

# Computer labels in The Netherlands

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In the United States and other countries computer labels have been around for quite some time. Market leader is Stamps.com, followed by Endicia.com and E-Stamp. In The Netherlands a humble start was made in 2000, but in recent years the use of these labels on envelopes has increased. The system is easy to handle. A customer can subscribe via a contract with PostNL and print the labels at home with his own computer. The amount is automatically withdrawn from one's bank account. All in all this package is pretty expensive for small amounts of mail, but businesses with larger quantities of mail use them. From a philatelic point of view these computer labels are interesting in the Netherlands, because their development goes hand in hand with the four consecutive postal organisations. First there was PTT POST, previously owned by the State, but turned into a private postal organisation. In 2002 this organisation merged to become TPG POST, which in its turn changed to TNT post in 2006. Finally PostNL was created in 2010 to handle packages and letters (TNT post went on to handle express mail packages exclusively).

The abbreviations stand for:

PTT = Post, Telegraaf, Telefoon (= Post, Telegraph, Telephone)

TPG = TNT Post Groep (= TNT Post Group)

TNT = Thomas Nationwide Transport (originally an Australian based company)

PostNL = Post The Netherlands

As the names of these postal organisations can be identified on the computer labels during the past 12 years, I want to take you along this path of recent postal history.

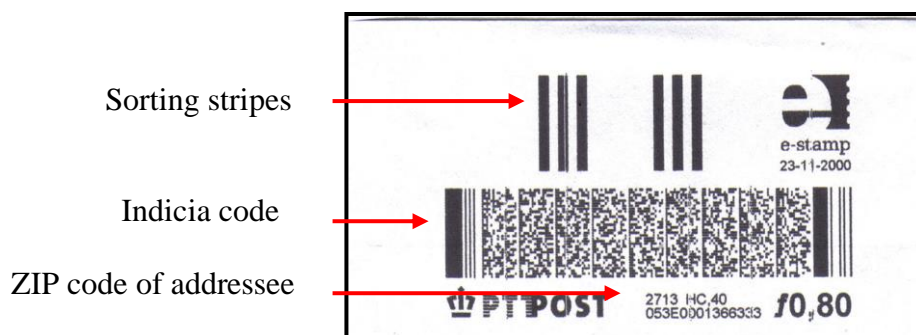
## 1. PTTPOST

In 2000 and 2001 four pilots were held on a modest scale with business and private partners, who could register to participate and report about their experiences with the computer labels. All pilots have been aborted after some time.

*Picture #1* shows a label dated 23-11-2000 of the first pilot by the American company E-stamp.

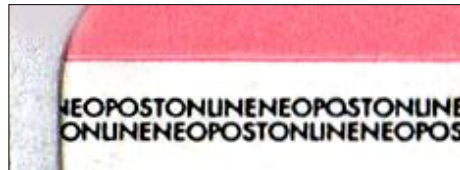
The six vertical stripes above identify this kind of franking in the electronic sorting process of the mail. The strip with the many stripes below is the Indicia two dimensional code. It may contain information such as denomination, date, origin zip code, mail class, credit card number of the customer, destination, confirmation/tracking numbers, etc. *See also Karim Roder's account about this topic in the 2007 Journal, page 180 and further.*

It is to be noted that in 2000 the rate for a domestic letter up to 20 grams on the E-stamps was *f.* 0,80, the *f* standing for *florin* (= the Dutch guilder).



#1: pilot E-stamp

Another company was Neopost "ProMail", offering self adhesive labels. Vertically on the left hand side is an endless repetition of the text NEOPOSTONLINE (*picture #1a*).



#1a: NEOPOSTONLINE

PTT POST chose for the EasyStamp program with the slogan **Likken wordt Klikken!** (= licking becomes clicking!). The introduction to the public was on **25-10-2001** (picture #2). It was available until 01-09-2009. The most remarkable change compared to the pilot labels is that the Indicia code now is a square, which consists of four smaller squares.

As of 1 January 2002 the Guilder was replaced by the Euro (€).



#2: licking becomes clicking

Misprints or variations are rare on computer labels. For instance, I have never seen a label without the Indicia code or without the vertical stripes. In the PTT POST-era I have found only one label with a mistake. On the label in picture #3 the €-sign is missing, 4½ month after the introduction of the euro..



#3: without €-sign

## 2. TPGPOST

On **1 May 2002** PTTPOST became TPGPOST and after some time this could be seen by the change of the postal logo on the computer labels such as the one of 30-08-2002 (picture #4). Some years later however I found a label dated 06-12-2006, still with the old PTTPOST logo (picture #5).



#4: TPGPOST



#5: PTTPOST in 2006

Some other variations could be found more frequently. It is unclear whether they were caused by a problem in the software or by the setting of the letter type or letter size by the customer. An example of such a variation is the mini letter type on a label dated 19-10-2003 (*picture #6*).



#6: mini-print

In another case something went wrong with the €-sign (• instead of €) in *picture #7*. This may have been caused by the closeness of both these symbols in the computer program. CTRL+ALT +127 creates the square • , CTRL+ALT +128 creates the euro sign €.



#7: • instead of €

More than once I found the remarkable misprint of the letter **a** instead of TPGPOST (*picture #8*). Also note, that in 'Nederland' the d and e are glued together.



#8: **a**

On a label of 06-04-2006 the print was shifted showing part of the print of the previous label (*picture #9*).



*#9: shifted print*

The letter size caused a problem on the label dated 03-01-2008 in *picture #10*. Apparently because of the large letter setting the text TPGPOST does not fit on the label. The ZIP code and the date are missing completely. On the label of 12-12-2008 in *picture #11* TPGPOST is missing completely.



*#10: TPGPOST printed half*



*#11: no TPGPOST*

If the sender types in a fantasy ZIP code of the addressee (0000 XX, 0) as on the label dated 06-04-2009 in *picture #12*, there does not seem to be a mechanism in the computer program that forbids or corrects this. Apparently the Indicia code accepts this.



*#12: fantasy ZIP code*

I found two labels on which the date and the postal code were illegible (to the right). Also notable is the wide text N e d e r l a n d without a space to the rates € 0,44 and € 0,88 (*picture 12a*).



*Afb.12a: illegible text*

Thus three types of the country name 'Nederland' are known:

#3

**Nederland**

#8

**Nederland**

#12a

**Nederland**



### 3. TNT post

The new organisation TNT post was created on 16 October 2006, but that name has never been programmed on the computer labels of EasyStamp. Almost three years the text TPGPOST stayed on the labels. On 1 September 2009 the program with the EasyStamp labels was terminated.

As of **1 September 2009** TNT post offered a new program. The customer prints the labels with a . DYMO printer. The labels are less wide than the previous ones (*picture #13*).



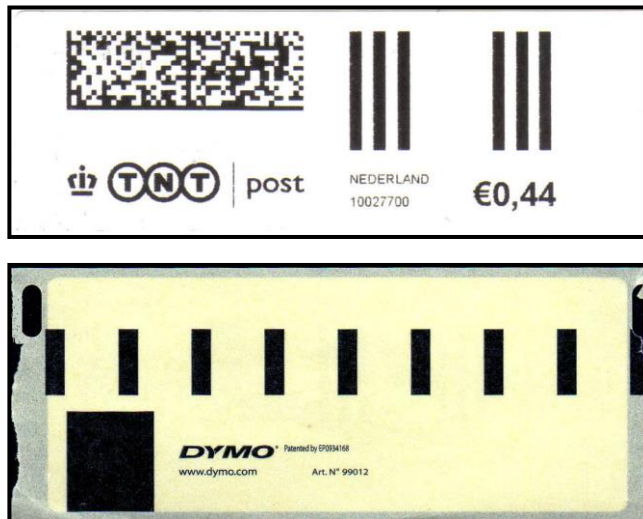
*#13: DYMO printer*



There are seven differences with the previous computer labels (*picture #14*):

- There is no date on the labels any more;
- The country name NEDERLAND is printed in capital letters;
- The number 10027700 below NEDERLAND is the customer number. All numbers start with 100, followed by the individual number of the customer;
- The ZIP code of the addressee is omitted;
- The space between the € -sign and the postal rate is gone (used to be € 0,39, now €0,44).

- The Indicia code consists of a rectangle, no more squares;
- For the first time the TNT post logo appears on the labels.



#14: TNT pos: front side and text on liner paper

Labels also appeared with PRIORITY print (picture #15)



#15: PRIORITY

In particular the fact that the date is not printed on the labels makes them less attractive for collectors. Moreover this program seems to be more reliable than the previous one. Up to now I have not yet found any misprints or variations. Only once I found a transparent label, on which the print has stuck without fading (picture #16).



#16: transparent

#### 4. PostNL

Since **31 May 2010** TNT post is divided in two new organisations: TNT post itself handles express packages and the new organisation PostNL handles packages and letters. The text on the computer labels was not adapted right away. A fellow collector documented the change from TNT post to PostNL in the first week of January 2012. *Picture #17* shows an envelope cancelled on 2 JAN 2012 with an old TNT post label, followed by the envelope in *picture #18*, cancelled on 6 JAN 2012 with the new PostNL logo.

Both labels have a denomination of € 0,50, which is the new rate as of 1 January 2012 for a domestic letter up to 20 grams.



#17: TNT post old



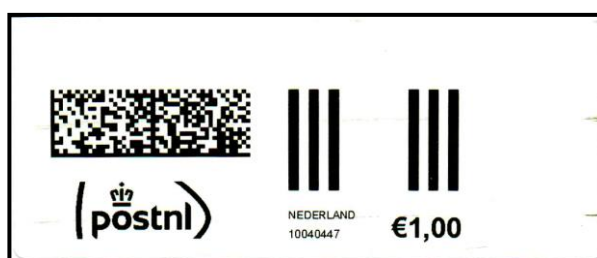
#18: PostNL new

Just like in the TNT Post-labels, the print PRIORITY appeared (picture #19).



#19: PRIORITY

In **October 2012** the text PostNL on the computer label was changed without prior notification to the PostNL logo, as pictured in the top left corner of the envelopes in pictures 15 and 16. Only the top and bottom of the logo have been cut off (picture 20).



#20: PostNL-logo

During the 2012 Christmas Season a special rate of €0,40 was applicable. The PostNL-logo is made smaller so that two stars and two Christmas trees fit in (picture 21). The date on the cancellation documents it as a Christmas label.



*#21: Christmas rate*

On **2 January 2013** the Christmas motive was replaced again by the normal PostNL-logo (*picture #22*). This is done on-line, without any influence by the customer. As of 1 January 2013 the domestic rate has gone up from €0,50 to €0,54.



*#22: new rate € 0,54*

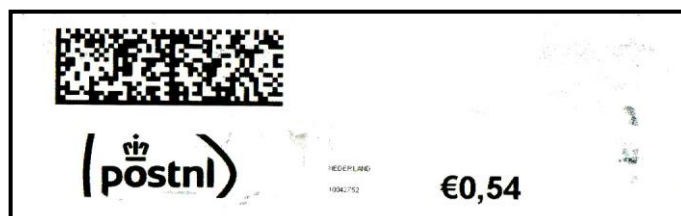


In the first half of 2013 I found a label with a mini letter and digit type (*picture #23*). I have never seen this type previously on TNT post and PostNL labels.



*#23: mini letter and digit type*

On a letter from August 2013 I found a fable with the same mini letter type, but on top of that the 2x three black vertical bars were missing (*picture 24*).





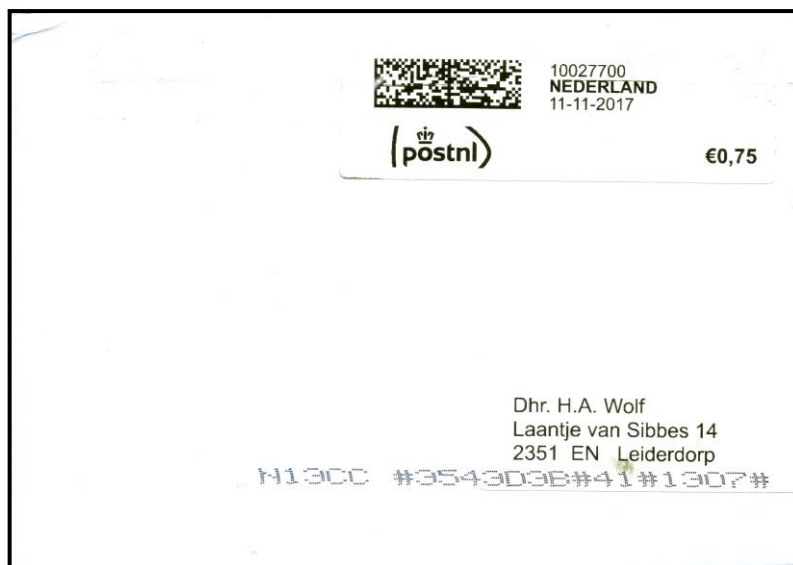
*#24: missing black vertical bars*

As of **1 January 2014** the rate for international mail is € 1,05. The PRIORITY-print as in pict.19 has not changed (*picture 25*).



*#25: PRIORITY-print*

On **11 November 2017** a new label design was introduced (*picture 26*). The date has returned on the labels. The domestic rate in the last two months of 2017 was € 0,75. As of 1 January 2018 it was € 0,80.



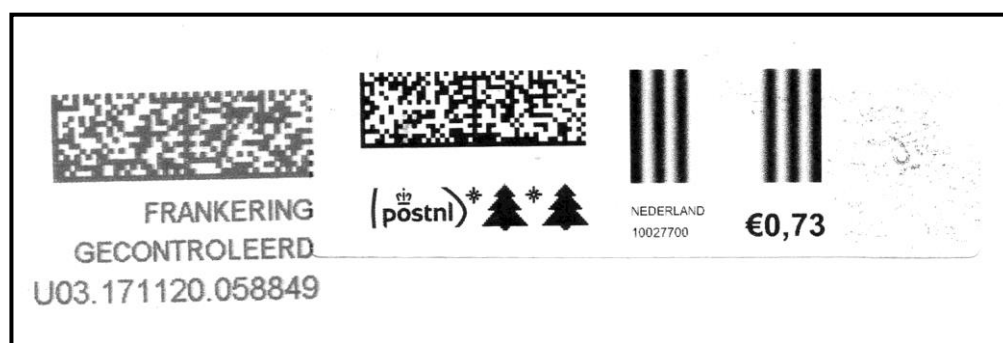
*#26: new labels*

The rate for international mail was: €1,33 in 2017 and €1,38 in 2018. It is remarkable that on the SPECIMEN-version of the new labels the date is printed, but not on the “real” labels, which come out of the printer upside down with the old version as in #25 (*picture 27*).



*#27: international rate*

On 15 November 2017 the Christmas Season rate was programmed again: €0,73, but again no new design: the same two christmas trees and two stars. Interesting though is the stamp to the left with the tekst FRANKERNG GECONTROLEERD (= postage checked). The label itself does not have a date, but the stamp does: 171120 stands for 20 November 2017 (*picture 28*).



*#28: Kersttarief 2017*

Since 2018 no new developments can be reported.

Hens Wolf, 22 November 2022