter mail within Europe costs €1.10, also placing this postage rate well

below the average. In only five of the countries surveyed the price for letter mail within Europe is cheaper than in Germany.

As every year, the current study on European letter prices adjusts the postage for inflation over the last ten years. From this perspective, since 2011 letter mail has become 79.11% more expensive in the countries covered in the survey. In comparison, the German letter price rose by only 29.4 per cent in the same period, taking inflation into account. This puts the price for a standard letter in Germany in 21st place, ranking it in Europe's lower field. With an inflation-adjusted price increase of more than 300% in the last 10 years, Italy takes the lead.

In its 20th edition, the Deutsche Post letter mail price survey also uses the example of an industrial worker to show the number of minutes that need to be worked in each country to be able to pay for a standard letter postage. This gives an insight into how affordable the postage rate actually is. Germany has the cheapest letter mail price after Switzerland and Malta, the latter being the most affordable - a worker only has to work 1.44 minutes to earn enough to buy a stamp. With the European average at 4.24 minutes, at 9.76 minutes Estonia has the least affordable rate.

Source: Deutsch Post DHL Group

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