

The Essential U.S. to Europe Shipping Checklist:

Seven Things You Need to Know

Although customs activities are generally performed by DHL Express, being prepared will ensure you experience a smooth purchase and delivery experience.

Here's your essential guide to avoiding costly mistakes, delays, or legal issues when importing goods into the 27 European Union member states and the UK.

1. Do you have your EORI and IOSS number?

To ship goods to many European countries and clear customs, your business will require an EORI (Economic Operators Registration and Identification) number. This unique number acts as your business identifier with local customs authorities, granting you access to ship across the EU. You can apply through any EU country's customs office. Once approved, this number will be used in all Customs documentation and should be shared with DHL Express.

(Note: an EU-issued EORI number can only be used in the EU, and a UK-issued number can only be used in the UK).

- ☐ You may also need an Import One Stop Shop (IOSS) registration. One registration covers all EU countries. IOSS is a program that simplifies VAT for B2C online orders under €150.

2. Are you prepared for customs duties and taxes?

Preparing your shipment for customs duties and taxes in advance will make it easier to sell and ship your goods without any surprises to you or the buyer.

- ☐ Partner with a Customs broker or logistics provider (like DHL Express) that has experience with EU imports
- ☐ Classify products using correct Harmonized System (HS) code(s) by using DHL's MyGTS (Global Trade Services) tool
- ☐ Calculate duties and VAT in advance if shipping DDP
- ☐ Determine the Incoterms (e.g., DDP vs. DAP) you will use. This determines who will pay duties and taxes (you or the receiver)

3. Have you completed your Commercial/Proforma Invoice documentation?

A digital Commercial/Proforma Invoice contains detailed information about goods being shipped across international borders, and is used electronically by customs brokers when preparing customs declarations. Data quality is key – make sure all the information you provide is accurate, complete and up to date.

Expect to provide:

- ☐ Details of shipper/exporter and receiver/importer
- ☐ Identification number(s)
- ☐ Commodities/Goods Description
- ☐ Harmonized System (HS) Code(s)
- ☐ Country of Origin
- ☐ Values & Currency
- ☐ Weight/Unit & Quantity
- ☐ Incoterms & Place
- ☐ Proof of Origin Statement
- ☐ Reason for Export
- ☐ Other Requirements
- ☐ Proof of purchase

4. Did you create a waybill or shipping label?

This is your shipment's "passport" -- a document issued by a carrier (like DHL Express) and attached to a shipment. The waybill contains important details like the sender's and recipient's name and address, a line-item description of goods/commodities using precise and plain language, and who is responsible for paying duties and taxes.

- ☐ Waybill completed

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5. Do you need any other documentation?

A Commercial/Proforma Invoice and Waybill are the two main documents you'll need, but it's worth checking whether you also require:

- ☐ A packing list
- ☐ A certificate of origin
- ☐ Export/Import licenses
- ☐ A dangerous goods declaration

7. Are your goods packaged correctly?

To avoid damage in transit, ensure:

- ☐ Goods are in correct-sized boxes to reduce movement (and save on shipping costs!)
- ☐ Packing peanuts are used to fill in spaces and absorb shocks
- ☐ Fragile items are wrapped carefully with extra padding

6. Have you met EU compliance and product requirements?

There are strict regulations on product standards, labeling, VAT, and customs. This list helps you avoid fines, rejected shipments, or customs holds.

- ☐ Ensure CE marking for regulated products
- ☐ Verify product labels meet EU or UK standards (language, safety, etc.)
- ☐ Compile conformity documentation (e.g., Declaration of Conformity, test reports)
- ☐ Check for import restrictions on your product category
- ☐ Register products with local agencies if required (e.g., cosmetics, electronics)

For more details, [download our guide](#).