

The Europa stamps (also known as Europa CEPT stamps) © bpost

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The Europa stamps (also known as Europa CEPT stamps) are an annual joint issue by European postal administrations, intended to highlight the cultural and historical ties between European countries. They have existed since 1956, when the Council of Europe took the initiative to create a series of stamps that would promote a common European identity.

What exactly are Europe stamps?

Joint themed issue: Each year, the participating countries choose a single common theme (e.g. 'Europe and nature', 'Children's books', 'Architecture', 'Peace').

Individual design per country: Each country designs its own stamp within that theme, resulting in a rich variety of styles and interpretations.

Origin: The idea stems from the same European unification movement that also led to the European flag (1955), designed by the Council of Europe.

Aim: To highlight European cooperation through philately — a kind of 'cultural embassy' on a postage stamp.

Historical context

The Europe stamps emerged during the same period in which Europe was seeking symbols of unity following the Second World War. The Council of Europe introduced the European flag in 1955, and the first joint postage stamps followed a year later. The flag itself symbolises unity, solidarity and harmony — values that are also reflected in the Europe stamps.

Themes and design traditions — Some typical themes over the years:

Europe and nature

European music

Children's books

Historical routes

Cultural heritage

Peace and cooperation

Many countries use well-known artists or national symbols to interpret the theme in their own designs. This makes European stamps popular with collectors who enjoy collecting complete annual sets or stamps from all countries within a single theme.

Why European stamps are popular with collectors

Wide scope for collecting: You can collect by year, by theme or by country.

Strong cultural value: They show how different countries interpret a single idea visually.

Historical continuity: Issued every year since 1956, making them a wonderful historical record.

Variety of printing techniques: Intaglio, offset, combination printing — often of high quality.

The history of the Euro stamps is surprisingly rich and well documented. Below you'll find a complete, chronological overview — exactly as you'd like it: clear, structured and with precise dates.

Origins (1956–1959): European unity in the making

The first Europa stamps were issued on 15 September 1956. Six ECSC countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Italy and West Germany) released a common design: a tower formed from the letters 'EUROPA', surrounded by scaffolding — a symbol of a Europe 'under construction'.

This design was created by Daniel Gonzague (France).

CEPT period (1959–1992): European postal cooperation

In 1959, the CEPT (Conférence Européenne des Administrations des Postes et des Télécommunications) was established. From 1960 onwards, the CEPT logo appeared on all joint European stamps.

1956–1973: Common design

During this period (with the exception of 1957), all participating countries used a single, identical design each year. Examples:

1964 – Floral motif (5th anniversary of the CEPT)

1969 – Temple motif (10th anniversary of CEPT)

1984 – Bridge motif (25th anniversary of CEPT)

1974–1992: Common theme

From 1974, the system was changed:

No longer a uniform design,

but a single theme, which each country was free to interpret.

This led to an explosion of creativity and a sharp increase in the number of participating countries (to 35 in the 1980s).

PostEurop period (1993–present): Modernisation and expansion

In 1993, PostEurop took over the organisation, as CEPT was now focusing on telecommunications. The CEPT logo disappeared and was replaced by a new EUROPA logo that slopes diagonally to the right — a symbol of progress.

Key innovations

2000: a new common design (Schuman Declaration, new millennium).

2002: launch of the annual 'Best Europa Stamp' competition.

2007: the public is allowed to vote for their favourite Europa stamp.

2011: new logo featuring a stylised postbox.

Today, more than 60 postal administrations take part.

Visual evolution of Europe stamps

Why this history is important for collectors

1956–1961 are the most sought-after and valuable years.

From the 1970s onwards, most issues are less valuable, but of philatelic interest due to their variety.

The transition from a common design to a common theme makes it a fascinating area of collecting with clearly defined time periods.

♥ So what are these black-and-white European stamps? (known as ZW/NB – Black-White) © bpost

See also: (these are not part of this series but are presented separately on this website under ▼)

[— ZW/NB:-Reeks - Série - Series / Inhoud-Sommaire-Content / ZW/NB-ZNP, ZNE, GCA, GCB, GCD: —Zwart-wit velletjes—Noir-blanc feuillets—Black-white small sheets - / Extra 🇳🇱🇫🇷🇪🇳 | postzegelalbum-be](#)

There are also the black-and-white sheets issued annually with a theme relevant to Europe, dating from 1987 (1st = black-and-white sheets of stamps 2251/52). Although these stamps do not bear the Europa logo, the sheet itself is marked 'Europa'.

These black-and-white Europa sheets form a distinctive and often overlooked part of the annual issues. Whilst they are not officially CEPT-labelled, they do bear the 'EUROPA' inscription and follow the annual theme.

From 1987 onwards, the Belgian Post (then still known as PTT) began issuing black-and-white miniature sheets containing that year's Europa-related stamps. They are printed in black-and-white offset on white paper, usually with a central 'EUROPA' title and the postal logos of Belgium and CEPT/PostEurop.

The first sheet (1987) featured stamps nos. 2251/2252, with the theme 'Modern Architecture'. This was followed by new sheets every year, each reflecting the current Europa

📄 Characteristics

Description	Characteristics	
Belgian Post (later bpost)	Publisher	
From 1987 to the present (with a few interruptions)	Period	
Black-and-white offset, sometimes with light shades of grey	Print run	
Usually approx. 120 × 80 mm	Format	
2 Europa stamps of the year	Content	
Belgian postal logo on the left, CEPT/PostEurop logo on the right	Logos	
'EUROPA' centred beneath the stamps	Title	
Philatelists — not intended for postage	Target audience	

📄 Philatelic status

These sheets are considered non-postal but official philatelic issues. They appear in Belgian yearbooks and are included in specialist catalogues such as OBP/COB (Official Stamp Catalogue / Catalogue Officiel des timbres-Poste). In Michel and Yvert & Tellier, they are usually listed as souvenir sheets or presentation sheets.

💡 Collectors' value

Limited print run → often only a few thousand copies.

Complete series (1987–present) → sought after by Belgian thematic collectors.

Aesthetic value → minimalist design, striking contrast with the array of coloured stamps.

 Example: Black-and-white 1987 Euro sheet

The first small sheet features the two Belgian Euro stamps from 1987 on the theme of Modern Architecture — the Palace of Justice in Antwerp and the Tower Building in Brussels. It is the first in the series and marks the beginning of this tradition.

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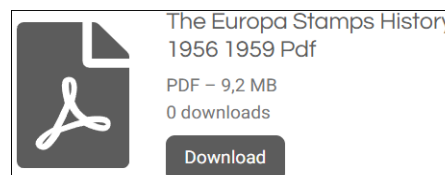
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[intro 5: Contact - suggesties - appreciaties / Intro](#)



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MZ