

POSTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PANEL

Activity report 2025



Bundesnetzagentur

Postal dispute resolution panel

Activity report

2025

Report in accordance with section 34(1) Act on Alternative Dispute Resolution in Consumer Matters (VSBG) and

section 4 Ordinance on the Obligations to Furnish and Report Information as per the Consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution Act (VSBInfoV)

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Foreword

In this activity report, the postal dispute resolution panel provides an overview of its activity, development and meaning in the reporting period. For the past 25 years it has played a central role in out-of-court settlements between postal customers and postal operators. The aim of its work is to resolve conflicts objectively, independently and with a minimum amount of bureaucracy and thereby enable an equitable balance of interests between the parties concerned. This report documents not only the work and performance of the postal dispute resolution panel but also underscores its contribution to strengthening peace under the law, consumer protection and social cohesion.

A look at the number of cases of the past 25 years shows that since its foundation in 2001, the postal dispute resolution panel has established itself as a point of contact for postal customers that is reliable, neutral and free of charge. The 2025 reporting year saw a new record of 5,861 submissions received by the postal dispute resolution panel. This was an increase of more than 42% compared with the previous year. The agreement rate of 37.4% was on a stable level. These figures show that customers are using the postal dispute resolution panel more and more as an effective, accessible and trustworthy alternative to asserting their rights in court.

Overall developments in recent years have shown a significant increase in dispute resolution requests. A possible explanation for this could be the introduction in 2021 of the obligation for postal operators under the amended Postal Act to participate in postal dispute resolution panel procedures when consumers request them to do so. In this area of conflict the postal dispute resolution panel assumes a key intermediary role, enabling customised conflict resolution and contributing to acceptance in the social dialogue on rights, obligations and responsibility in the area of services of general interest.

This activity report provides an overview of the organisational framework, the development of case numbers and the most common subjects of dispute resolution requests. At the same time it identifies the resulting challenges, in particular with regard to the increasing number of cases and the associated resource requirements. Against this backdrop, the basic principles of neutrality, expertise and transparency are key to ensuring high-quality and trustworthy dispute resolution in the future as well.

The Bundesnetzagentur will continue making this important contribution to consumer protection.



Dr Daniela Brönstrup

Vice President of the Bundesnetzagentur für Elektrizität, Gas, Telekommunikation, Post und Eisenbahnen

Table of contents

Foreword.....	3
Table of contents	4
1 Bundesnetzagentur postal dispute resolution panel.....	5
2 The dispute resolution process.....	6
3 Evaluating the dispute resolution requests and procedures from 2025	6
3.1 Dispute resolution requests and other submissions in 2025.....	7
3.2 Reasons for dispute resolution requests 2025	7
3.3 Outcomes of dispute resolution procedures in 2025.....	9
3.3.1 Proportion of dispute resolution procedures in which the parties reached agreement	9
3.3.2 Proportion of requests refused under section 14(1) and (2) VSBG in 2025.....	9
3.3.3 Proportion of procedures with no outcome in 2025	10
3.3.4 Average duration of procedures in 2025.....	10
3.3.5 Cases in 2025 in which the parties kept to the outcome of the procedure	10
3.3.6 Proportion of cross-border disputes in 2025.....	10
4 Common problems	11
4.1 Common problems with lost items	12
4.1.1 Sending items using parcel lockers.....	12
4.1.2 Liability risks with alternative delivery locations	12
4.2 Liability issues with damaged items	12
4.3 Liability exclusions for certain types of products	12
4.4 Limitations on or exemptions from liability for prohibited items and items with a value over the limit	13
4.5 Cross-border disputes	13
5 Recommendations for avoiding or settling disputes.....	13
5.1 Serious efforts to reach an agreement before dispute resolution.....	14
5.2 Postal operators' information about permissible contents.....	14
5.3 Choosing the correct product.....	14
5.4 Choosing the correct packaging and documentation	15
5.5 Keeping evidence of value and posting	15
6 Indications of structural barriers to settling disputes	15
7 Cooperation with other consumer conciliation bodies in networks to resolve cross-border disputes.....	15
8 Outlook.....	16
List of figures	17
List of abbreviations.....	18
Publishers' details.....	19

1 Bundesnetzagentur postal dispute resolution panel

The Bundesnetzagentur's postal dispute resolution panel is an official consumer conciliation body within the meaning of the Act on Alternative Dispute Resolution in Consumer Matters (VSBG) and is thus one of the dispute resolution entities in the European Economic Area that are recognised by the European Commission. The postal dispute resolution panel has been conducting dispute resolution procedures between postal operators and their customers since 2001.

Dispute resolution serves to resolve disputes out of court and is a cost-effective alternative to court proceedings. The process conducted by the postal dispute resolution panel is free of charge for both parties. Each party must bear only their own costs. The aim of dispute resolution is to achieve a mutually satisfactory outcome that fully resolves the conflict.

Since 2016, the VSBG has stipulated consumer protection rules for the procedure and its organisation by the postal dispute resolution panel. The Postal Act (PostG) also determines further details of the dispute resolution procedure conducted by the panel.

Consumer rights were significantly strengthened by the amendment to the PostG in 2021. Since then, postal operators have been obliged to take part in procedures before the postal dispute resolution panel when requests come from consumers.

Because of this amendment to the PostG, the procedure and the set-up of the panel have been regulated in the Postal Dispute Resolution Ordinance (PostSchliV) since 2022.

Further information on the postal dispute resolution panel and the dispute resolution procedure may be found (in German) on the Bundesnetzagentur's website. The page includes details of the requirements of the procedure and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

This information and the online request form may be found at

www.bundesnetzagentur.de/post-schlichtungsstelle.

The address of the postal dispute resolution panel is:

Bundesnetzagentur, Schlichtungsstelle Post, Referat 523, Postfach 8001, 53105 Bonn.

2 The dispute resolution process

Postal customers whose items have been lost, damaged or stolen or who have experienced breaches of the obligation to provide universal services or the non-discrimination obligation (section 15(4) sentence 2 PostG) can request dispute resolution from the postal dispute resolution panel (section 34(1) PostG). Both senders and recipients of postal items are entitled to request a dispute resolution procedure provided no special conditions for the delivery were agreed for the postal item in question. There must also be no ground for exclusion from the dispute resolution procedure. Requests may be submitted to the postal dispute resolution panel either online via the Bundesnetzagentur website or by email, letter or fax.

The request form provided by the panel asks for information about the matter that is relevant to the procedure. People using the form are asked, for example, to provide all relevant facts, to specify the value of the damage and to submit the required documents together with their request.

Once the postal dispute resolution panel has received the request for dispute resolution, it checks whether the request meets the requirements for admissibility, there is no ground for exclusion and the request is complete. If these conditions have been met, the request is sent to the relevant postal operator (the respondent), who is requested to provide a statement on the relevant facts of the case. However, sometimes a ground for exclusion only becomes known after the procedure has begun, resulting in it having to be terminated.

When a request is submitted by a consumer, the respondent is obliged to take part in the process. Dispute resolution in the postal sector is otherwise a voluntary process. The respondent should provide a statement covering all the facts about the applicant's submission and desired outcome.

Both parties are entitled to present their view of the matter and submit relevant documents during the dispute resolution procedure. It is sometimes possible for them to reach agreement during this exchange of statements through mediation and assessment of the postal dispute resolution panel.

If an agreement is not reached in the course of the procedure, the panel assesses the facts of the case again and may submit a proposal for an amicable resolution of the dispute. When doing so, it weighs up the arguments and documents submitted, taking into consideration the facts and the legal situation. The proposal for a resolution should be sent to the parties within 90 days of receipt of all relevant information and documents. The parties are not obliged to accept the proposal made by the postal dispute resolution panel, but if they do, it becomes a binding agreement between them.

As a rule, dispute resolution procedures are conducted in written form (by email, letter or fax). Oral hearings are conducted only if the postal dispute resolution panel considers it necessary and both parties agree to them.

3 Evaluating the dispute resolution requests and procedures from 2025

Again in 2025 the postal dispute resolution panel saw a record number of submissions (requests for dispute resolution and other submissions), which exceeded the 5,000 mark for the first time. The number of

submissions thus increased by more than 40% on the year before. This trend strikingly illustrates the steadily growing interest of postal customers in out-of-court dispute resolution.

3.1 Dispute resolution requests and other submissions in 2025

In 2025 the postal dispute resolution panel received a total of 5,861 requests for dispute resolution and other submissions, This clearly surpasses the previous record figure from 2024. This total can be broken down into 4,804 dispute resolution requests and 1,057 other submissions, which are dispute resolution cases where formal requests are not involved. In contrast to the report from the previous year, the number of other submissions now also includes all submissions in which a formal request for dispute resolution was also subsequently made. In 2025 the number of formal requests for dispute resolution increased on the previous year by 25.7% (from 3,821 to 4,804 requests).

Dispute resolution requests and other submissions 2014 to 2025

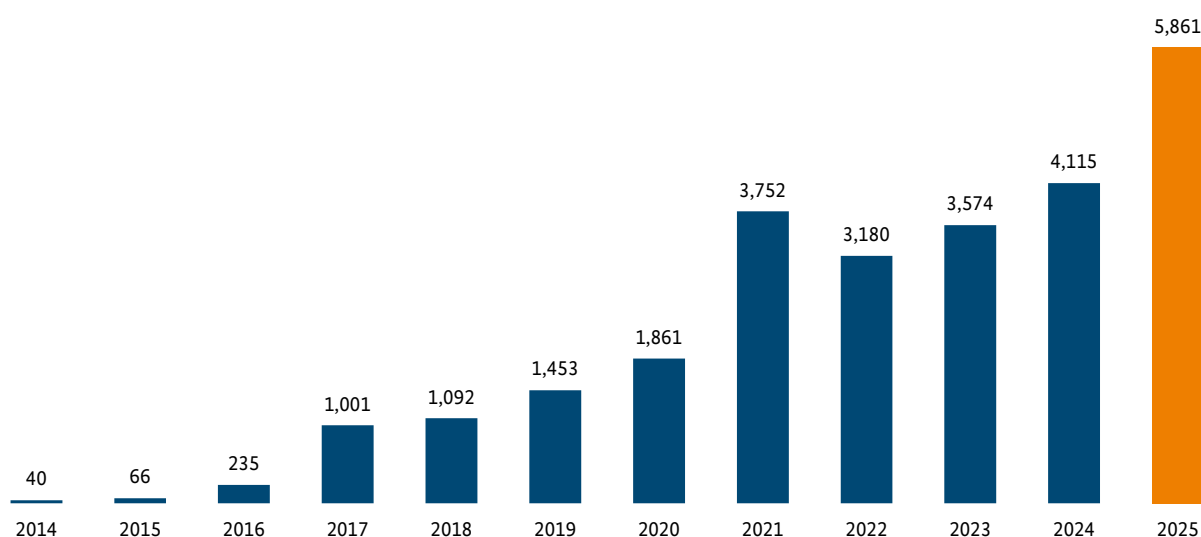


Figure 1: Dispute resolution requests and other submissions 2014-2025

3.2 Reasons for dispute resolution requests 2025

Of the 4,804 requests received in 2025, 3,035 of them (just over 63%) were about the loss or theft of a postal item. Damaged contents were the reason for 1,005 requests (nearly 21%) and 764 requests (almost 16%) were about other issues. These other issues may include breaches of the non-discrimination obligation pursuant to section 15(4) PostG and breaches of the obligation to provide universal services. Appropriate requests are generally eligible for dispute resolution under the statutory requirements. However, in 2025 no dispute resolution requests were made, either separately or without naming another reason for requesting dispute resolution, for breaches of the non-discrimination obligation or the right to the provision of universal services. Other issues included, for example, slow delivery speed and delivery irregularities. These requests are not eligible for dispute resolution under the statutory requirements and had to be refused because they do not fall under the panel's responsibility.

Reasons for dispute resolution requests 2025

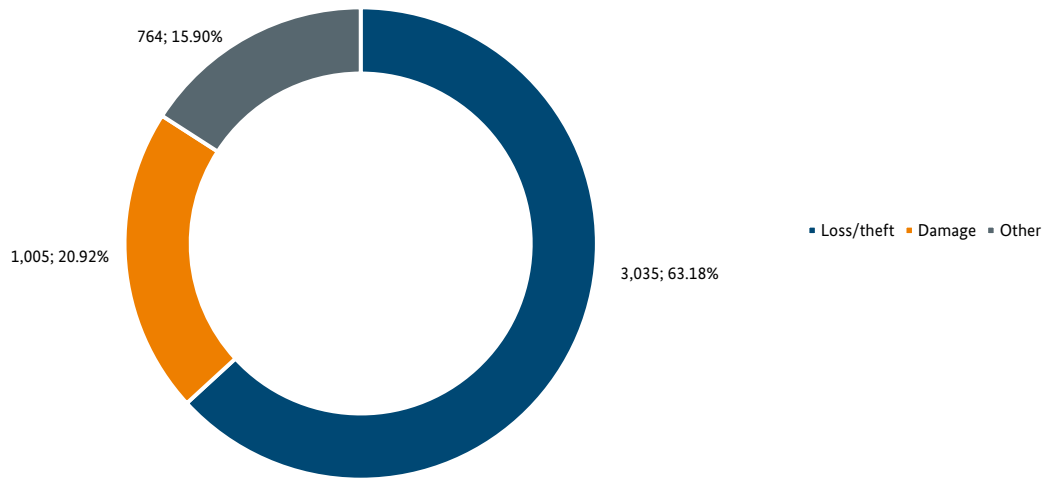


Figure 2: Reasons for dispute resolution requests 2025

The 4,804 requests for dispute resolution submitted in 2025 were mostly due to disputes over parcel delivery (3,625 cases or 75.5%). In second place was a far smaller group related to the sending or receipt of small packets (481 cases, 10%), then registered items (298 cases, 6.2%), letters (241 cases, 5%) and other products (159 cases, 3.3%).

Dispute resolution requests by product type in 2025 (%)

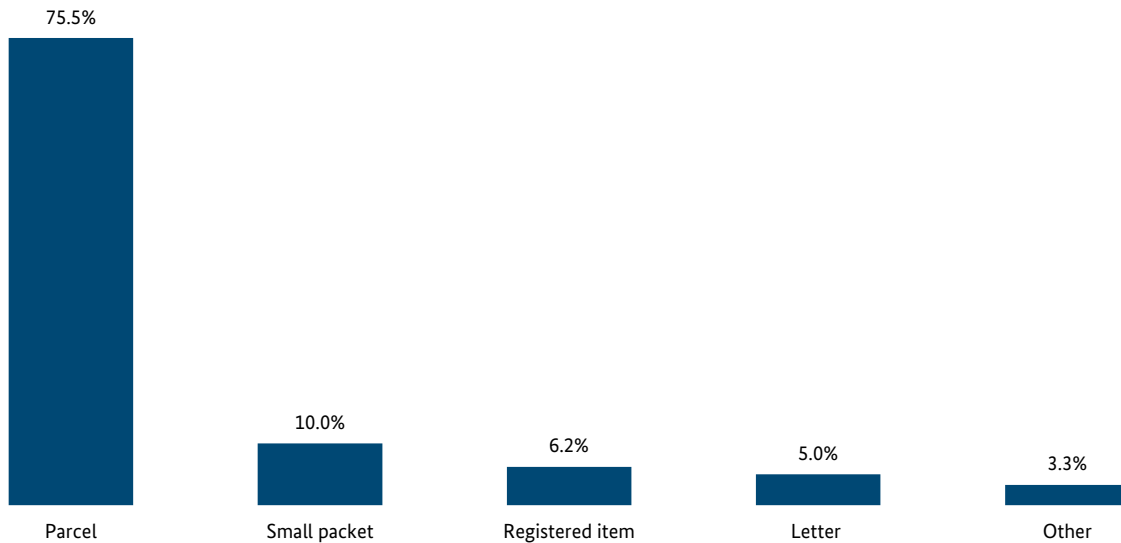


Figure 3: Dispute resolution requests by product type in 2025

3.3 Outcomes of dispute resolution procedures in 2025

In 2025 the panel closed 4,044 requests for dispute resolution.

Outcome of closed dispute resolution requests in 2025

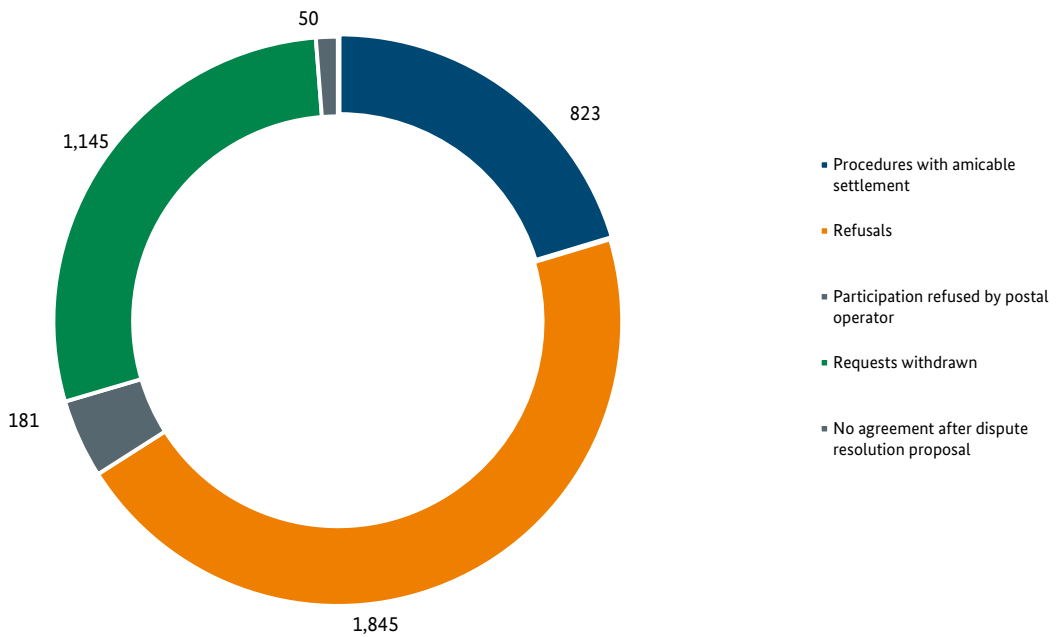


Figure 4: Outcome of closed dispute resolution requests in 2025

3.3.1 Proportion of dispute resolution procedures in which the parties reached agreement

The parties in dispute reached agreement in 823 cases in the 2025 reporting period, corresponding to about 37.4% of the 2,199 requests closed in 2025 that were not refused on the basis of legal grounds for exclusion. The agreement rate compared with the previous year thus remained more or less the same (agreement rate in 2024: 37.93%). As part of these agreements, the postal service providers concerned usually made payments for damaged or lost items.

The dispute resolution panel proposed a solution in 79 cases, of which 29 were accepted by the disputing parties.

3.3.2 Proportion of requests refused under section 14(1) and (2) VSBG in 2025

Of the 4,044 requests closed in 2025, a total of 1,845 were refused on the basis of legal grounds for exclusion.

Most of the refusals in 2025, which totalled 1,238, were due to the fact that the dispute did not fall within the competence of the panel (section 14(1) para 1 VSBG). Another 303 refusals related to requests in which the claim at issue was not previously asserted against the respondent (section 14(1) para 2 VSBG, 16.4%) and 174 requests were refused because they had no prospects of success (section 14(1) para 4 VSBG, 9.4%). Three disputes had already been resolved (section 14(1) para 4b VSBG, 0.2%). In sum, therefore, around 93% of all

refusals in 2025 were mandatory on the basis of section 14(1) VSBG. Around 7% of refusals were due to optional reasons under section 14(2) VSBG. The highest number of refusals in this group (122) in 2025 was due to the fact that the value of the dispute was too low or too high (section 14(2) sentence 1 para 3 VSBG, 6.6% of all refusals). The lower limit for the value of the dispute is €10 and the upper limit is €2,500 (section 7(1) para 7 PostSchliV). Three requests were refused because the dispute resolution panel had already conducted a procedure to resolve the dispute (section 14(2) sentence 1 para 1 VSBG, 0.2%). One other request was refused because the dispute was pending in court. Another case was refused because the postal dispute resolution panel would only be able to clarify the circumstances or legal questions at unreasonable cost in terms of effort and resources (section 14(2) sentence 1 para 4a VSBG).

Three of the grounds for refusal listed in section 14(1) VSBG were not used in 2025. These were refusals on the basis that the claims or legal relationships that are the subject of the dispute resolution procedure were registered in the register of representative actions as a test case or action for redress measures and the case or action is still pending (section 14(1) para 3 VSBG), refusals because the disputed claim was already statute-barred at the time the application was made and the trader invokes this limitation (section 14(1) para 4a VSBG) and rejected requests for legal aid (section 14(1) para 4c VSBG). Two of the grounds for refusal referred to in section 14(2) VSBG were not applied: dealing with the dispute would seriously impede the effective operations of the consumer conciliation body (section 14(2) sentence 1 para 4 VSBG) and a fundamental legal question of significance for assessing the dispute has not been resolved (section 14(2) sentence 1 para 4b VSBG).

3.3.3 Proportion of procedures with no outcome in 2025

Of the 2,199 requests closed in 2025 where there was no reason to refuse the request, 1,376 had no outcome. This corresponds to an increase of around 63%. In 1,145 procedures (around 83%), the request was withdrawn. In 181 cases (around 13%), the postal operator concerned did not participate in the dispute resolution procedure (for example, when the request came from a trader). In 50 cases (around 4%), at least one party refused to accept the dispute resolution proposal.

3.3.4 Average duration of procedures in 2025

In 2025 the procedure took an average of 113 days from the time the request was received to the final conclusion.

The average time from when the complete dispute file was received to when the dispute resolution proposal was made was 85 days.

3.3.5 Cases in 2025 in which the parties kept to the outcome of the procedure

The postal dispute resolution panel has no statistically relevant information on whether or not the parties abided by the outcome of the dispute resolution procedure. As soon as both parties have come to an agreement, usually for a refund, the procedure before the dispute resolution panel is terminated. In a few cases, applicants return to the panel after a procedure because the respondent has not (yet) abided by the agreement and the refund has not been made promptly. In such cases, the postal dispute resolution panel contacts the relevant postal operator again and asks them to clear up the matter promptly and pay the refund.

3.3.6 Proportion of cross-border disputes in 2025

Of all the requests submitted in the year under review, 4,205, or nearly 87.5%, involved postal items sent within Germany. Meanwhile, 599 had a foreign connection, of which 314 (6.6%) were related to the EU and 285

(5.9%) to countries outside the EU. Of the disputes with a foreign connection, generally either the sender or the recipient was based abroad.

Cross-border disputes in 2025

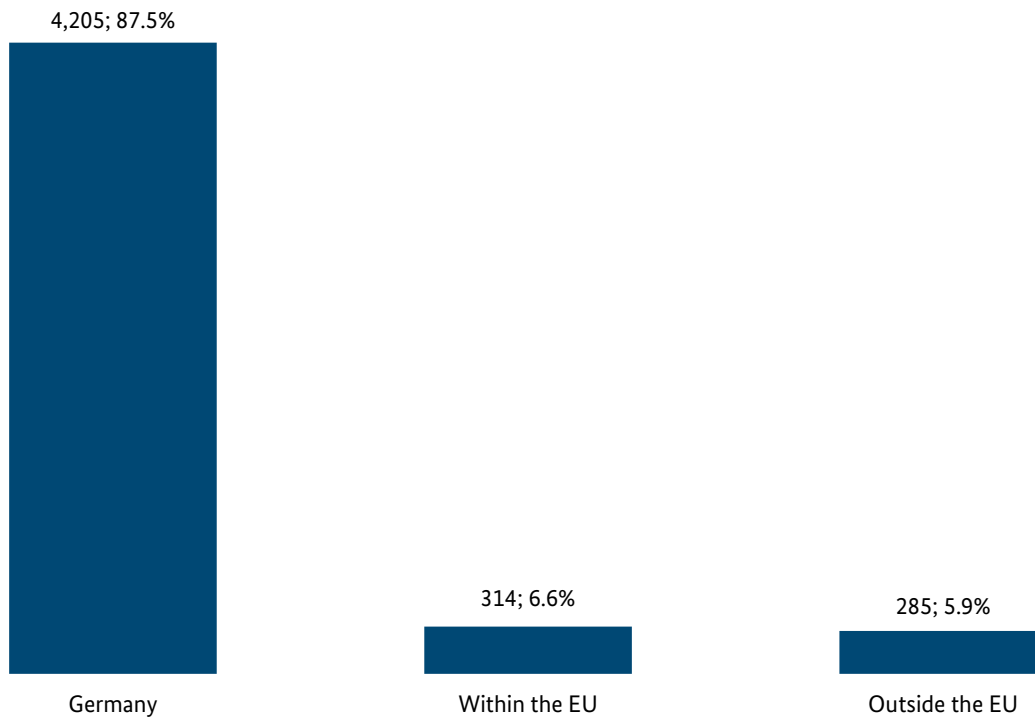


Figure 5: Cross-border disputes in 2025

4 Common problems

Under the statutory requirements, this activity report is to include details of conspicuous business practices and draw attention to systemic failings or those that occurred particularly often during the reporting period and led to requests for dispute resolution.

As in prior years, the majority of the requests for dispute resolution in 2025 were about lost or damaged postal items. The disputes often centred on whether or not the postal operator was actually liable and the subsequent question about the extent of the operator's liability. Whether or not and to what extent a postal operator is liable for loss or damage depends on the contractual agreements and the operator's general terms and conditions usually included in the service contract. The provisions of the German Commercial Code (HGB) relating to freight also apply in most cases. Alternative liability rules usually apply in cross-border disputes.

Many dispute resolution procedures in 2025 were again characterised by difficulties providing evidence. The documents submitted by the parties often showed that the parties had not reached an agreement beforehand

because of problems with providing evidence. As the postal dispute resolution panel cannot collect evidence, these problems are a key factor in the dispute resolution process as well. The difficulties in these procedures include lack of evidence of posting an item, suitable documentation of the value of the contents of an item and sufficiently precise information from the postal operator about the occurrence of damage. These uncertainties are taken into account in the postal dispute resolution panel's mediation process.

4.1 Common problems with lost items

Most dispute resolution requests in 2025 had to do with lost postal items. The following scenarios were most common.

4.1.1 Sending items using parcel lockers

One of the things that digitalisation in the postal sector is leading to is growth in the number of parcel lockers, which many customers use to send or receive postal items. In 2025 the postal dispute resolution panel again received reports of various difficulties customers had using parcel lockers. Many cases involved disputes about whether an item had actually been placed in a locker and whether there had been technical problems.

4.1.2 Liability risks with alternative delivery locations

In 2025 the postal dispute resolution panel also received requests for dispute resolution concerning lost or damaged items for which an alternative delivery location had been agreed. In these cases, the parties were usually in dispute about whether an item had actually been delivered and whether it had been lost or damaged after delivery. Some cases centred on the question of whether the postal operator had provided sufficient information about the delivery. In some cases, the parties were also in dispute about whether an alternative delivery location had actually been agreed.

Various postal operators give their customers the option of designating an alternative place for their items to be left. The postal operators have a rule for leaving items at an alternative place, establishing that an item is considered to have been delivered once it has been left at the designated place and that they are then no longer liable for the item. The postal operators explain that this is because it is not possible to know who is responsible for any loss or damage to an item after it has been left at a designated place.

4.2 Liability issues with damaged items

In 2025 damage to items was again the second most common reason for requesting dispute resolution following loss of items. In damage cases, the parties are typically in dispute over whether the damage occurred due to inadequate packaging or improper conveyance. While a postal operator is generally liable for any damage caused between an item being handed over for transport and the item being delivered, the sender must package the item so that it is protected against damage and does not cause any harm to the postal operator. Which type of packaging is considered adequate depends on the contents of an individual item, the method of conveyance and any special arrangements for transporting the item.

4.3 Liability exclusions for certain types of products

In the year under review the postal dispute resolution panel again received requests for dispute resolution from customers whose postal operator had refused to pay compensation for loss or damage because of the product the customer had used. Postal operators' general terms and conditions state, for example, that they do not accept liability for ordinary letters (without any extra options) or small packets. The Commercial Code

provides the legal basis for limitations on and exemptions from liability. Under the provisions of the Commercial Code, postal operators may exempt certain products from liability or impose limits on the liability through either individual agreements or provisions in their general terms and conditions. In accordance with the Commercial Code, however, these limitations or exemptions do not apply to any damage caused intentionally or recklessly and in the knowledge that damage would probably occur.

4.4 Limitations on or exemptions from liability for prohibited items and items with a value over the limit

In 2025 the postal dispute resolution panel received numerous requests for dispute resolution where the respective postal operator invoked a limitation on or exclusion of liability on the basis of what are called prohibited goods. In their general terms and conditions, postal operators often both prohibit the conveyance of certain items and place limits on the value of an item's contents. Postal operators' general terms and conditions often set a limit of €500, for example, on the value per item. Some items are even totally excluded from conveyance, regardless of their value. The general terms and conditions limit or exclude liability for any items not in accordance with these rules.

Contents that are not permitted are often referred to as prohibited items in the general terms and conditions. They frequently include cash, precious metals, jewellery, precious stones, watches, artwork and antiques as well as dangerous goods and goods that need special handling. Customers with dispute resolution requests relating to these issues often stated that they did not know about the liability limitations and exemptions.

4.5 Cross-border disputes

A large number of postal items are transported across different national borders. As in previous years, in 2025 the postal dispute resolution panel again received requests for dispute resolution relating to international items. These cases raise particular questions about liability compared with domestic items, which are sent both to and from an address in Germany.

First, German postal operators set some of their own individual liability rules for different international products in their general terms and conditions. The liability rules for the same type of product sometimes differ considerably, depending on whether it is domestic or international. Second, the provisions of the Commercial Code relating to freight are often only additionally applicable, if at all.

The question of which rules apply depends partly on the postal operator transporting an item and the countries to and from which the item is being sent. Where the service contracts were made abroad, the postal dispute resolution panel has no information about the contractual agreements and any general terms and conditions of the foreign postal operator that may have been included in the contract or the applicable foreign provisions relating to freight.

5 Recommendations for avoiding or settling disputes

The postal dispute resolution panel sees various recurring issues in the procedures it conducts. The following recommendations are designed to help avoid and settle disputes.

5.1 Serious efforts to reach an agreement before dispute resolution

A condition of accessing dispute resolution is that the postal customer has first tried to reach agreement with the postal operator before making the dispute resolution request.

The postal dispute resolution panel recommends that postal operators take their customers' efforts to reach an agreement seriously and settle the dispute at an early stage. Customers often report not being taken seriously enough by their postal operator and feeling they have been left on their own. Good customer service is a key factor in settling disputes quickly.

Customers are recommended to give their postal operator enough time to clear up the matter and, at least initially, to use the means suggested by the operator to do so. For example, if a postal item has been lost, the postal operator may tell the customer to send an inquiry.

5.2 Postal operators' information about permissible contents

Many disputes are about what customers can or cannot send. Postal operators may or may not accept liability or may limit the amount for which they are liable, depending on whether or not the contents of an item are permissible. Their general terms and conditions sometimes specify what cannot be transported (prohibited items) or put a limit on the value for which they are liable (for example €500 per parcel). Postal operators will not accept liability for items with contents that are not permissible or will only accept limited liability for items with a value over the limit. In such cases, customers often report that they did not know about the liability exclusions or restrictions.

Postal operators are therefore recommended to provide their customers with clear and adequate information about what they can or cannot send and what is excluded from liability.

Customers are recommended to find out about their postal operator's rules on what they can or cannot send and any liability exclusions or limitations before posting their items. Information about this is included in postal operators' general terms and conditions. Customers are recommended to check the information available on their postal operator's website and elsewhere as well as the general terms and conditions before posting an item.

5.3 Choosing the correct product

The postal dispute resolution panel often receives reports of cases in which the postal operator will not accept liability because of the product the customer had chosen.

Postal operators are recommended to provide their customers with clear and adequate information about the correct product for different contents in order to avoid such disputes.

Customers should first be aware that there may be considerable differences in postal operators' terms and conditions depending on the product. Customers are also recommended to find out which product is correct before posting an item, depending on the contents and value of the item. Customers are strongly recommended to check the rules on liability for damaged, lost and stolen items and to consider extra options (such as additional compensation cover).

5.4 Choosing the correct packaging and documentation

When items are damaged, disputes about how the contents of an item were packaged often lead to problems with providing evidence.

Postal operators are recommended to provide their customers with adequate information about the correct packaging for different products and contents.

Customers are recommended to choose the right packaging for what they are sending and to document (for example take a photo of) their packaged item. They should also check whether their postal operator has rules regarding packaging. Postal operators often put their packaging rules for different types of product on their websites.

5.5 Keeping evidence of value and posting

A feature of many dispute resolution procedures is disagreement between the parties about the value of the item or the posting of it.

The panel recommends postal operators to provide their customers with reliable evidence of the handing over or delivery of postal items.

Customers are recommended to keep documents that can provide clear evidence of the value of the contents of an item and of the handover of the item. These documents can often help in a dispute to calculate the exact damage and have the postal operator pay compensation.

6 Indications of structural barriers to settling disputes

The postal dispute resolution panel did not find evidence of structural barriers to resolving disputes in 2025.

7 Cooperation with other consumer conciliation bodies in networks to resolve cross-border disputes

The Bundesnetzagentur's postal dispute resolution panel was part of the Commission's European Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform. However, in 2024 no requests for dispute resolution were forwarded to the postal dispute resolution panel through the ODR platform. The ODR was discontinued on 20 July 2025.

There was no further cooperation with other consumer conciliation bodies in networks to resolve cross-border disputes in 2025.

8 Outlook

The record number of dispute resolution requests received in the year under review will continue to influence the activities of the postal dispute resolution panel this year.

The postal dispute resolution panel sees itself as a neutral point of contact for consumers. Society's growing need to reach out-of-court settlements with postal operators when there is a dispute will also be met in 2026.

The postal dispute resolution panel will again contribute to an independent and fair conflict resolution between postal operators and their customers and in doing so also contribute to relieving the courts.

List of figures

Figure 1: Dispute resolution requests and other submissions 2014-2025	7
Figure 2: Reasons for dispute resolution requests 2025	8
Figure 3: Dispute resolution requests by product type in 2025	8
Figure 4: Outcome of closed dispute resolution requests in 2025	9
Figure 5: Cross-border disputes in 2025	11

List of abbreviations

EU	European Union
HGB	Handelsgesetzbuch (German Commercial Code)
PostG	Postgesetz (Postal Act)
PostSchliV	Post-Schlichtungsverordnung (Postal Dispute Resolution Ordinance)
VSBG	Verbraucherstreitbeilegungsgesetz (Act on Alternative Dispute Resolution in Consumer Matters)
VSBInfoV	Verbraucherstreitbeilegungs-Informationspflichtenverordnung (Ordinance on the Obligations to Furnish and Report Information as per the Consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution Act)

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