

Landlocked Countries: Alsace-Lorraine and the European Institutions in Strasbourg

by Geir Sør-Reime

Alsace-Lorraine, with the major city of Strasbourg, is the French border region to Germany, stretching the entire length of their joint border, from Luxembourg in the north to Switzerland in the south.

Alsace was occupied by German forces during the Franco-Prussian war 1870 and together with Lorraine it was incorporated into the new German Empire in early 1871. The German Imperial Territory of Alsace-Lorraine comprised most of the historic region of Alsace and a smaller part of the historic region of Lorraine, covering a total area of 5.597 square miles.

Provisional stamps were issued September 10, 1870 and these were used in the combined area until May 5, 1871. These provisional stamps carried no country name, just the word "POSTES" (posts) and the value in French centimes. For mail to France, they had to be used in combination with French stamps.



High and low values in 1870 Transitional issue in French currency (Sc. N1, N7, listed in Scott France section as "Franco-Prussian War, Issued Under German Occupation")

From May 1871 until 1916, ordinary German stamps were used. After WWI, the region was annexed to France December 5, 1918, and was formally ceded to France by the Treaty of Versailles, after which French stamps were used 1918-39.



1872 folded letter from Rappoltswiller to Aniane in Occupied Alsace-Lorraine with Germany 2 Groschen stamp

After the German invasion of France in May 1940, the area was re-incorporated with Germany in July 1940. As a provisional measure, German stamps overprinted Elsass (Alsace) were issued August 15, 1940, and German stamps overprinted Lothringen (Lorraine) were issued August 21, 1940. Both



Germany 1933 Hindenburg issue: Left, low value overprinted Elsass for Alsace (Sc. N27); right, high value overprinted Lothringen for Lorraine (Sc. N43-58)

sets were used until December 1941, when the region was fully integrated into Germany.

German stamps were then used until the Allied reconquest in late 1944. In 1945, France issued a single stamp for the liberation of Alsace and Lorraine.

On January 1, 2021, Alsace was made a European Collectivity covering 3,200 square miles as part of several measures to deepen the co-operation between France and Germany.

The capital of Alsace, Strasbourg, has been hosting important European institutions ever since 1920, when the seat of the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine was moved to Strasbourg.

After WWII, further institutions have been located to Strasbourg. The Council of Europe set up its headquarters in Strasbourg from 1949 onwards. Today, all European states are members of the Council. The Council of Europe decides several European conventions that are binding for the member states.

The Council of Europe has had its distinct service stamps since 1958.

Associated with the Council of Europe are several other institutions located in Strasbourg, including:

- The European Court of Human Rights (established 1959)
- The European Youth Center (established 1972)
- The European Audiovisual Observatory (established 1992)
- The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (established 2006)

The European Union, which currently has 26 member states is an economic, social, and political union, based on the 1957 Treaties of Rome and later treaties strengthening European integration.

The European Parliament, the elected parliamentary assembly of the European Union, has its plenary sessions in Strasbourg, whereas the committees of the parliament meet at the Parliament building in Brussels. The secretariat of the European Parliament is based in Luxembourg.

The European Parliament building in Strasbourg was featured on a 1998 French stamp, issued for the inauguration of the building.

There are several other European and international agencies and institutions located in Strasbourg, including agencies of the European Union; however, service stamps have only been provided for the Council of Europe. The first appeared January 14, 1958 and



1945 Liberation of Alsace and Lorraine (France Sc. 559)



1952, Council of Europe Assembly Hall, Strasbourg (France Sc. 679)



Inauguration of European Parliament building (prior to that, the European Parliament used the plenary hall of the Council of Europe for its plenary meetings) (France Sc. 2687)



was an overprint on a French 1957 stamp showing the Cathedral of Rouen.

In October 1958, the first stamps of the definitive issue featuring the flag of the Council of Europe, were released. An



1958 CoE flag, CoE Sc. 102, flag in ultramarine

Council of Europe (hereafter referred to as CoE) overprint on Sc. 854 (CeO Sc. 101)

additional stamp of this series, denominated in Old Francs, was issued in August 1959.

1969 Cover with CoE Sc. 1011 & 1014, Flag in ultramarine & yellow.



This series was re-issued with New Franc denominations in January 1963, with additional values added in 1965, 1969 and 1971.



Left, 1963 New Francs Sc. CoE 1010, flag in ultramarine; right, 1975 flag inscribed 'FRANCE' (CoE Sc. 1018)



In 1977, definitive stamps featuring the new Council of Europe building were issued. An additional value was added in 1980.



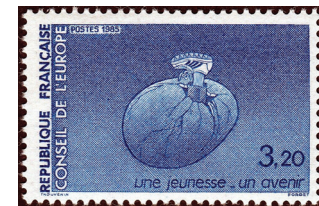
Left, 1977 new CoE building (CoE Sc. 1021); right, 1978 Human Rights commem, with Human Rights emblem (CoE Sc. 1023)



In 1978, the design of this series was re-used for the Council's first commemorative stamp, marking the 25th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Left, 1981-84 new CoE building (CoE Sc. 1031); right, Youth emerging from eggshell (CoE Sc. 1039)



From 1981 onwards, a new definitive series was issued, combining exterior and interior views of the new Council building.

In 1985, a foot breaking through a shell was the motif of three stamps, and the following year, a third definitive series

featuring the new Council building was issued, this time again showing a exterior view.



Left, 1986-87 new CoE building (CoE Sc. 1040); right, CoE 40th Anniversary, denomination also in European Currency Units, forerunner to Euros (CoE Sc. 1045)



The 40th anniversary of the Council of Europe was commemorated with two 1989 stamps showing stars, doves and a girl.

The 1990 definitive stamps featured a map of Europe, and in 1994, two stamps showing details of a work by Friedensreich Hundertwasser were issued.



Left, 1990-91 map of Europe (CoE Sc. 1050)



Right, 1996 Palace of Human Rights (CoE Sc. 1053)

The Palace of Human Rights, the seat of the European Court of Human Rights was depicted on two 1996 stamps, and in 1999, two stamps featured sculptures donated to the Council by member states.

Multiethnicity was the theme of two 2001 stamps, which in fact also were the last Council of Europe stamps denominated in Francs.

In 2003, the first Euro stamps appeared, two stamps entitled "Walking on Stars". Two similar symbolic stamps appeared in 2005, and again in 2007 (page 3).

The two 2009 stamps celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Council and the 50th anniversary

of the European Court of Human Rights, respectively. The 60th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights was marked with a 2010 stamp, and in 2011, the



Left, "36 Heads" by Hundertwasser (CoE Sc. 1051); right, 1999 sculptures, Charioteer of Delphi, (CoE Sc. 1056)



Left, 2001 multiethnicity (CoE Sc. 1058); right, 2003 walking on stars (CoE Sc. 1059)



2005 symbolic designs (CoE Sc. 1061-62)





2007 symbolic designs (CoE Sc. 1063-64)

50th anniversary of the European Social Charter was commemorated with a stamp. The 40th Anniversary of the European Youth Center was marked by a 2012 stamp.



Left, 2009, 60th anniversary Council of Europe, right, 50th anniversary European Court of Human Rights (CoE Sc. 1065-66)



Left to right: 2010 Symbolism, Tree forming roots; 60th Anniversary Human Rights Commission; 2011 50th Anniversary European Social Charter (CoE Sc. 1067-69)

A 2013 stamp focused on educating the citizens about democratic values with the balance between rights and responsibilities.

The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines celebrated its 5th anniversary in 2014 and a commemorative stamp was issued for this event. A stamp for the 60th anniversary of European cultural co-operation was issued at the same time.



Left, 2012 40th Anniversary of the European Youth Center; right, 2014 5th anniversary of the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (CoE Sc. 1070, 1072)



Left, 2014 60th anniversary of European cultural co-operation; right, 2015 60th anniversary of European flag (used by both the Council of Europe and the European Union). (CoE Sc. 1073-74)

In 2016, the European Social Charter was highlighted on a stamp, and in 2017, the 30th anniversary of the European Cultural Routes was celebrated with a stamp.

Left, 2016 European Social Charter (CoE Sc. 1075; right, 2017 30th anniversary of European cultural routes (CoE Sc. 1076)



The Pilgrimage Routes to Santiago de Compostella was the first European Cultural Route to be accredited

by the Council of Europe. The Hanseatic Route and the Viking Route are the two other still active routes accredited during the initial years of the program. Currently, I am myself secretary of the Viking Route, which is branded as Follow the Vikings.



2018 20th anniversary convention for protection of national minorities

The 20th anniversary of the European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was the theme of a



2019 70th anniversary of CoE

2018 stamp, and in 2019, stamps were issued for the



2019 60th anniversary of European Court of Human Rights



2020: left, 70th anniversary of European Convention on Human Rights; right, 25th anniversary of Palace of Human Rights



60th anniversary of the European Court of Human Rights and the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, whereas the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights and the 25th anniversary of building of the European Court of Human Rights were the subjects of the two 2020 stamps.

The latest Council of Europe stamp was issued October 1, 2021 and highlights the Council of Europe's efforts to defend the freedom of speech.

2021 CoE defends freedom of speech



**To Enjoy World of Stamps articles
by Geir Sør-Reime in every issue,
subscribe to Mekeel's & Stamps Online,
One Year, 24 issues for \$25.50
603-424-7556 or
subs@stampnewsnow.com**