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To:

- Designated operators of Union member countries

For information to:

- Restricted unions
- UPU regional offices

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Subject: Invitation to participate in the quality management certification of designated operators

Dear Sir/Madam,

With traditional postal mail on the decline, e-commerce volumes on the rise and heavy competition in the postal market, designated operators (DOs) face new demands and need to achieve ever better performance. It has therefore been essential to revise the UPU quality of service certification methodology, taking it from an initial phase aimed primarily at raising awareness to a more rigorous certification phase, based on industry and market needs.

Consequently, at its 2023.1 session (S3), the Postal Operations Council (POC) adopted a new certification methodology, whose principal aim is to evaluate not only the extent to which quality management procedures are applied in postal enterprise structures, but also the way in which postal operations are organized and carried out, as this forms the basis for the ongoing improvement of the international postal network.

DOs that have an internal quality of service assurance system for cross-border mail products and services can request that their system be assessed by engaging in the UPU certification process. This UPU certification is a means of continuous quality of service improvement and allows DOs to evaluate the effectiveness of their end-to-end quality system and operational processes, as well as the management of their electronic data interchange (EDI) messages, and the reliability of their transportation and distribution network.

Based on the satisfaction of end customers, this evaluation also examines the interface with internal customers (including the inquiry and complaint system and the involvement of staff), as well as with stakeholders such as airlines, Customs, and safety and security authorities.

This new certification system, which focuses on the management of international quality of service, aims to provide a level playing field to evaluate DOs, irrespective of a country's level of development. The evaluation is based on questionnaire responses (including prerequisites), performance results and an on-site audit.

The certification procedure can be summarized as follows:

- Application – prerequisites and questionnaire: A DO wishing to be certified must first assess whether it fulfils all the prerequisites (indicated in the questionnaire). It must then send the International Bureau (IB) a request for certification, accompanied by a completed questionnaire and the required supporting documents (see POC C 2 2023.1–Doc 3c. Annex 2);

- Quality of service performance results: In addition to the responses provided in the questionnaire and in order to ascertain whether the DO is a viable candidate for certification, the IB will gather and review the DO's annual performance results from various sources: IB reports, EDI messages, and performance measurement systems used by the UPU. This data will be summarized in a special document ("results sheet") presenting the DO's quality of service performance (see POC C 2 2023.1–Doc 3c. Annex 3);
- On-site audit: A consultant will be sent to the country to verify the information provided in the questionnaire and make any necessary corrections based on the data collected at all levels within the operator's organization. The audit will include the DO's international sorting centre(s), office(s) of exchange and other relevant facilities. This audit is used to determine the extent to which the operational and quality management requirements are fulfilled. The audit findings are designed to assess the effectiveness of operational processes and quality management, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

The financial conditions remain unchanged to allow all countries to participate in the certification process. The contribution rates are 3,000 CHF for the DOs of least developed countries, and 7,000 CHF for those of all other countries. It should, however, be noted that this financial contribution will be billed only if the DO applying for certification meets the new methodology's prerequisites and reaches the third level of the process, which includes the on-site audit mission by a consultant to determine whether the requirements of the quality management system have been satisfied.

The new certification system comprises three levels: Gold (level A), Silver (level B) and Bronze (level C). Certification is valid for a three-year period, with an annual validation based on actual performance, to ensure that the appropriate standards are maintained.

Therefore, certification is a way to continually improve quality of service, and can be communicated through the media to customers and the public, so as to raise awareness of DOs' efforts. The fact that a DO receives certification demonstrates that the DO has a good system for quality of service management, and that it is capable of taking steps to improve quality of service in both the short and long term.

Within the framework of the operational readiness for e-commerce project (ORE 3), the IB is organizing regional hands-on training workshops to assist the participating DOs in improving quality of service – which is crucial for delivery performance in the postal network – and in the subsequent implementation of UPU quality management certification.

/ I am therefore pleased to enclose a copy of the new certification methodology and questionnaire (Annexes 1
/ and 2 hereto; published at S3 as POC C 2 2023.1–Doc 3c. Annexes 1 and 2). The document summarizing
/ DOs' performance in the quality of service field (published at S3 as POC C 2 2023.1–Doc 3c. Annex 3), which
/ the IB uses for data collection, is also attached to this letter for your information (Annex 3). These documents
are also available on the UPU website (www.upu.int/en/Postal-Solutions/Programmes-Services/Quality-of-service/Certification).

DOs wishing to apply for certification from the fourth quarter of 2023 onwards are requested to complete and submit the application questionnaire to the IB and upload the required supporting documents.

On receipt of a certification request, the IB will conduct an analysis thereof. The DO must meet the prerequisites and obtain a minimum of 43 points (out of a total of 114 points) in order to continue with the certification procedure. If the information provided in response to the questionnaire is unsatisfactory, the IB may request further details and develop an improvement action plan, as required.

For further information, please contact Mr Chokri Ellili, Quality Improvement Programme Manager (tel: +41 31 350 35 87, e-mail: chokri.ellili@upu.int), and Mr Mirko Ponti, Quality Improvement Programme Assistant (tel: +41 31 350 35 33, e-mail: mirko.ponti@upu.int).

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

Masahiko Metoki
Director General