

## **CONTINUOUS TESTING OF INTERNATIONAL POSTAL SERVICE QUALITY**

### **A. General description**

The Universal Postal Union has introduced the continuous testing of transmission times for international priority letter-post items. This method has been developed in order to provide postal administrations with a simple, effective tool for measuring international quality of service.

The main characteristics of the testing are as follows:

- the tests are of the "end-to-end" variety (test letters posted in letter boxes and delivered to the private addresses of test participants);
- the testing is continuous (the test letters are posted continuously, six days a week);
- the geographical distribution of test participants has been simplified and in principle, participants are located in cities;
- to guarantee the independence of the results, the data on posting and delivery are processed separately and transmitted via the Internet to the neutral and independent body (Universal Postal Union's International Bureau), which combines and checks them and produces the results;
- the detailed results are processed confidentially, unless the administrations concerned agree to restricted or general publication.

### **B. Participation of postal administrations in continuous testing and test volume**

In February 2002, ten postal administrations, from three continents, launched the continuous testing pilot phase. By December 2003, at the end of this pilot phase, 120 international links, with the participation of 35 administrations, had already been tested.

Since February 2004, the continuous method has been rolled-out worldwide, with a participation of approximately 350 international links. Each week, some 4,000 test letters are posted in more than 90 countries from all regions of the world.

UPU continuous testing is restricted to those international links for which at least one of the partners is the postal administration of a developing country. The links between industrialized countries, whose quality is usually higher, are the subject of a separate quality test. For details, click here <http://www.ipc.be/pubs.asp>

### **C. Method of calculation and statistical accuracy of the results**

The method of calculation excludes Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Example: The transmission time for an item posted on Thursday (day "J") and delivered on Tuesday is J+3.

**Note:** The calculation methods are adjusted accordingly for countries whose day without delivery is other than Sunday.

The accuracy of the overall quarterly result, which depends on the number of test letters and on the percentage delivered within J+5, varies between 0.5 and 2%, with a reliability indicator of 95%.

The statistical accuracy of the regional quarterly results varies between 1 and 8%.