Postal Addressing Systems

UPU | UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

International addressing

Address elements

The International Bureau is currently compiling a list of all the elements that may be included in international addresses, on the basis of model addresses collected from all the UPU member countries.

The list of international address elements will include, for each element:

– the unique code for the element;

– the name of the element;

– the definition of the element;

– specific examples from several different countries, showing different ways of using the element.

This list will form an integral part of a UPU standard that includes, for each country, a formal description of the structure of the country's model addresses. This formal description, supplied in natural language and in other languages (XML, etc.) will therefore include, for each country and each address type:

– the position of each address element on a line;

– information on whether the element is mandatory or optional;

– layout rules describing, among other things, the conditions under which:

  • a logical line may be divided into two physical lines;

  • two logical lines may be compressed into one physical line;

  • words that may be abbreviated, etc.

The formal description of the structures of countries' model addresses will not be included in this brochure, but will be the subject of a separate publication within the framework of the UPU standards.

A first version of this standard was published in 2003. An updated version is currently available under the reference "S42–6: International postal address components and templates" in the UPU Technical Standards Manual.

The standard includes a formal description of the structures of model addresses for some sixteen countries.

To receive detailed information, please contact us at our e-mail address:

postcode@upu.int

Formatting an international address

The formatting of the address on an international item is dictated by the recommendations issued by the countries of origin and destination of the item. More specifically, the part of the address indicating the destination country is dictated by the recommendations of the country of origin, while the remainder is dictated by the recommendations of the destination country.[1]

On outward international items, the **name of the country** of destination must **always** be printed:

–   on the *last line* of address;

–   in *capital letters*;

–   *preferably in the language of the dispatching country* or in an internationally recognized language.

Characters

Article RL 123.3.3 of the UPU Letter Post Regulations clearly defines the rules governing the character sets to be used in international addresses: "The addressee's address shall be worded in a precise and complete manner. It shall be written very legibly in roman letters and Arabic numerals. If other letters and figures are used in the country of destination, it shall be recommended that the address be given also in these letters and numerals. The name of the place of destination and the name of the country of destination shall be written in capital letters together with the correct postcode number or delivery zone number, if any. The name of the country of destination shall be written preferably in the language of the country of origin. To avoid any difficulty in the countries of transit, it is desirable for the name of the country of destination to be added in an internationally known language. Administrations may recommend that, on items addressed to countries where the recommended position of the postcode should be preceded by the EN ISO 3166-1 Alpha 2 country code followed by a hyphen. This shall in no way detract from the requirement for the name of destination country to be printed in full"

Example 1:   the address of an item posted in Great Britain to the United Arab Emirates will therefore, in principle, be written once in roman characters and once in Arabic characters:

MR. OMAR HUSSAIN	السيد عمر حسين
P.O. BOX 111	ص.ب. 111
DUBAI	دبي
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	الإمارات العربية المتحدة

Example 2:   the address of an item posted in Poland to Germany will contain the name of the destination country in Polish. To avoid any difficulty in any countries of transit, the name of the destination country will also be included in English, or another internationally known language:

Herrn
Erich Müller
Goethestr. 13
22767 HAMBURG
NIEMCY – GERMANY

It is important to keep the elements needed for the item's proper transmission to the correct country ❶ clearly separate from those used for its delivery ❷.

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[1]   Please refer to the "Address formats by country" chapter for countries' recommendations concerning the formatting of an address.

Using the example above:

Herrn	❷
Erich Müller	❷
Goethestr. 13	❷
22767 HAMBURG	❷
NIEMCY – GERMANY	❶

In conclusion, we would therefore recommend that:

– you write addresses in roman letters and Arabic numerals; if other letters and numerals are used in the destination country, the address should also be written using these letters and numerals;

– you comply with the recommendations of the postal authority of the country in which you post your items as regards indication of the destination country (element ❶);

– you follow the recommendations of the destination country's postal authority for the remainder of the address (elements ❷);

– you always write the name of the destination country in one of the languages used in the country in which you post your items; if this language is not an internationally known language, you should add the name of the destination country in an internationally known language.

Position of the address on the envelope

Correct positioning of the address is necessary in order to:

– enable rapid optical reading of the addressee's address;

– facilitate manual, automatic sorting and delivery.

The area reserved for the addressee's address is on the front of the item:

– at least **15 mm** from the right-hand edge;

– at least **15 mm** from the bottom edge;

– at least **40 mm** (tolerance 2 mm) from the top edge;

– **140 mm** at most from the right-hand edge.

No wording or extraneous matter is to appear:

– **to the right** of the address;

– **below** the address;

– **to the left** of the address, in an area at least **15 mm** wide and running from the first line of the address to the bottom edge of the item;

– in an area **15 mm high** starting from the bottom edge of the item and **140 mm long** starting from the right-hand edge of the item; this area may be partly identical with those defined above.

These values are **those defined by the UPU** and set out in the Letter Post Regulations, article RL 128 "Standardized items". Each country may adapt these values, taking care not to exceed the limits.
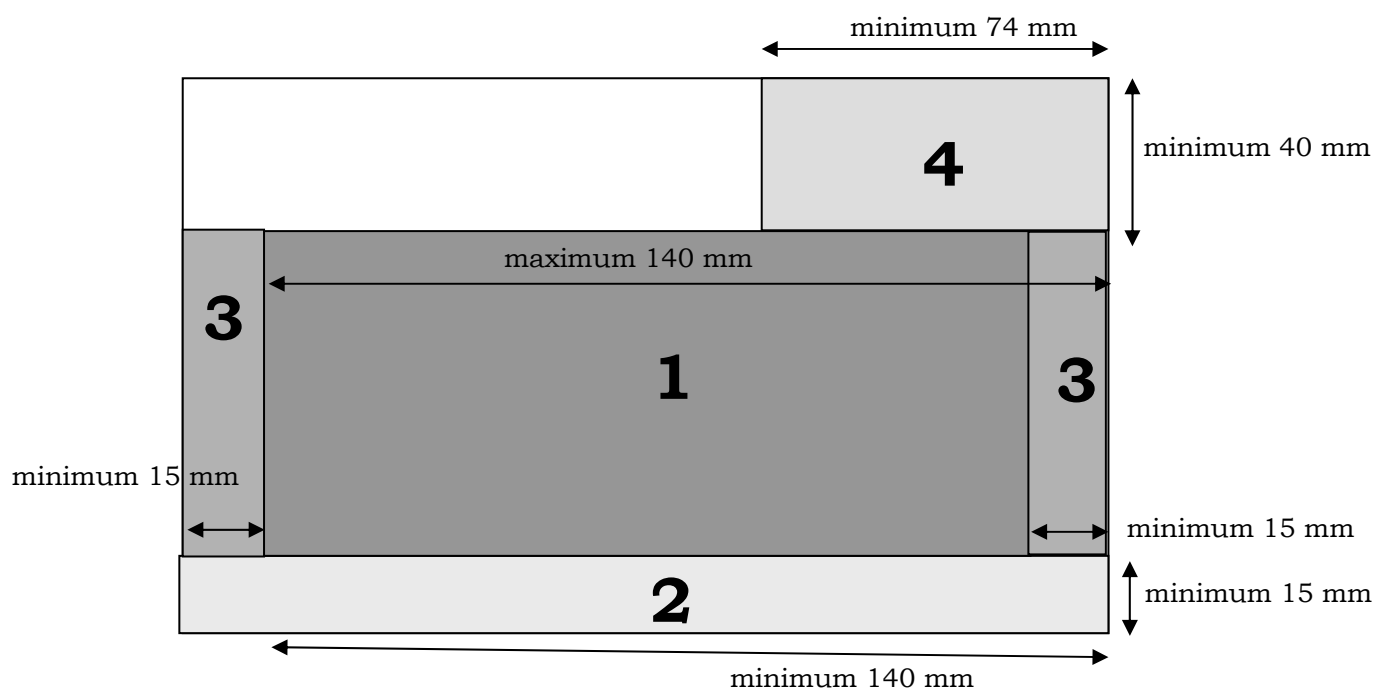
1 addressee's address area;

2 indexing or coding area (leave blank);

3 address detection area (leave blank);

4 area reserved for prepayment and cancellation.