

# Introduction to Spanish Thermal ATM Postage Labels & Their Varieties

CORREOS, the Spanish Postal Service, utilized thermally printed self-adhesive postage labels from 1992 to 2007 with 123 different pre-printed designs.

In Spain, these labels served the purpose for paying postage and related fees for the mailing needs of the general population.

Several billion of these labels were used during the time frame of the 1990's to 2007 (with a few smaller post offices still using up remaining labels later). Yet, few are seen in the USA, and the stamp catalog used most widely in the USA does NOT list these items since they are not deemed "stamps" (although that isn't quite true as will be shown in this exhibit).

At first glance (other than the pre-printed color designs), many of these labels appear very similar, however, there is quite a bit of complexity with these labels. As such, this exhibit is an "introductory" exhibit, designed to indoctrinate the viewer into the fascinating world of Spanish thermal ATM postage labels.

First and foremost, it is important to note that these postage labels can be divided into 3 distinct types of postage labels:

- 1) **ATM** (vending machine) postage labels, valid anytime, usable from anywhere within Spain. These were sold via "franking scales" operated by a postal clerk or by vending machines either inside or outside of the post office.
- 2) **PVI** (postage value indicated) postage labels, issued by a postal clerk and valid only on the date of issuance.
- 3) **Postage stamps** with pre-printed designs AND pre-printed denominations. These were sold over the counter by postal clerks and could be used anywhere and anytime within Spain.

Additionally, some of the labels were also used as registered mail labels.



*Of the 123 designs, 121 are fairly "common" based on the numbers printed. Most of these labels were printed in quantities of 45 to 250 million for each design.*

*The "Ibn Al-Abbar" design above is one of 2 designs of which only 100,000 copies each were printed and this one was available only in Madrid for a short time (October - December 1998).*

*The left label is an "ATM" version while the right one is a "PVI" version.*

This exhibit is an introduction to the Spanish ATM postage labels and their varieties, and will give the viewer a chance to see what is available to collect.

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←The angle of this imprint should NOT even be possible based on how labels rolls are mounted and the paper path in the machine!

## ATM - The Definition

This exhibit is about Spanish “**ATM**” postage labels.

Occasionally the word **ATM** can be a bit confusing depending on which side of the Atlantic you are.

In the USA, “**ATM**” is generally an abbreviation for “**Automated Teller Machine**”, meaning the machines at banks (or stand-alone locations) where you can do electronic banking, depositing checks & cash or for withdrawing funds.

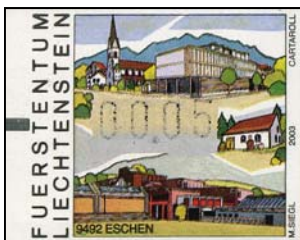
In a few instances, some bank teller machines do sell stamps. These are generally called “**ATM booklet panes**” here in the USA, for the main reason that they are the exact same size as standard US currency (6.125” x 2.625” or 155 mm x 66.5 mm) —>

In most other stamp collecting countries, “**ATM**” has a totally different meaning: it is actually the abbreviation for the German word “**Automatenmarken**”, which translates to “**Vending Machine Stamps**” in English!

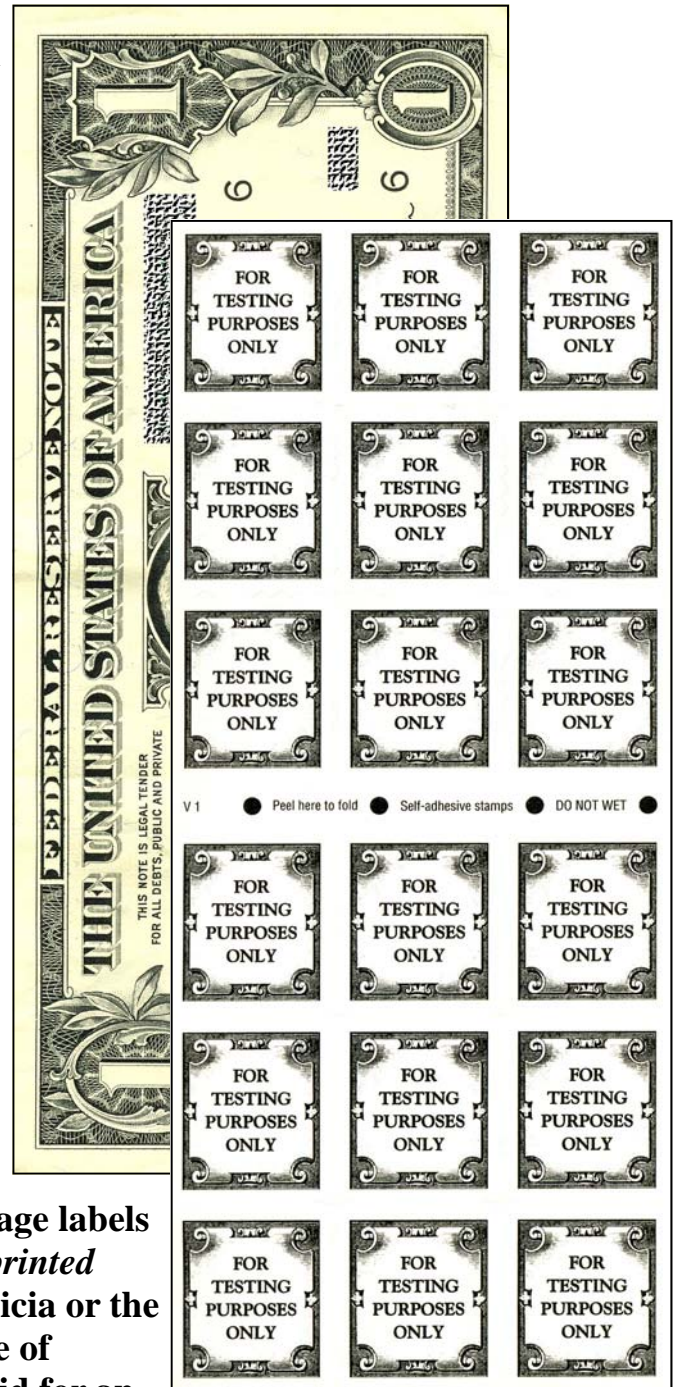
In some cases, **ATM stamps** are also referred to as “**Automatic stamps**” and in some cases the slightly more correct “**Automat Stamps**”. The former is partially a translation error from the German word “**Automat**” (meaning vending machine), and there’s nothing really “automatic” about the stamps themselves!

**Philatelically speaking, “ATM” stamps / postage labels refers to variable rate postage that can be printed on-demand from a machine where just the indicia or the entire label design is printed at the time of**

**purchase and that are valid for an indefinite amount of time.**



← Liechtenstein ATM postage label (from a “Frama” machine)



USA “For Testing Purposes Only”  
ATM Stamp Booklet Pane

# All Spanish ATM Postage Labels

The reduced size copy of the large Poster below from the Spanish “Ateeme” Collector Group takes up 9 pages in the actual exhibit, and shows all Spanish ATM stamps issued from 1989-2007, including both the thermal and impact printed ATM stamps.

Label number 1 is from a Swiss Frama machine.

The Labels numbered 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 13, 15 are from German Klüssendorf machines.

Labels 4, 7, 9 - 12, 14 and 16 - 132 are from the Spanish Epelsa & Mobba machines and are the ones discussed in this exhibit.



## The Machines

The Spanish thermal ATM postage labels were issued with 123 different designs similar to the way regular postage stamps are printed, except that the postage value and other information would be thermally printed at the time of sale.

The large poster nearby shows all known thermally printed ATM postage labels, as well as some earlier impact-printed ATM postage labels from the Frama & Klüssendorf machines.



Mfg. "EC-TB" with 4-digits



Franking machines for use by postal clerks.

Mfg. "Mobba"



Mfg. "Epelsa"

The above were the main manufacturers of the franking scales.



ATM machine for the public to use, model "LF 1100". Another model, "LF3100", that also incorporated a scale, was also available.

These "LF" model machines were installed starting in mid-2003 so that customers could buy small amounts of postage labels themselves without having to stand in line to buy them from a postal clerk.

The machines could only vend certain denomination postage labels and only accepted cash.

## The Machines - Epelsa ET-RL

The Epelsa model ET-RL is the most common of the franking scales.



*This "maximum card" shows the ET-RL series of franking scales and an ATM postage label from the city of Tarragona with a serial number in the 3000 range and showing the 5-digit "narrow" font.*

A later version, the RL/T model, came into use in January 2002. By April 2002, there were 1,271 in service. —>



<— Simple modifications allowed this machine to be used in other countries, such as Costa Rica.

Reportedly 4,070 of them were installed.

The machine serial numbers are in the 3000 to 7000 range.

Two series of machines had been manufactured.

The ET-RLa with a metallic body had a lower printing resolution of approximately 100 dpi and printed the "wide / large" style of fonts with 5 or 6 digits. Approx. 500 units with serial numbers in the 3000 range are known.

The ET-RLb is a newer version, incorporating a plastic body and has a higher resolution printing capability of 200 dpi and prints the "small / narrow" variety of fonts.



## The Postage Stamps

45 different ATM stamp designs from 2003 to 2005 were printed in strips of 3 different denominations and for sale over the counter at post offices.

Since the denomination was pre-printed along with the design, these are actually **postage stamps**, not ATM stamps, since they were not vended from a self-service machine or the franking scales.

These stamps do NOT have a machine number on the left, but the designs are otherwise identical to the postage labels issued by the franking scales or the self-service machines.

The denominations that were available in the strips of 3 are:

Year	# of designs	Denomination (in €)		
2003	15	0.26	0.51	0.76
2004	11	0.27	0.52	0.77
2005	15	0.28	0.53	0.78 (one was at 0.77)
2006	2	0.28	0.53	0.78
2006	2	0.29	0.57	0.78

The printing of the pre-printed denomination portion looks identical to the thermal printing by the franking machines or self-service machines, but there are slight differences in the look of the denominations.

Strip of 3 pre-printed stamps from 2006 as sold over the counter at the post office.

Postally used ATM label.

Postally used pre-printed stamp.

Close-up of the pre-printed stamp

Close-up of the ATM label

Notice how the printed elements are made of closely spaced dots the versus the solid blocks of the pre-printed stamp.

## Sharing the Designs

Several of the ATM label designs were also issued as “regular” postage stamps.



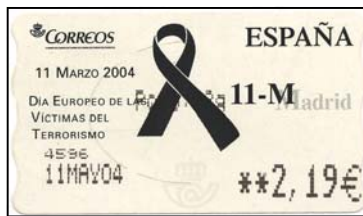
Regular postage stamp



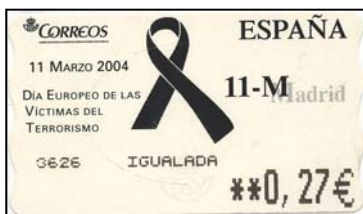
Booklet version in self-adhesive format



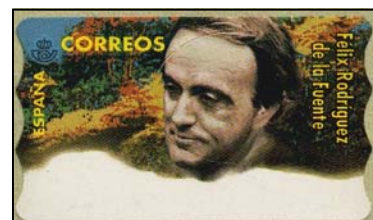
Pre-printed postage stamps in strip of 3 different denominations



PVI thermal version  
5-digit narrow                      5-digit wide



ATM version  
5-digit narrow                      5-digit wide



This design also exists as a regular postage stamp featuring the same person



Regular postage stamp



PVI thermal version



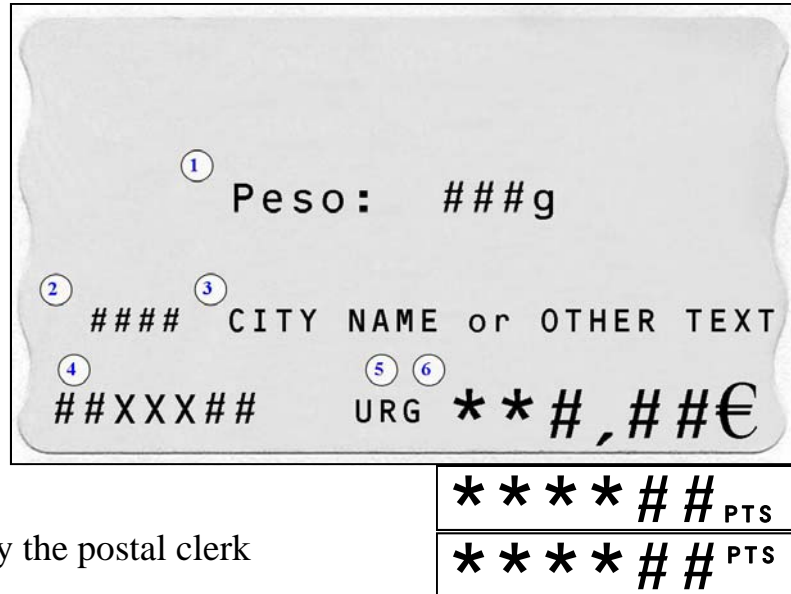
ATM version



## Anatomy of an ATM Postage Label

The thermal ATM labels have several imprint areas, some of which are required and others that are optional.

To the right is a mock-up of a thermal ATM label and the placement of data fields.



### **1. “Peso” (Weight) field**

This is an optional entry by the postal clerk

### **2. Machine Number**

Generally a 4-digit (occasionally 5) number assigned by the machine manufacturer and entered by a technician (supposedly also postal clerks).

### **3. City Name (or other Text)**

Optionally entered by the postal clerk, generally the city name. In a few instances, for special occasions, such as stamp shows, the name of the show was entered here while the machine was available at the show.

### **4. Date sold**

Optionally entered by the postal clerk when the labels were printed by a franking scale. This meant that the label was for use only on that day and for the mail piece being weighed and mailed.

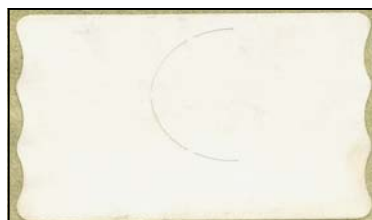
The format is Day Month Year (DD MMM YY) with the month being a 3-letter abbreviation.

### **5. URG imprint**

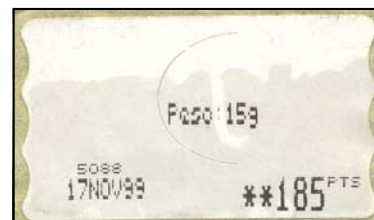
Optional imprint by the postal clerk for “Urgent” shipments.

### **6. Denomination**

The denomination in PTS (Pesetas - prior to 1/1/2002) or €(Euros - starting on 1/1/2002). The denominations can range from 4 to 6 digits with a \* character in place of unused digits.



*Scarce unprinted testing label that clearly show the security die-cut “C” designed to prevent re-use of the labels.*



*Scarce unprinted testing label with postage imprint, unused and still on original backing paper.*

*(Note: the discoloration is due to moisture damage inflicted by the USPS while in-transit to the exhibitor)*

## Weight

The “**Peso**” (weight) imprint is optional and could only be done by a postal clerk using the franking scales.

### Lowest Observed Weight



This stamp has the lowest seen weight of only 7 grams (~ 0.25 oz).

This corresponds exactly to the weight of a C6 size envelope + 1 sheet of paper that was sent at the domestic rate in 2004.



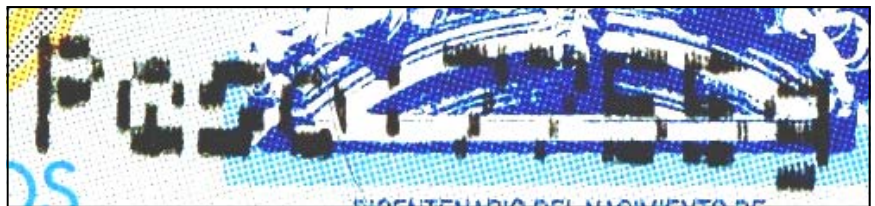
This stamp also has a fairly low weight of only 11 grams (~0.4 oz), but a rather high denomination.

This is most likely due to a standard envelope with 2 sheets of paper that sent via certified or registered mail.



Slightly enhanced close-up scan of the imprint on the stamp above left.

### Highest Observed Weight



At 7,755 grams (273.5 oz or 17.1 lbs), this is the highest imprinted weight seen. The enlarged scan to the right is enhanced.

## Machine Nr.

Each franking scale or ATM machine had a “machine number” on the left side of the label, assigned by the manufacturer (not the postal service).

Technicians assigned to work on the machines were supposed to enter the machine numbers. To our knowledge, CORREOS did not have a master list of which numbers were assigned to post offices and/or cities! Some collectors have attempted to put their own lists together.

Assigned machine numbers are either 4 or 5 digits.

The “franking scales” (for postal clerks) generally had 4-digit machine numbers, while the “ATM” machines had 5-digit machine numbers.



(Scan of) Machine Nr. “0001”.  
Where was it located?

### Franking Scale Machine numbers known (4-digit):

<b><u>Mobba:</u></b>	0000 to 2200	200 machines, used through December 31, 2001
<b><u>Epelsa:</u></b>		
ET-CB	0001 to ?	1,668 franking scales used through December 31, 2001
ET/RLa	3,### series	~500 franking scales
ET/RL	3,000 to 7,###	4,070 franking scales



### ATM Machine numbers known (5-digit):

<b><u>Epelsa:</u></b>		
LF1100	10001 to 10200	Installed June/ July 2003
LF3100	10201 to 10250	



5-digit Machine numbers beyond 10250 are generally a data entry error by the technician that set up the machine. →



## Machine Nr. - Varieties

Varieties and errors exist with the machine numbers  
(which are entered either by a technician or the postal clerk).



“0 99” was a data entry error with a “space” entered rather a number.



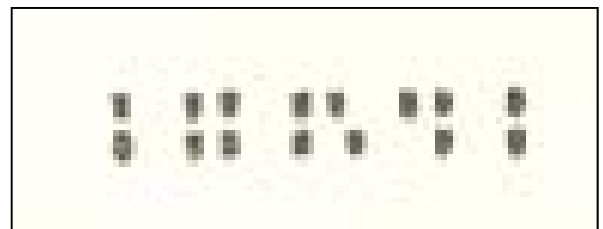
“414” was a data entry error. It is unknown whether the missing digit should be in front or behind the 414.



“1!75” was a data entry error. Generally the “!” is generated on a shifted “1” keystroke on a regular computer keyboard. However, it is unknown what the keyboard layout for these machines was.



“1 78” was a data entry error. Although, there is a remote possibility that bad pins could cause a skip in printing.



(above: a cropped close-up from the right stamp from the pair on the left)

The machine number is totally illegible and the “characters” that are present (which appear to be about half the regular height) do not resemble anything that would form numbers that might ordinarily print here, so most likely a “glitch”.

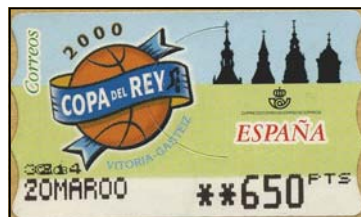
## Fonts

The fonts that are used on the ATM & PVI labels vary based on the manufacturer of the machine (either Mobba or Epelsa).

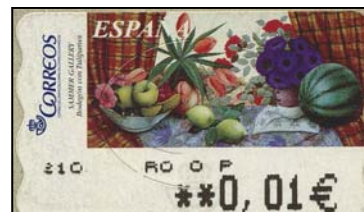
As shown in the illustrations below (courtesy of [www.ateeme.net](http://www.ateeme.net)), the number of digits can be 4, 5 or 6 during the Peseta period and 4 or 5 during the Euro period.

Additionally, each type can be either “narrow” or “wide”, but not all font varieties are available for each label design.

4 digits	5 digits	6 digits
<b>**35<sub>PTS</sub></b>	<b>***35<sub>PTS</sub></b>	<b>****35<sub>PTS</sub></b>
MOBBA 4 digits	EPELSA ET-RL 5 digits large	EPELSA ET-RL 6 digits large
<b>**35<sub>PTS</sub></b>	<b>***35<sub>PTS</sub></b>	<b>****35<sub>PTS</sub></b>
EPELSA ET-CB 4 digits	EPELSA ET-RL 5 digits small	EPELSA ET-RL 6 digits small



4 digits (very rare)	5 digits
<b>*0, 25€</b>	<b>**0, 25€</b>
EPELSA model ET-RL 4 digits large	EPELSA model ET-RL 5 digits large
<b>*0, 25€</b>	<b>**0, 25€</b>
EPELSA model ET-RL 4 digits small	EPELSA models ET-RL and ET-RL/T 5 digits small (*)



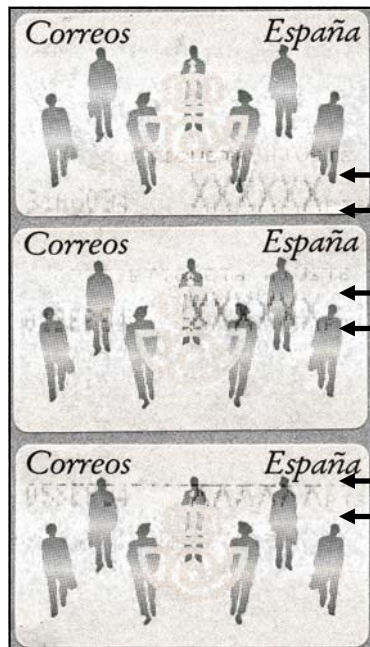
*4-digit narrow version  
not seen yet*

## Adjust Labels

“Adjust” Labels were used to test alignment and printing quality of the machines.  
Only the postal clerks (and technicians) could perform this function.

These test labels were supposed to be discarded, but of course many ended up in the hands of collectors.

As with the regular ATM & PVI stamps, there are many imprint varieties depending on which brand machine (Epelsa or Mobba) they were printed on.



An “adjustment” in action:

Labels are dispensed such that the bottom label shown is dispensed first from the machine.

This enhanced scan shows that the first label (bottom) was very misadjusted.

The middle label shows a better adjustment and the top label shows a good adjustment.



The first (bottom) label looks good, but the 2nd adjustment has a double print.



Unusual “lines” on the first test label (bottom), the adjustment looks good.



Blank label first, followed by a label that could still use an adjustment.



## Adjust Labels



“ETIQUETA AJUSTE” as normally seen  
(from the Epelsa machine)

Unusual variety (from a Mobba machine):

- “**AJUSTE ETIQUETADORA**” instead of “ETIQUETA AJUSTE”
- Uses \* (star) symbol instead of the usual “X”

“TICKET JUSTIFICANTE”

The reason for this label is unknown

Information: “Post Office & Telegraph”

“Ticket Justificante”

“Cadiz Suc 2” (city of Cadiz, Branch 2)

“Fecha” (date) & “Hora” (time)

“Ventani” (?)



Extremely out of adjustment to the point where the “Etiqueta Ajuste” is not visible.



The first (bottom) test print looked ok, but the 2nd (top) one is way out of adjustment and also slightly skewed.



While most adjustments are usually of the vertical type, this label could use some horizontal adjustment.



## Blank Labels

“Blank” labels are those with a pre-printed design but without the postage denomination and possibly other information printed on them. As such they have no postal validity and are basically just a colorful pretty sticker (but of course still collectible).



*Blank labels could be obtained with the aid of a co-operative postal clerk*

On occasion, blank labels do make it through the mailstream unnoticed.

## Varieties: Shifted Printing

When the machines are not adjusted properly, the information on the labels is shifted, in some instances to the point where it is illegible.

The printing can be shifted in all directions, left / right / up / down.

*With thermal printers, since the print head itself is totally stationary, it is actually the paper that needs to be adjusted.*



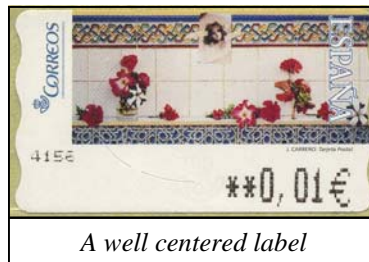
← Shifted so far up that the denomination of **\*\*40 PTS** is barely visible. The lower label is blank.



↑ Shifted UP



Missing currency and part of value.



A well centered label

→ Shifted RIGHT



Missing currency.



← Shifted LEFT

Missing the machine nr. due to the shift.

↓ Shifted DOWN



Missing currency.



Value not visible and with handwritten notation that it is **5-€!**



Value of 0,41€ is barely visible.



## Variety: Missing Machine Nr.

All ATM or PVI labels are supposed to have a 4 or 5-digit machine number printed on the left side. There are many that appear without a number though. Technicians servicing the machines could put these numbers in; supposedly the postal clerks could NOT manipulate the machine number.



Same label design used, yet only two of the labels have the machine nr. "0207". Why does the 0.09€ label not have the machine nr.?



Since there is no imprinted date, this was issued as an ATM label either from a ATM machine or a franking scale. The cancel from "SANTIAGO" from Suc-3 ties to the misspelled "SUC. 3 Satiago" imprint .



Missing machine numbers from the "MONTROIG DEL CAMP" post office's franking scale. Judging the by the date from 28. August to 2 December 2002, the missing numbers problem was not corrected during this timeframe.



Labels from "C.T.P. PONTEVEDRA". Why the right label would NOT have a machine number is not known.



Missing machine numbers. On 0.25€ label at least the mailing city can be determined by the postmark.

## Variety: "CONTROL CALIDAD"



The "CONTROL CALIDAD" (meaning "Quality Control") inscribed labels have been found from a variety of different machines.

Instead of "CONTROL CALIDAD", this area should either be blank or contain the city name.

The cause for the inscription is unknown, but it is theorized that it comes from machines where the technician did not clear out the wording during setting up the machine, leaving it in place.

The spacing for "CONTROL CALIDAD" and the machine number can range from 1.5mm to 6.5mm, but at least four examples (two to the right and two above) are known with no spacing.

←Regular and no-spacing versions →

The most frequently encountered machine is number 5102.



## Variety: "CONTROL CALIDAD"

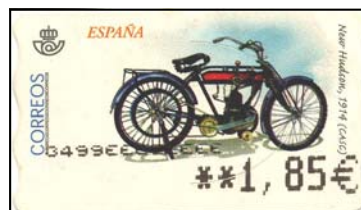
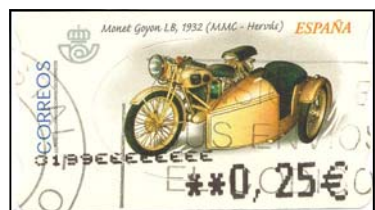


Based on reviewing over 20,000 Spanish ATM labels, the most frequently found "CONTROL CALIDAD" is the "Sanglas 350/1" motorcycle design, with 10 different machine numbers found:

3501, 3576, 4809, 5030, 5089, 5102, 5198, 6092, 6573 and 6685



## Variety: "EEEEEEEE"



The EEEEEEEE variety is seen on a number of different labels, so far predominantly from machines #3082 3095, 3097, 3182, 3199, 3499, 3500, 65535 based on the exhibitor's purchase of over 20,000 labels.

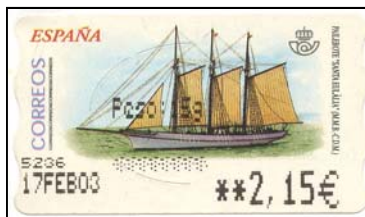
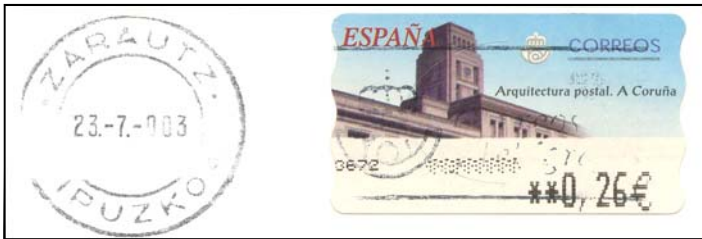


It is unknown what caused this variety. It is speculated that this is due to operator error when setting up the machine.

In all instances, there are 8 letters "E" immediately following the machine number.

*This is from machine 65535, not 5535 since the imprint is shifted to the left.*

## Variety: "Dots"



A few machines have "dots" in place of the city name area. In most instances, the "dots" are 12.5 mm wide and are spaced 6.5 mm to the right of the machine number.



Labels from machine number 5680 are known without any spacing between the machine number and the dots.



At least two machines are known to have dot patterns that are longer, 28 mm and 32 mm wide and with the gap to the machine number being 6 mm & 2 mm respectively.

The cause of the "dots" is unknown. It could either be due to data entry error or a machine error (as these dots are not standard keyboard characters).

# Varieties: Partial or Missing Currency & other Printing Anomalies

Occasionally labels are found without the **PTS** currency shown.

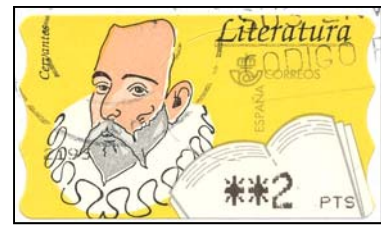


Machine Nr. 0266 (top row) apparently had a “missing currency” for a while, but it is also known from other machines →



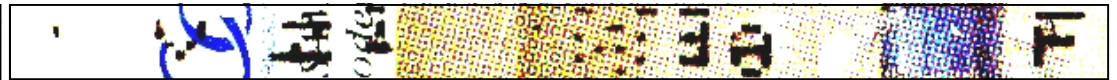
← In this case, only the “P” from “**PTS**” is shown.

Missing 4th digit → (\*\*2 instead of \*\*2#)



The “0257 STA COLONA QUERALT” line is taller on the right label than on the left label.

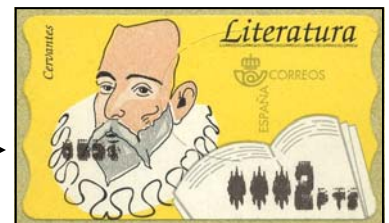
More than likely, this is due to slippage of the label while printing.



Garbled printing on the machine # / City line (*enhanced scan above*)



Multiple imprint on the same spot, most likely due to slippage of the label while printing →



← The currency is shown as a small “2” instead of “€”.



# Variety: URG

Modern usage of older “URG” inscribed labels on a parcel front bearing approx. €40 (\$54) in postage. The thermally printed values underneath the 2 right lower stamps is not visible due to interaction of the USPS zip code label.

*This package almost did not reach the recipient due to water damaged that smeared the address (luckily a Customs Label elsewhere on the package also had the address listed).*



## Mixed Currency Usages

After a transitional period of 3 years, when Spain officially transitioned from using the “Peseta” to the Euro on 1. January 2002, the currency on postage also changed (from PTS to €).

Peseta denominated stamps could only be used until February 28, 2002, starting March 1, 2002, the Euro is the only valid currency.

As a result of the currency change, CORREOS allowed the use of the older Peseta denominated stamps alongside the new Euro denominated stamps (at an approximate exchange rate of 1€= 188 PTS)



Although not postmarked, the date on the left stamp (15ENE02 = January 15, 2002) is within the official transition period.



Proper usage (January 17, 2002) within the transitional period.



Proper usage with an interesting date of 2-02-02. Not significant as such, but of interest to postmark collectors.



Improper usage past February 28, 2002.

Apparently the post office in Logrono allowed usage of PTS stamps well past the cut-off date.



Shown here are March 4 (04.03.) and April 3 (03.04.), 2002 usages.

*Note: Spain follows the DD MM YY date scheme. In this case, partially incorrect, as the 3rd set of digits are 00, instead of 02. The last set of digits is supposed to be the HH (hours), not the YY (year).*

## Control Labels

In addition to postage labels, the ATM labels also served as “control labels” for better control of various types of shipments until approximately April 2002.

The types of shipments could include Registered Mail, Express Mail and Parcel Post.

As a result of the different types of mail and machine manufacturers, there are a variety of label variations available.



Different styles include “R” followed by a space and then numbers and also with a “-” (dash) and followed by numbers.



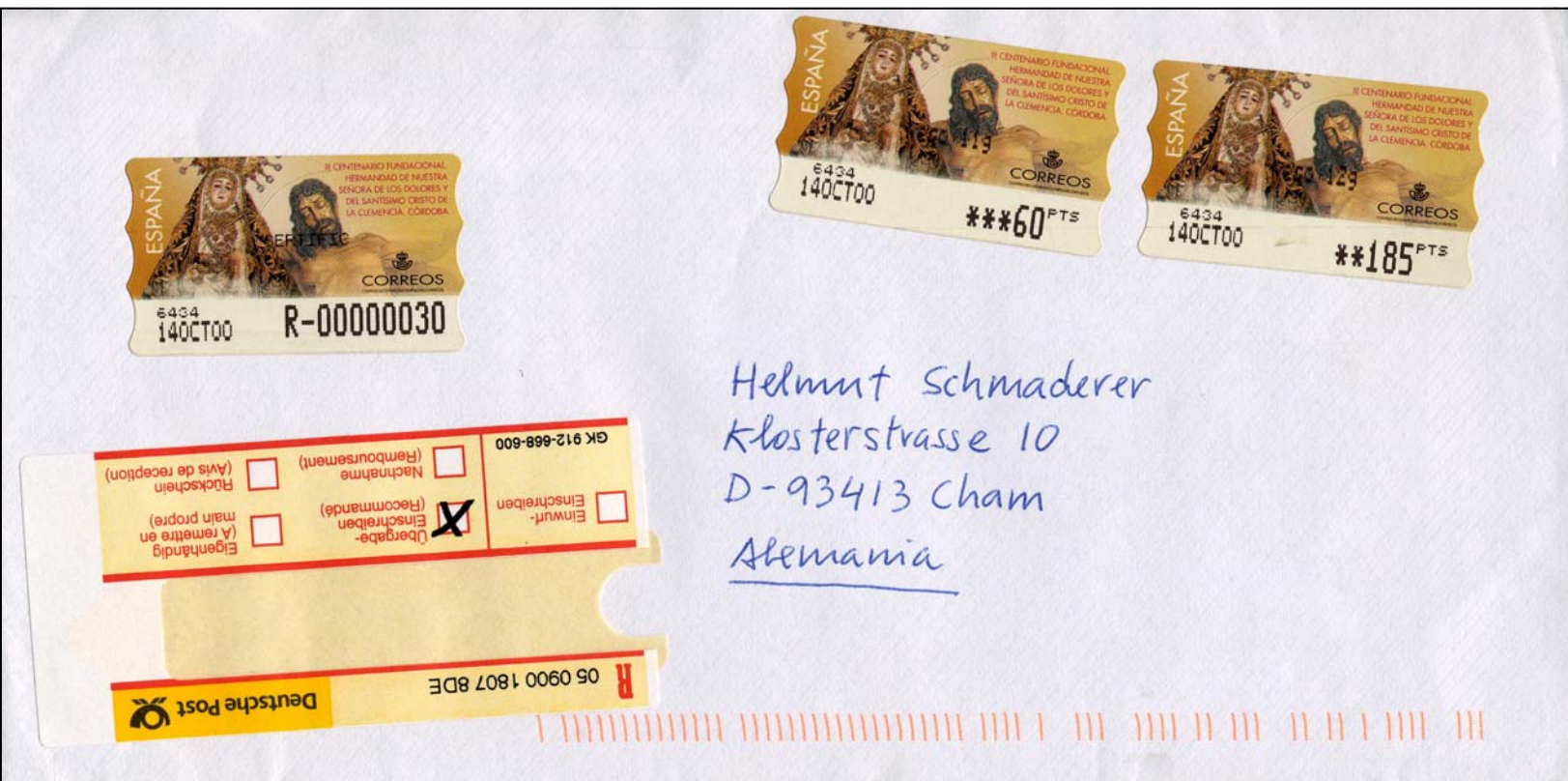
Varieties of font sizes and placement of the “R” number.



The (above) faded label is of the “barcode” variety, which is barely visible on the modified scan,

to the left underneath the bicycle and across the upper half of the sidewalk.

## Control Label - Registration Labels



The Registered labels could only be printed by a postal clerk using their franking scales.

In this case, the German Postal Service added one of their own Registration Labels once the letter entered the German mailstream, in order to better track the item.

The German Postal Service attached their own registry label, which has the “Übergabe-Einschreiben” box checked. Literally this means “Handover Registration”, meaning that this will be handled as a very basic form of registration, in which the recipient will have to sign a receipt for postal service documentation when the mail piece is “handed over”, however, the sender will NOT receive notification of the delivery.

## Control Labels - Other

Other “Control” labels include those with a number preceded with an “N” (and as with the “R” labels, usually include “CERTIFIC” (short for Certificado, most likely similar to the US “Certified”))

A number of varieties exist.

The “N-#####” label (8 digits)



Unused “N-” label  
with date



Used “N-” label  
without date



Used “N-” label with date.  
Underneath is Label #  
“N-00000327”



Used “N-” label  
with date



Unused “N-” label  
with date

The “No. #####” label (6 digits)



Used “No.” labels

## Control Labels - Other

The “**No. #####**” label (6 digits) with barcode



Unused “**No.**” labels

*Unused labels such as these were most likely printed by a postal clerk as a favor for a collector.*

The “**No. - #####**” label (8 digits)



Unused “**No.**” label

Used “**No.**” labels

Used “wide” font “**No. -**” label

The wider font on this label pushes the date further to the left, off the label !

Why the printing layout on these labels was not adjusted so that the date and machine number are properly shown is not known.



## Control Labels - Other

Additional Control Labels start with a “PP” (presumably for Parcels)



“PP.” with 6 digits  
and barcode



“PP-” with 8 digits



And there are some other labels which appear to be regular PVI postage labels (since they have a denomination imprint), yet have letters & numbers Printed in the center of the label:



“N-####” (4-digit) label



“No.-####” (4-digit)



“N-###” (3 digit)



← “0090596228” is printed on the center of a normal PVI postage label. This is a 10-digit number and does NOT correspond with the usual 3, 4, 6 or 8 digits that are seen on other labels.

## PREFRANQUEADO

If it looks like a Spanish ATM postage label, is it one?

No, in the case of the PREFRANQUEADO label, these are a form of “postal stationery stamps”.

PREFRANQUEADO = “pre-franked envelope” in Spanish

While postal stationery in general has the postage printed directly on the card or envelope, in the case of the PREFRANQUEADO stamps, these were applied to envelopes provided by Correos.



*Above: envelope cut-out featuring a PREFRANQUEADO stamp plus an ATM stamp to pay for additional postage or service.*

While the PREFRANQUEADO labels have the same dimensions as thermally printed ATM postage labels, they are pre-printed and pre-applied to envelopes that are sold over the counter by a postal clerk and thus not vending machine stamps.



Above: the paper on the backside of an envelope (featuring a PREFRANQUEADO stamp) shows the printed Correos logo (crown & post horn) of the Spanish Postal Service.



## Collectible Items - Maximum Cards

Outside the USA, the collecting of “Maximum Cards” is much more popular.

Generally the definition of a Maximum Card is a Postcard that has the same (or similar image) to a stamp that is affixed to the front of the card and is postmarked (it does not necessarily have to be postmarked on the First Day of Issue).



*The postmark on this card is 11.ENE 07 (January 11, 2007).  
The postage label itself was issued in May, 2005.*

## Caveat - Damage

The biggest “enemy” of thermal labels is heat.

Of course, heat is used to “print” (i.e.: “activate” the thermal coating on the labels to form the image), continual exposure to heat will cause degradation of the thermal coating.

Too much heat, and the entire label will turn dark.



← Damaged →



← Undamaged →



Below is an unusual phenomena. The labels below were stored in large boxes in Spain (presumably at elevated temperatures). As one can see, impressions of the one label formed an outline on the thermal coating of another label due to heat and pressure (from thousands of labels stored against each other in the boxes!).



## Caveat - Do Not Soak!



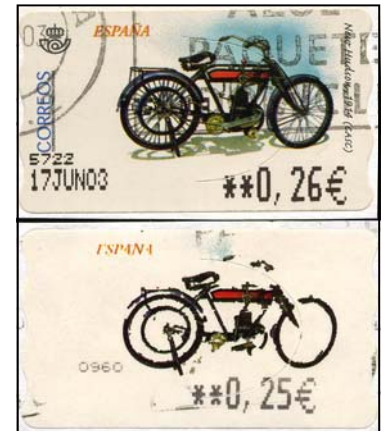
Mint Spanish ATM stamps come on removable backing paper and are best collected that way.

← *mint example on original backing paper*

Used Spanish ATM stamps can only be collected “on piece”, either entirely or clipped from the envelope or mail piece.

The self-adhesive gum used does NOT soak off. In fact, the only thing that does soak off in water is the ink!

*Shown here are 7 pairs of identical ATM stamps. The lower of each pair shown was soaked for 20 minutes in lukewarm water and then lightly rubbed with a finger while still wet, proving that the inks are fugitive.*

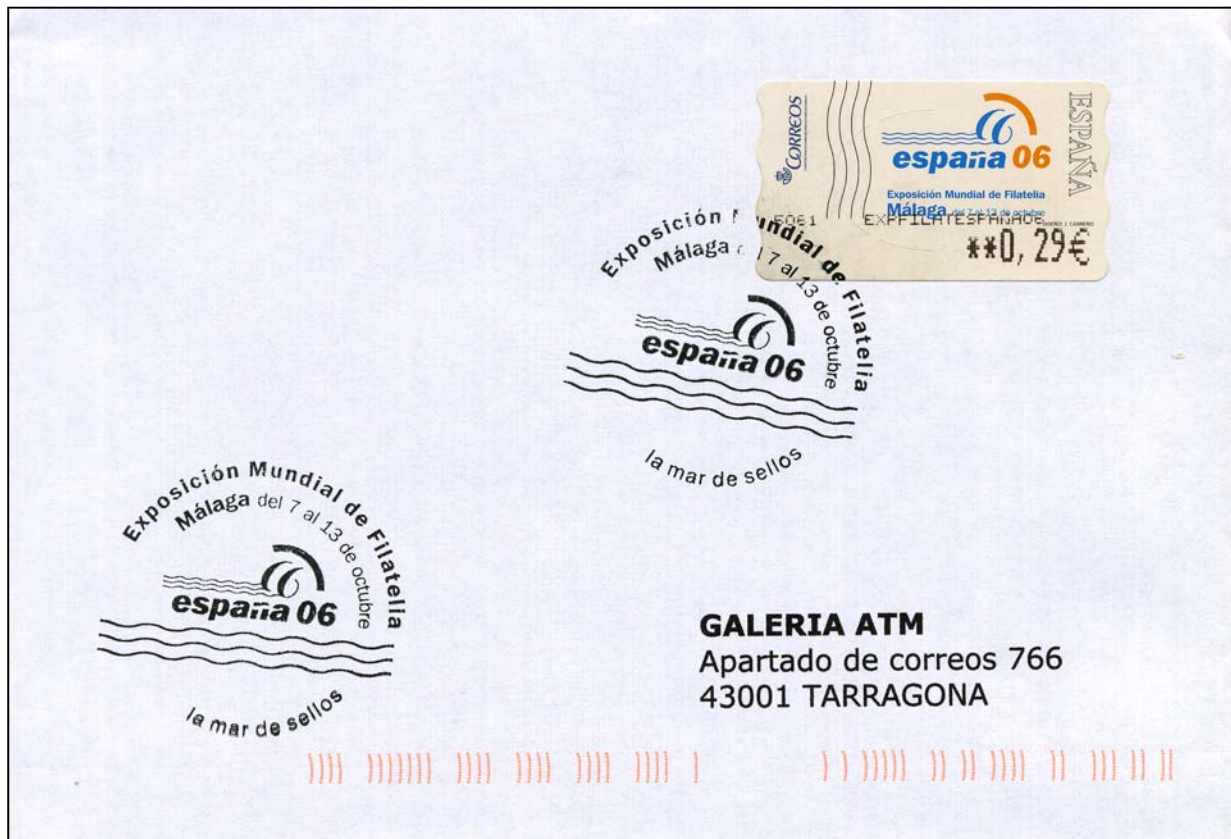


*The results are obvious as the inks either completely or partially come off while the thermal printing and postmarks (if any) stay intact.*



## Special Imprints

For some stamp exhibitions, the labels have special imprints,  
such as these for  
“ALACANT EXFILNA.2005”, “EXFILNA 2006 ALGECIRA”  
and “EXFILNAESPANA06”



## Re-usages & Double Labels

All countries prohibit the re-usage of postage that was previously used to carry mail but just did not get postmarked / cancelled.



An obvious example of re-used postage labels that were clipped from a Previous mail piece and then glued on a new mail piece.



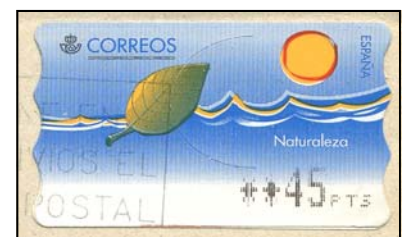
Behind each of these 2 labels are blank versions of this label. The reason for this is unknown.



Behind this label is another one of the same design. Only the € symbol is visible and backlighting does not show any other imprinting, but that may be an interaction caused by fading due to the thermal coating being in contact with the adhesive from the front label



A re-used label. It was trimmed exactly including the wavy portions of the die-cutting.



Another label is behind this one, but due to the design and the colored envelope paper, it is not possible to discern what is underneath.

## Usages: Non-matching Dates

PVI (dated) labels issued by postal clerks are supposed to be mailed on the date indicated on the label. This is not always the case.



Left label 14. November, 2001  
 Right label 15. October, 2001  
 Postmark 14. November, 2001



Left label 1. February, 2001  
 Right label 2 January, 2002.  
*The postmark is illegible.*



Left label 11. February, 2003  
 Right label 12 August, 2002  
*The postmark is illegible.*



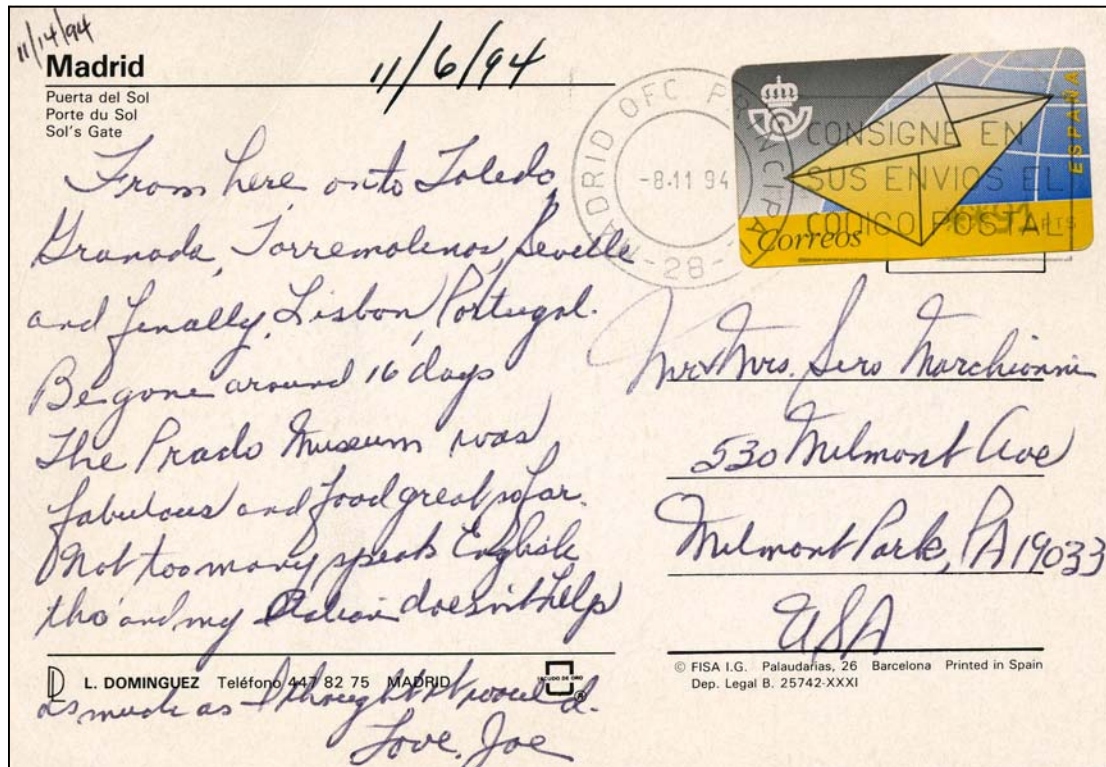
Left label 29. October, 2002  
 Right label no date  
 Postmark 7. January, 2003



Left label 6. March 2003  
 Right label no date  
 Postmark 27. June 2003

## Usages - Vacations

When on vacation and wanting to mail postcards back to family and friends, it is certainly easy enough to find postcards, but not always stamps to mail them.



Having a post office nearby and being able to purchase a stamp (even when the post office is closed) is a good reason for having postage vending machines available.

The card above was written on November 6, 1994, which was a Sunday and it was postmarked two days later (8.11.94). It is unknown of course whether the stamp was purchased that day or not, and why the postcard was postmarked until two days later (instead of the next day); it might have been deposited in a mailbox that wasn't emptied for a while or perhaps it was in a hotel's "outgoing mail" box.

## Conclusion

The Spanish ATM postage labels represent an interesting and challenging area to collect and study, as hopefully the preceding pages have shown.

While the last of the ATM labels were issued in 2007, a few franking scales still remain in post offices, and supposedly a handful of ATM's are still in operation using up remaining label stock.

ATM postage labels printed in Euro (€) denominations are still valid for postage.



*The above cover was mailed on April 15, 2014 from Seville to Rota.*

While resources about these labels in the USA are limited, there are many resources (both printed and online) available in Europe.

The exhibitor is hoping that this exhibit will have awakened some interest in this fascinating philatelic area of study!