



**UPU**

UNIVERSAL  
POSTAL  
UNION

---

---

# **Philatelic Code of Ethics for the use of UPU member countries**

**Recommendation C 13/2016**

**Philatelic Code of Ethics for the use of UPU member countries**

Congress,

Referring to:

- article 6 of the Universal Postal Convention, which establishes the status of the postage stamp;
- article RL 115 of the Letter Post Regulations, which specifies the characteristics of postage stamps and postal prepayment impressions; and
- the Philatelic Code of Ethics adopted by the 24th Congress under recommendation C 26/2008,

Recognizing

that postage stamps continue to have a commercial value when used for philatelic purposes,

Also recognizing

that the Philatelic Code of Ethics as adopted by the Bucharest Congress has provided valuable guidance to the issuing postal authorities of UPU member countries in maximizing the value of postage stamps to collectors and issuing postal authorities,

*Reaffirms*

its commitment to the production of high quality, ethical stamps, and to a vibrant philatelic market,

*Recommends*

that all issuing postal authorities observe the procedures set out in the annexed revised Philatelic Code of Ethics when issuing and supplying postage stamps and philatelic products.

(Proposal 07, Committee 4, 3rd meeting)

**Philatelic Code of Ethics for the use of UPU member countries**

The Philatelic Code of Ethics for the use of member countries comprises the following recommendations:

- 1 Issuing postal authorities creating philatelic products shall ensure that the use of the postage stamps and other means of denoting payment of postage does not lead to the creation of such postal products as would not result from the exercise of proper postal procedures.
  - 1.1 Philatelic products within the scope of this code include, but are not limited to:
    - postage stamps, as defined in article 6 of the Universal Postal Convention;
    - cards and first day covers;
    - presentation packs and albums;
    - stamp yearbooks;
    - envelopes with embossed or pre-cancelled/pre-printed stamps;
    - cachets for special occasions and events and related products;
    - stamps with surcharges.
  - 1.2 Other means of indicating payment (e.g. franking marks, postage paid indicia and other labels) are permitted in accordance with article 6 of the Universal Postal Convention, but are not considered to be postage stamps.
- 2 Issuing postal authorities shall not authorize such use of cancellation dies, hand stamps or other official informative or operational markings as would not result from the exercise of proper postal procedures.
  - 2.1 Issuing postal authorities shall not permit the use of such cancelling or marking devices by persons other than their own employees.
  - 2.2 In certain exceptional cases, and provided that direct supervision is exercised by their employees, issuing postal authorities may authorize the use of these cancelling or marking devices by persons other than their own employees.
  - 2.3 Where issuing postal authorities contract out part of their operational activity and in particular cancellation, the contract shall specify that the cancelling and marking devices shall be used for operational purposes only and in strict accord with the proper postal procedures of the issuing postal authority concerned, which shall ensure that this rule is strictly observed.
- 3 In the sale of products for philatelic purposes incorporating postage stamps, issuing postal authorities shall ensure that the handling of the postage stamp itself and the use of cancellation dies, hand stamps, cachets and other marking devices is in conformity with their respective postal procedures.
- 4 For each issue of postage stamps, issuing postal authorities shall ensure that these are printed in sufficient quantity to meet potential operational requirements and foreseeable philatelic needs. In employing cancellation dies, hand stamps and cachets for special occasions or events, issuing postal authorities shall ensure that a sufficient quantity of philatelic products is available to meet requirements. Although issuing postal authorities may not be able to make every stamp issue available from every outlet, they must nonetheless make sure that their customers and philatelists are well-informed at all times where each postage stamp issue is available for postal and philatelic purposes.
  - 4.1 Issues of postage stamps depicting particular regions of a country or territory may be produced, so long as they comply with the requirements of this Code of Ethics and that customers and philatelists are well-informed at all times of their availability for postal purposes.
  - 4.2 Issuing postal authorities shall take care to ensure that they issue stamps which help meet market demands. They shall ensure that the number of stamps issued each year is limited to that which their market will accept. If policies are still to be decided, issuing postal authorities should respond cautiously to market demand to avoid oversupply. They shall not saturate the market and thus drive philatelists and collectors away from the hobby.

5 In choosing themes, logos, emblems and other design elements for their issues of postage stamps, issuing postal authorities shall, at all times, respect intellectual property rights.

6 If issuing postal authorities offer their customers personalized stamps, they shall establish a legal framework to protect the latter's status, in accordance with their national law.

7 Whilst issuing postal authorities have no control over the use of postage stamps or articles entrusted to the postal service for postal purposes once they have been sold, they shall nevertheless:

7.1 Not support or acquiesce in any artifice intended to enhance sales of their postage stamps or products incorporating postage stamps by suggesting a potential scarcity of these products.

7.2 Avoid any action which might be taken as declaring approval of or conferring official status on products of unofficial origin incorporating postage stamps.

7.3 In the event that they appoint agents to market their philatelic products, instruct such agents to observe the same procedures and practices as those of the issuing postal authorities themselves, and to respect the provisions of the Philatelic Code of Ethics and of the issuing postal authority's national postal legislation. Issuing postal authorities shall not permit agents to operate or alter their proper postal procedures nor to control philatelic procedures.

7.4 Specifically prohibit the sale or disposal by their agents of their postage stamps or products incorporating postage stamps below face value. In remunerating their agents, issuing postal authorities shall obviate as far as possible any need for agents to sell postage stamps or philatelic products incorporating postage stamps above face value. Due allowance may be made for national or local variations in sales and other taxes which may be pertinent, including at international philatelic exhibitions.

7.5 Retain full responsibility for the printing and delivery of postage stamps and related philatelic products, either directly, or by making sure that all contractual obligations are fully respected and fulfilled by the agent, in order to avoid any misunderstanding between partners.

7.6 Establish separate contractual provisions for the printers entrusted with producing the stamps and the agents responsible for marketing them.

7.7 Award the printing of postage stamps only to security printers that have signed up to the Code of Ethics for postage stamp security printers and that have achieved or undertaken to achieve certification as a security printer, while abiding by public procurement practices (where applicable).

8 Issuing postal authorities shall not produce postage stamps or philatelic products that are intended to exploit customers.

8.1 In this spirit, issuing postal authorities shall not produce any abusive issues of postage stamps or philatelic products. Any issue that has one or more of the following features shall be regarded as abusive:

- A philatelic issue whose theme is a subject totally contrary to article 6, paragraph 5, of the definition of a postage stamp, i.e. alien to the culture of the issuing member country or territory, and which cannot be considered as contributing to "the dissemination of culture or to maintaining peace".
- A programme and issue whose quantity far exceeds the acceptable limits for philatelic issues as defined in point 4 of this Code of Ethics, particularly 4.2. That is, where the number of annual issues is unrelated to the actual market capacity, whether for postal prepayment or for stamp collection, of the member country or territory concerned.

8.2 On the proposal of the International Bureau, and with the approval of the relevant Union body, abusive issues may be reported on the WNS website. These incidents should be reported in a form proposed by the International Bureau and approved by the relevant Union body following the Istanbul Congress.

9 Issuing postal authorities shall acknowledge in all their philatelic activities that, while their stamps represent symbols of national identity and culture, such stamps retain a secondary value beyond face value only because philatelists and collectors choose to purchase them. Issuing postal authorities pledge to abide by this code of conduct in order to ensure the long-term survival of the philatelic market in each country.