



# 7 Costly EU Shipping Mistakes Swedish Brands Make

And how to avoid them with a smart  
fulfilment strategy in Europe

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# Shipping from Sweden to the EU

More and more Swedish brands are successfully selling outside their home market. Orders from Germany, France, the Benelux and other EU markets are growing year after year. Europe feels like the logical next step.

But that growth also brings new challenges. What started as **“sending an occasional parcel to Germany”** turns into structural flows to multiple countries, with higher customer expectations.

If your logistics do not keep up, costs, complexity and frustration rise quickly. High shipping costs per order, slow delivery times, many questions and declining review scores put immediate pressure on your margins and on your brand.

In many cases it is not the products or the marketing that slow down growth, but exactly these logistical pitfalls.

## Mistake #1

# Treating EU shipping as a side issue

Many Swedish brands start with EU shipping by copying their existing Swedish setup. The thinking is often:

**“We’ve already arranged everything for Sweden, let’s just add a few EU-options.”**

You keep all inventory in Sweden, add one international carrier and offer a generic shipping option in the checkout. In practice, this is exactly where EU shipping remains a side issue. No separate strategy is created for Europe and no clear delivery promises per country are defined. The result: high costs per order, inconsistent delivery times and a lot of manual work to smooth out exceptions and problems.

The solution is to stop seeing the EU as “extra sales” and start treating it as a fully fledged growth market. That means making conscious choices:

- ✓ Which countries get priority?
- ✓ What delivery time do you want to offer there?
- ✓ Which delivery options fit?
- ✓ How do you design your fulfilment to support that?

## Mistake #2

# Shipping everything directly from Sweden

A second common mistake is to keep shipping everything from Sweden, even when most of your growth comes from other EU countries.

In the start-up phase this is logical, because you have one warehouse, one process and one team. But as volumes increase, the downsides become more visible. Shipments to Germany, France or Southern Europe quickly take 5 to 8 days. That is hard to justify in a market where many competitors deliver within one to two days. Shipping costs per order are higher because you are constantly shipping cross-border instead of regionally.

The impact on your business is direct. Conversion in the checkout drops because customers abandon when they see longer delivery times or high shipping costs. There are fewer positive reviews due to slow delivery. There are fewer repeat purchases because the delivery experience does not match what customers are used to from other webshops.

### Shipping from Sweden to other EU countries

- ✘ Long delivery times (5–8 days).
- ✘ Hard to compete with 1–2 day local delivery.
- ✘ Higher cross-border shipping costs.
- ✘ Lower checkout conversion.
- ✘ Fewer positive reviews.
- ✘ Fewer repeat purchases.

### Working with a central EU-fulfilment centre

- ✔ Faster EU-wide delivery.
- ✔ More stable delivery experience.
- ✔ Lower regional shipping costs.
- ✔ Efficient bulk shipments from Sweden.
- ✔ Better performance with local carriers.
- ✔ Higher customer satisfaction and retention.

A structural solution is to work with a central EU-fulfilment centre, for example in the Netherlands, combined with local carriers per country. You send bulk shipments from Sweden to the hub, and from there individual orders are shipped quickly and efficiently to your EU customers. This reduces delivery times, lowers shipping costs per order and creates a more stable delivery experience.

## Mistake #3

# Relying on a single carrier for all EU-markets

Another classic mistake is choosing one carrier that has to do everything in Europe. Convenient on paper, but logistically and commercially often an expensive choice. No single carrier is equally strong in all countries. What works fine in Germany may be much weaker in France or Italy, and vice versa. In addition, customer expectations differ strongly per country. In some markets parcel lockers and pick-up points are the norm, in others people mainly expect home delivery with time slots. One carrier can rarely serve all these preferences optimally.

The solution is a multi-carrier strategy in which you look per region or per country at which carriers best fit your target group and service promise. Efulfilment Europe works by default with multiple carriers and can suggest the best mix per country. Thanks to our tailor-made software you can manage this mix centrally, without having to handle separate contracts and integrations with all these parties yourself.





## Mistake #4

# Not enough control over inventory and data

Many problems in EU logistics can be traced back to one core issue: you lack real-time control over inventory and data. Inventory is entirely in Sweden, while part of it should actually be closer to the customer. As a result, out-of-stocks, overselling and high safety stocks occur more often, especially when you sell through multiple channels. Without solid data per country it becomes difficult to steer. You might see total EU-volume, but not which countries are really growing fast, which SKUs perform where and how return behaviour differs per market. Decisions on purchasing, inventory positions and marketing actions are then based more on gut feeling than on facts.

The solution starts with a fulfilment and IT-setup that supports real-time inventory management. You want to see in a single dashboard what is in the EU hub, what is in Sweden, which inventory is reserved, what is inbound and what is coming back as returns. Integrations with your webshop, marketplaces and possibly ERP are essential for this. The Efulfilment Europe platform is built exactly for this. You get central dashboards with real-time data, linked to your sales channels. This allows you to manage demand, inventory and performance per EU-country and avoid costly mistakes such as structural overstock or stockouts.

## Mistake #5

# Underestimating returns and reverse logistics

Returns are often already a challenge in Sweden, but in other EU countries return behaviour can be even more intensive, especially in categories such as fashion, shoes and lifestyle. Many brands set up their EU logistics primarily around outbound shipping, while returns remain something of a side issue. The result is ad hoc solutions, manual processing in Sweden and many hidden costs. Slow and unclear return processes lead to frustrated customers and extra pressure on customer service. Shipments that have to go back to Sweden are expensive and take a lot of time. Products sit idle for long periods and are sometimes only put back on sale very late, causing you to miss out on revenue.

The solution is to treat returns as a fully fledged part of your EU-setup from day one. That means a clear return policy per product category, clear timelines and a return flow that matches customers' expectations in different countries. Ideally, you work with local return addresses in the EU and a standardised process for inspection, resale and write-off. With Efulfilment Europe you can handle returns within the EU, close to the customer. Our processes and tools are designed for fast processing and clear feedback. This way you cut costs, keep inventory moving and improve the overall customer experience.





## Mistake #6

# Choosing a fulfilment partner that cannot scale

Some brands do switch to a fulfilment partner, but choose a party that cannot grow with them. The warning signs often show up early: limited storage capacity, rigid contracts, little experience with cross-border flows and an IT landscape that is mainly set up for one country or one sales channel.

The solution is to choose a partner from the start that has scalability in its DNA. You want a party with international warehouses or at least a central hub with proven cross-border experience, scalable technology and processes that are used to increasing volumes. Contractually you need flexibility instead of hard ceilings.

Efulfilment Europe has been working with international webshops and brands for more than twenty years. Our central hub in the Netherlands, combined with scalable software and a team that is used to peaks and international growth, ensures that you don't have to switch fulfilment partners with every growth spurt. You build on one foundation instead of having to start over each time.



## Mistake #7

# Not measuring the right KPIs

Many teams mainly look at one number: shipping cost per order. Important, but if that is your only steering metric, you miss the real story. You can, for example, have low shipping costs but consistently deliver too late, have many failed first delivery attempts and a customer serviceteam flooded with questions. On paper your logistics then look “efficient”, while your brand is taking damage.

For healthy EU logistics you need a broader set of KPIs. Average delivery time per country, the first-attempt delivery rate, the number of customer service contacts related to delivery, customer satisfaction around delivery and the percentage of repeat purchases together give a much better picture.

A simple dashboard in which these KPIs are visible per country makes a huge difference. You see where carriers perform well, where return rates are off and in which markets you are not living up to your delivery promise. Based on that, you can implement targeted improvements. Efulfilment Europe provides standard reports and dashboards that go beyond just cost per shipment. With our tailor-made software you get insight into the KPIs that really matter, so your EU logistics are not a black box but a part of the business you actively manage.

# From costly mistakes to competitive advantage

Looking at the seven mistakes, you see a pattern. They are not complicated, exotic problems, but the familiar issues that have “just crept in”.

The good news is that because these mistakes are so common, the solutions are also well known. By treating the EU as a serious growth market, placing inventory closer to the customer in a central EU-fulfilment centre, choosing the right carrier mix per country, getting your data in order and organising returns professionally, you turn the situation around. Logistics stop being a cost centre you are constantly chasing and become a competitive advantage you can lead with.

With a partner like Efulfilment Europe you don't have to figure this out on your own. Our 20+ years of experience, proprietary software, personal approach and short lines to the warehouse ensure that you can skip these mistakes and set up a scalable model from the start. And thanks to onboarding that can often go live within a week with a first pilot, it doesn't stop at making plans – you actually start noticing the difference in practice.

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