

## Fluorescence on Lithuanian and Latvian stamps

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It took a tip from Lithuania to discover an interesting aspect of modern Lithuanian and Latvian stamps. The Lithuanian philatelist Antanas Jankauskas had been reading the Michel catalogue carefully and had come across the words "Melierfasern fl.", "Melier fibres fl." and "Aufdruck fl.", "Overprint fl." in the descriptions of stamps from MiNo. 1269 onwards. None of us had noticed this before. He had set the ball rolling. The abbreviation "fl." of course means "fluorescent", as collectors of stamps from the Federal Republic of Germany and Berlin in particular will know. Fluorescent stamps have been used there since the 1950s and 1960s for sorting mail and as a deterrent to counterfeiting. They are also widely used on banknotes.

Chemists are familiar with this effect: fluorescence is a bright yellow-green light that can be seen when an ultraviolet (UV) lamp in a dark room. Be careful, the UV light can damage your eyes! In philately, UV lamps are indispensable for collectors of all countries and especially for experts. Due to physical conditions, fluorescence is only possible in the yellow-green and orange-red colour range and should not be confused with bluish phosphorescence. It is not intended to change colour under UV light, but to produce a striking yellow-green luminescence. This is a wonderful effect that we would never have noticed if a Lithuanian had not read the Michel catalogue carefully!

Melier fibres were used in Germany for several years, fluorescent paper was used throughout, and occasionally by other postal administrations. However, we only knew of

a few other stamps with fluorescent overprints, such as Norway MiNo 1415 "Post horn" 9 crowns. These overprints are not visible in daylight, although daylight also contains UV light, which is outshone by visible light.

Lithuanian and Latvian stamps only have overprints in yellow-green fluorescence, not orange-red fluorescence, which rarely appears on stamps at all (e.g. the aforementioned Norway Post Horn 9 crowns). The managers of the Estonian Post have not yet discovered this design option.

### **Fluorescence on Lithuanian stamps**

From January 2018, stamps have been issued with fluorescent "Melier fibres", i.e. paper with specially prepared fibres mixed in during production. They are listed under MiNos. 1269 to 1319, although some stamps were issued without such components, e.g. block 58 with MiNos. 1271 and 1272.

The fibres are used very sparingly, often only a few can be seen on stamps and margins.

From MiNo. 1320, issued on January 7, 2020, fluorescent overprints can be found on Lithuanian stamps in various shapes:

- Post horn (Lithuanian Post logo) (fig. 4b)
- Post horn and LIETUVOS PAŠTAS lettering (Fig. 3 and 5b)
- Country name LIETUVA (fig. 6b).

To date, almost all stamps have been issued with these overprints, with only MiNos. 1335, 1337 and 1338 remaining without fluorescence. MiNo. 1357 has a different fluorescent paper respectively a full-surface overprint. The printers worked carefully – no varieties with missing overprints are known to date.

### **Fluorescence on Latvian stamps**

Not only the Lithuanian Post, but also the Latvian Post has been offering stamps with fluorescent overprints for several years.

According to our own research, this started in 2010, when the value digits of two Christmas stamps were printed with a fluorescent overprint, MiNos. 798 and 799 (fig. 7). The overprints are not yet listed in the Michel catalogue.

In 2011, we will continue with an example of a self-adhesive stamp which, in addition to the value digit, also bears the Latvian Post logo, a stylised letter (Fig. 8). Some coloured flakes (melange fibres) in the paper can also be seen under UV light.

In later years, from 2015 onwards, only the Latvian Post logo is overprinted on the stamps.

The Michel online catalogue refers to fluorescent overprints, which appear almost continuously from MiNo. 982 (2016) onwards. More examples: (see figs.)

It would be interesting if someone in their collection of Latvian stamps were to discover pieces without overprints with the indication "overprint fl." in the Michel. That would be a completely new form of variety!

Fig. 1a: MiNo. 1318 Christmas. Mottling fibres UV; the blue tears are damage to the colour surface!

Fig. 1b: Cutout (enlarged)

Fig. 2: Cover with MiNo. 1318 (milking fibres), 1320 (overprint Paštas/Post horn) and 1204 (without fluorescence!)

Fig. 3: UV overprint of post horn and LIETUVOS PAŠTAS lettering, for example on MiNo. 1320

Fig. 4a: MiNos. 1347 and 1348 (reduced size)

Fig. 4b: UV imprint of post horn (Lithuanian Post logo), enlarged

Fig. 5a: MiNo. 1395 Europe 2023

Fig. 5b: UV print Post horn and lettering LIETUVOS PAŠTAS

Fig. 6a: MiNo.1397, 700 years Vilnius

Fig. 6b: UV print country name LIETUVA, enlarged

Fig. 7: (see text)

Fig. 8: MiNo. 816a

Fig. 9: Left: MiNo. 929 I (2015), Centre and right: MiNo. 929 II (2017)

Bild 10: MiNr. 1005 (2016)

Fig. 11: MiNo. 1108 (2020)