



The hidden parts of historic relations: the founding of the Universal Postal Union and Türkiye's membership

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The Universal Postal Union was established with the purpose of unifying special agreements, the variety of rates, different dispatch conditions, and diversity of charges with regard to international exchanges of mail. In this context, the foundation of the UPU not only brought an end to operational difficulties between nations, but also made it possible for populations and administrative institutions to be directly involved in the course of postal development.

The UPU Convention was drawn up during meetings which took place at the first international postal congress held between 15 September and 9 October 1874, and was signed by 22 states, including Türkiye, on 9 October 1874 in Berne. As one of the most notable achievements of the 19th century, the UPU has become the linchpin of universal values and socioeconomic interactions among nations as well as the enabler of smooth flows of international exchange of postal items.

It is worth noting that the Berne Congress marked Türkiye's initial and most significant venture onto the global stage, indicating the country's recognition of the importance of international cooperation and its role in ensuring communication and understanding across diverse regions and communities. Given its geographical location, situated at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa, Türkiye's participation was instrumental in creating a unified postal zone where people from diverse cultures could receive postal services with equivalent standards. The UPU's ideal of a single postal territory was a strong demonstration of a joint commitment in creating a space where people from different backgrounds and affiliations could connect and engage with one another. Therefore, the UPU's reach extended to populations in need of unified postal products and services, with Türkiye's position serving as a gateway to vast territories.

In comparison to the decisive and constructive influence of other members on the development of international mail, Türkiye had the chance to become a party to international postal negotiations for the first time in history in 1874. Although the original reason for Türkiye's UPU membership was the closure of European post offices on its territories, as time progressed Türkiye lent considerable support to ensure the uniformity of postal standards in the new international postal order. In spite of Türkiye's deep-rooted ties and its long cooperation with the UPU, the mutual relations have not yet been the subject of academic studies. There is very little information in postal literature shedding light on Türkiye's UPU membership and its relations with the UPU. In addition to elaborating on the negotiations surrounding the Turkish postal administration's efforts to join the UPU and the attempts to close down foreign Posts operating in Türkiye, this article examines the politics and realities of the UPU membership based on the differential involvements of member countries, and also the development of operational aspects that positively contributed to the operational competence of Türkiye's postal administration.