

Postal services: further opening to competition

2000/0139(COD) - 23/03/2005 - Follow-up document

This Report is a follow-up to the first Commission Report on the Application of Postal Directive 97/67 which was submitted at the end of 2002. The Report presents the summary of the main conclusions drawn from the analysis provided in the Commission Staff Working Paper (SEC(2005) 388) which assesses in details the overall transposition of the Postal Directive in Member States, the application of key elements of the Directive as well as general market trends (including economic, technical, social, employment and quality of services aspects). In addition, it provides an outline of the perspective and recommendations for future policy development.

The Report confirms that, in sum, the reform of the postal sector in the EU is well on track. Though not yet completed, it has already resulted in a number of significant improvements notably as regards quality of services, improved business efficiency, and the separation of regulators from operators. The role of postal services remains vital in delivering the benefits of the Internal Market to citizens, consumers and business.

This reinforces the need to consider how to move towards more effective and better regulation and an Internal Market for postal services in order to ensure better services for all consumers, including commercial customers and end consumers (greater choice, access, innovation, quality, price options.).

The postal market is at a crucial stage in its development. The Report discusses the further steps needed to promote actual competition in the market, while addressing the end-consumer concerns. It also makes a series of recommendations.

Facilitate the conditions for further modernisation: The postal market is evolving quickly. The clear challenge for regulators and operators is to seize the opportunities. Postal organisations are becoming increasingly flexible in the provision of tailored services to clients. Some of the public postal operators have taken advantage of the gradual opening of the market provided by the Directive to reorganise and modernise. Those who did not seize the opportunities of the last few years and commit themselves to reforms are now coming under market pressure to do so. Further regulatory initiatives may be needed to secure the benefits of a postal internal market for all customers.

Respect the timetable set in the Directive: It is essential to maintain (in parallel) the pace of regulatory reform and respect the timetable set in the Directive for accomplishing the Internal Market for postal services. Developments to date provide no evidence supporting the need for a change of the deadlines set out in the Postal Directive.

Monitor carefully regulatory developments: On critical issues, such as market opening, universal service (quality of services, prices, accessibility from the perspective of the various stakeholders categories) the Commission will carefully monitor developments, and where appropriate take the necessary steps to ensure that Member States meet the requirements set out in the Postal Directive.

Intensify cooperation on regulatory issues: In order to tackle the more complex technical issues (such as licensing, access, regulatory accounting, or market data), the Commission intends to assist NRAs by working on bilateral co-operation between the services of the Commission and the NRA, and technical cooperation at the European level within the framework of the Postal Directive Committee.

Promote an in depth debate on the future postal policy: In light of the rapid evolution of the global communication market, and in the view of the 2006 deadline, it is necessary to open as soon as possible

the debate on the future of postal policies to a wide audience, including all stakeholders (public and private operators, customers, consumer associations, social partners, NRAs, Ministries, experts, academics, and industry) at national level as well as at EU level.

In addition to analysing the merits of retaining or removing the reserved area, the debate will need to address key issues such as how to best promote the postal sector, how to ensure the financing of the universal service, and what kind of postal universal service is needed in the future. It will also be necessary to assess the situation in the Member States where the reserved services have been removed, including from an end-consumer perspective. With this in mind, the Commission is launching two studies, on the development of competition and the evolution of the regulatory model for European postal services.