

# UNION POSTALE

Moving the postal sector forward since 1875 | Summer 2020



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**E-COMMERCE  
GUIDE**



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## UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in seven languages and takes a closer look at UPU activities, featuring international news and developments from the postal sector.

The magazine regularly publishes well researched articles on topical issues facing the industry, as well as interviews with the sector's leading individuals. It is distributed widely to the UPU's 192 member countries, including thousands of decision-makers from governments and Posts, as well as other postal stakeholders. All regard it as an important source of information about the UPU and the postal sector at large.

UNION POSTALE is also published in French, Arabic, Chinese, German, Russian and Spanish.

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### Summer 2020

*Refers to the season in the country of publication.*

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As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to shape thoughts and actions, it is important to understand that the virus has revealed the postal industry and the UPU at their very best.

Due to a recent UPU report, we know that the virus devastated the international postal network. Massive numbers of flight cancellations led to a virtual standstill unparalleled in our history. From 23 January to 14 May, postal volumes fell a vertiginous 21 percent compared to the previous year, while in May only one out of two items reached their destination.

Such figures are profoundly worrying, and I had genuine fears about how the international postal network would fare during this period. Although the financial fallout from the pandemic has yet to rain down upon us, I think there are positive signs.

# This pandemic has revealed the essential nature of our sector

Adaptability and innovation are essential elements of the postal industry. In recent months, I have seen numerous signs of this throughout the postal network. Instead of hunkering down and simply weathering the storm, postal operators have come out prepared to seize new opportunities. The result is a series of developments not only reinforcing the industry's resilience, but also confirming what I have long known – the industry's courageousness.

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**From 23 January to 14 May, postal volumes fell a vertiginous 21 percent compared to the previous year, while in May only one out of two items reached their destination.**

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I do not use the word courage lightly. Stepping into the sorting office, walking the deserted streets and delivering customers' mail were all acts of bravery. These individuals fully deserved the title "essential worker" and they showed tremendous dedication and commitment, just as doctors and nurses have done. A cruel price was also paid, and I mourn the loss of every single postal worker who died due to this terrible virus. My sincerest condolences to their families, friends and loved ones.

Throughout the pandemic, I also saw postal operators changing business models in

order to meet the lightning changes in customer demands. Examples of these swift adaptations include support for older members of society, assistance to pharmacies, provisions of medical equipment, and deliveries of pension payments. All of these efforts showed the world the high degree of innovation and agility existing among postal operators.

I believe there is a possible dividend flowing from our collective experience. A dividend based on the postal sector having reinforced its trusted position within societies, showed the depth and breadth of its invaluable services and highlighted to governments and ministries the strength and resilience of its infrastructure. We must now capitalize on this platform.

Then there is the UPU. In these difficult months where staff have operated together while being apart, I have been moved by the organization's performance. In monitoring, in analysis, and in operations, we have constantly gone beyond the call of duty. In the bleak depths of this crisis, we have found our true nature as an organization prepared to assist postal operators at every level, and in every possible way, to ensure the mail keeps moving.

To achieve this worthy goal, we have helped break down administrative barriers, created new routes and used new delivery methods all in the name of the universal service obligation. Every staff member has my warmest congratulations for all their efforts in recent months. Thank you.

**Bishar A. Hussein**, Director General,  
Universal Postal Union

## EDITOR'S NOTE

# DELIVERING GOOD

Over the last several months, COVID-19 has sent many of us into our homes, distancing us from our loved ones, our colleagues and our "normal" lives. While many of our daily routines have been turned upside down, one thing has remained constant – regular visits from our trusty postie.

While Posts have certainly felt the brunt of economic and safety measures implemented to halt the pandemic – as you will note in our feature on postal economics – they have also been steadfast in their dedication to the people they serve. As you will read in our cover story, they are essential service providers, not only of mail, but also of many other important social services.

Here in Switzerland, the UPU's postal experts have been hard at work to keep the mail moving. Our interview with the UPU's Director of Postal Operations, Abdelilah Bousseta, highlights the many challenges UPU has helped its member countries and their postal operators overcome.

As always, I wish you happy reading.

**Kayla Redstone**, Editor-in-chief



# Introducing the **UPU World Leaders Forum**

TEXT: David Dadge

The UPU's new postal event encourages greater dialogue on leadership.

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**Leadership is not simply tied to those in charge; we must also recognize those within organizations who are showing the way forward on matters of creativity and innovation.**

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A report released in May by the Universal Postal Union showed postal volumes falling by a calamitous 21 percent in the period 23 January to 14 May.

The report found that, on average, only one of every two postal items reach their destinations in the same week. These are changes almost unheard of across the international postal network.

Faced by the biggest postal upheavals since World War II, postal operations have shown great resilience by changing their operations in order to meet the needs of customers during the ongoing storm.

Postal operators have checked in on vulnerable and isolated individuals, delivered life-saving medicines, and created a pharmacy, among many other critical activities.

Throughout the pandemic, postal employees, viewed as essential employees, have continued to deliver services courageously.

Given these dramatic changes to Posts' business models, the Universal Postal Union has sought to introduce fresh changes to its own high-profile event at the Parcel and Post Expo to be held in Vienna, Austria.

Originally titled the World Postal Business Forum, the UPU has changed the name to the World Leaders Forum – a recognition of the leadership show by postal operators during the pandemic.

The new event takes place on 12 October, the first day of the 2020 Parcel and Post Expo, the largest international parcel and postal exhibition.

Leadership is not simply tied to those in charge; we must also recognize those within organizations who are showing the way forward on matters of creativity and innovation. The new event also introduces a new format to encourage discussion.

"The Forum is the first major opportunity this year for leaders in the post, parcel and logistics industry to meet together and review the impact of the global pandemic. Participants will have an opportunity to consider how the sector has reinforced its value as a vital service, particularly for logistics and delivery services – and, crucially, to reflect on what has been learnt and what has now changed," said Derek Osborn, international postal business coach and the Forum's moderator.



**WHAT LEADERS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING:**

**A platform for change:** Digital and business transformation in the marketplace

**Culture eats strategy for breakfast:** CEO panel on leading cultural change

**Posts and pandemics:** The hard lessons of COVID-19

**Starting again:** Business recovery and innovation in the last mile

**NEXT STEPS FOR THE SECTOR**

Attendees will divide themselves between two subject streams and will sit together in small learning groups. The moderator will invite everyone to engage in discussions founded on their experiences of the international postal network.

In the morning, the World Leaders Forum will open with an in-depth interview of UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein by Paul Needham of CEP Research. The interview is titled, "Looking to the future, learning from the past."

Afterwards, the audience will listen to keynote speakers, including the CEO of Emirates Post, Peter Somers.

After a break, participants will then be split into two streams to discuss "Posts and pandemics: The hard lessons of COVID-19," and "Starting again: Business recovery and the role of marketing." The streams include a panel discussion and questions and answers.

Following lunch, the Forum offers a stream titled, "A platform for change: Digital and business transformation in the market place" and one called "Culture eats strategy for breakfast: CEO panel on leading cultural change."

The Forum ends with a plenary session bringing together the day's themes and a consideration of the industry's future challenges and priorities. A special drinks reception hosted by the Escher group will be held at the end of the session.

Alongside the Forum, and throughout the Expo, visitors can attend the UPU stand (n° 800) to hear live talks provided by experts from the UPU, including the UPU's highly innovative Postal Technology Centre (PTC).

A special welcoming dinner will be held on the eve of the Forum for the CEOs of postal operators and their specially invited guests. The dinner will be held in the Vienna hills and offers an opportunity to sample both

splendid views of the capital and Austrian cuisine.

Stressing the Forum's importance, Osborn adds, "The traditional postal sector was already embarking on digital transformation and the culture change necessary to underpin that – and in an increasingly digitally connected world, that imperative is even greater. Postal businesses in the forefront of this change will share their experiences in a roundtable forum, which will provide a rich opportunity to exchange insights and latest ideas. Don't miss out on it!" **DD**

**The UPU's World Leaders Forum**

Parcel and Post Expo  
12 October 2020, Vienna, Austria

For further information,  
contact [post-expo@upu.int](mailto:post-expo@upu.int)



# CONGRESS POSTPONED

Due to the global spread of COVID-19, the UPU and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire have decided to postpone the Congress until it can be held safely.

TEXT: Kayla Redstone

The UPU's 27<sup>th</sup> Universal Postal Congress was set to be held 10 to 28 August in Abidjan.

While it has been difficult to determine definitive new dates due to the evolving global situation, UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein said the organization would work with the host country to select new dates once the situation was deemed safe.

"Naturally, the health and safety of delegates, participants and citizens of the host country will be given priority when selecting new dates," he said.

In a note to all member countries, Ivorian Vice-President Daniel Kablan Duncan reaffirmed his country's commitment to host the quadrennial meeting.

"More so than ever, Africa, and Côte d'Ivoire in particular, remains committed to hosting the 27<sup>th</sup> UPU Congress in Abidjan – the second to be held on African soil since Egypt in 1934 – as soon as the worldwide pandemic situation allows," said the Vice-President.

The Vice-President assured members that the country's national organizing committee was continuing their preparations for the Congress with the support of the UPU's International Bureau.

"Our solidarity in the face of this worldwide health challenge should serve to strengthen the universal postal community as never before," he added.

This Congress is not the first to be postponed due to exceptional circumstances. The Madrid Congress was postponed from 1912 to 1920 due to developments leading up to the First World War. Similarly, the Second World War saw the Paris Congress moved from 1944 to 1947.

The UPU will continue operating under the conditions decided by the Istanbul Congress until the next Congress can be held. Member countries will decide the next four-year work plan – referred to as the Abidjan World Postal Strategy – when they convene at the 27<sup>th</sup> Universal Postal Congress. **KR**

"Our solidarity in the face of this worldwide health challenge should serve to strengthen the universal postal community as never before"

For more information, including a list of frequently asked questions about the postponement, please see [www.upu.int/en/congress](http://www.upu.int/en/congress).



# UPU to help protect postal workers

Nearly 1.2 million masks have been procured and are ready for shipment to 36 Posts in least developed countries (LDCs).

TEXT: Kayla Redstone

The project, which was organized by the UPU in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), will assist Posts in the LDCs with the much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE). Each Post will receive 32,400 masks through the initiative.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruptions to daily life, including lockdowns, many countries have recognized postal services as essential and have allowed them to continue their operations. Postal workers have been on the frontlines, not only delivering regular mail, but also

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**“Postal staff on the frontlines were our first priority.”**

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assisting with the distribution of essential medical supplies and other goods, as well as providing social services.

Speaking on the project, the UPU’s Director of Development Cooperation, Rudy Cuadra, said, “Postal staff on the frontlines were our first priority. They can only continue to serve others daily if they remain healthy and, naturally, this project came about with the aim of protecting the health of postal employees around the world.”

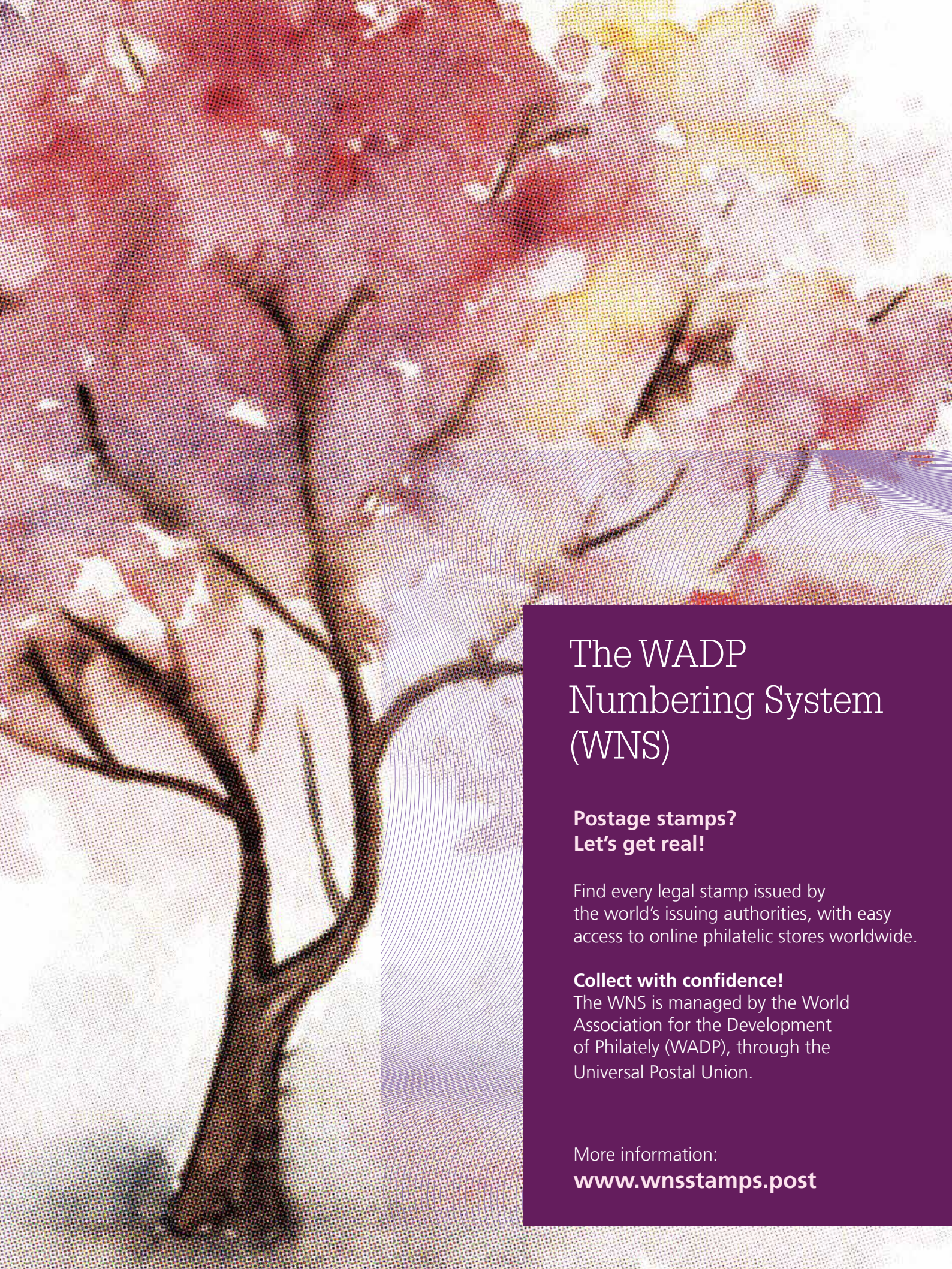
The masks have been provided thanks to funds from the UPU’s development cooperation budget, as well as special contributions from China (People’s Rep.), France, Japan and Switzerland. UNOPS has assisted with procuring the masks and ensuring their shipment to the selected countries, despite widespread supply shortages and transport disruptions due to COVID-19.

Sandra Bonfigli, who works in the Procurement Unit of the UPU’s Development Cooperation Directorate (DCDEV) and is helping to coordinate the project, says experience and partnership have been essential to the project’s success.

“DCDEV includes regional programmes with on-the-ground expertise, a disaster-risk-management unit and a goods and services procurement unit. Having this experience under one roof has made it much easier to implement the project,” she says.

She adds that the team has relied on UNOPS’s experience to “to find the quickest and most secure means of transporting the equipment to beneficiary countries.”

The UPU will also look into securing other forms of PPE, such as gloves and hand sanitizer, once these materials become more readily available. **KR**



## The WADP Numbering System (WNS)

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More information:

**[www.wnsstamps.post](http://www.wnsstamps.post)**

Julia Bazukina joined the UPU in 2006, after working in the Russian Post's EMS Department since the very first day the postal operator launched the express mail service (EMS). She learned the ins and outs of EMS while establishing operations and agreements with other Posts, setting up a tracking system and a call center for customers, organizing training for staff – preparing her for her future role with the UPU.

"This was a very intense and fruitful time," she says.

Upon joining the UPU, Bazukina was responsible for performance improvements in North America, the Caribbean, and Europe, later becoming an EMS Customer Service Expert for the EMS Cooperative. Bazukina felt grateful for the opportunity to share her experience with many Posts through preparing workshops, guiding them through performance reports and analysis, and helping them apply this knowledge to their work.

Bazukina now works as an EMS Standards and Measurement Manager. Over the past ten years, her team has been implementing different projects, such as EMS Standards and Procedures, an EMS Standard Agreement, the EMS Operational Guide, and the EMS Audit and Measurement Programme focused on the performance reporting and pay-for-performance accounting. The tools produced by her team facilitate the cooperation between postal operators exchanging EMS items.

"When EMS Cooperative members reach out to us and we can help them, it makes our work meaningful. I like this part of my job a lot, it is interesting and fulfilling."

One of Bazukina's recent projects has been the development of a modern EMS Operational Guide and an EMS Simple Monitoring and Reporting Tool (EMS SMART). It has been challenging to prepare specifications and requirements for such a complex reporting system based on tracking data, and to find individual solutions for EMS Cooperative members with different operational requirements. Now complete, EMS SMART gives EMS Cooperative members their own tailor-made reporting tool.



*Name*  
**Julia Bazukina**

*Directorate*  
**Postal Operations**

*Position*  
**EMS Standards and Measurement Manager**

*Nationality*  
**Russian**

*Languages*  
**Russian (mother tongue), English, Italian, French, German**

"It has been a tough couple of years, but they have been so rewarding. Members' feedback means a lot to me," says Bazukina.

Bazukina's work also brings high responsibility. It has a financial impact on the postal operators who rely on the performance reports that her team regularly produces. She often feels under pressure, meeting strict deadlines and handling extraordinary situations and force majeure cases. Therefore, in her opinion, good teamwork is crucial, especially in an intercultural environment.

"I feel privileged to work with such intelligent people. In the UPU, everyone comes from a different cultural background and has an individual approach. However, when we work together on a project, it all comes together like a puzzle," she says.

She also looks up to her teammates: "I got to know some outstanding, inspiring women that were combining intensive work with motherhood, which I learned was really challenging when I became a mother myself."

Although the COVID-19 crisis has put pressure on the entire postal network and has created new challenges at the UPU, Bazukina says it has brought her team even closer together.

"Regardless of the pandemic, we have kept working together, and the postal world has become closer while overcoming its hardships. I am proud to be working for the UPU, helping to make the impossible possible, helping to unite the world." **OM**

# UPU's eCom API provides a cutting-edge IT solution to facilitate e-commerce

The UPU's Doha Postal Strategy (2013-2016) and Istanbul Postal Strategy (2017-2020) have mandated the UPU to support the development of global e-commerce through its postal network. The UPU encourages its member countries to participate in its different projects enhancing their driving role in inclusive e-commerce.

TEXT: Olena Muravyova

With this in mind, the Postal Technology Centre (PTC), the UPU's cutting-edge technical arm, has been offering innovative Cloud services, as well as a large choice of logistics and payment-related solutions, to Posts. Examples include the International Postal System (IPS), the Customs Declaration System (CDS), the Domestic Postal System (DPS), and the International Financial System (IFS). In order to provide postal operators with easier access to this software and more flexible integration options, the PTC has created the eCom API, a package of application programming interfaces (APIs) that serves to build a comprehensive e-commerce solution.

## How it works

"The eCom API can be helpful anywhere there is potential for e-commerce cooperation between two countries, involving their Posts and a merchant platform located in the country of origin," says David Avsec, UPU's Account Relations and Product Management Coordinator.

The solution ensures standard interfaces for the Posts' and their commercial partners' merchant virtual market places (VMPs) to automate order, payment, shipment, customs clearance, and delivery processes.

Currently a proof of concept, this solution offers a full online purchase and delivery scenario through the Post.

"Assuming a merchant platform or the Post can calculate all costs related to a postal item, such as its value, shipment, import duties, and handling, we can activate the corresponding payment with the eCom API," explains Avsec.

"Therefore, the eCom API represents a 'plumbing' mechanism to link a VMP, powered by the Post or an e-commerce company, and the logistics and financial services offered by the Post."

## Advantages

The primary advantage of the eCom API is the easy technical integration between the IT systems of the Post, its e-commerce partner company, and the relevant UPU IT product. The solution provides for reduced

deployment costs of these systems, harmonized compliance with the UPU's regulatory and security requirements, and safe access to the UPU's IT tools.

Moreover, its minimum set of APIs supports all business operations required for successful online purchases through a virtual marketplace, as well as delivery to the customer. The eCom API provides accurate, real-time information about the quality of service of a postal item. Its numerous functions also include track and trace.

Finally, with the help of the eCom API, the Post can quickly enrich its services portfolio for its customers.

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"...the eCom API represents a 'plumbing' mechanism to link a VMP, powered by the Post or an e-commerce company, and the logistics and financial services offered by the Post."

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## Technical principles

With the eCom API, Posts can choose to integrate their e-commerce solutions based on a Software as a Service (SaaS) model. In this case, Posts do not purchase and install the solutions locally. They simply subscribe to the UPU's software powering the API, which the UPU hosts on its postal Cloud.

Posts can also host the solutions themselves. For example, if the operator decides to host IPS locally, then it would also need to host the eCom API using IPS in the background.

It is also possible to mix both integration models, offering total flexibility to Posts. Moreover, the operators can always extend the existing functions of their eCom API by adding new services and data sources to it.

The eCom API follows the same deployment process as any other UPU product developed by the PTC. The UPU offers its rich expertise to its member countries and their external partners, helping them successfully connect their platforms to the eCom API and providing consultation on any issues.

"Further development of the eCom API is of the utmost importance for the PTC. Our primary goal is to continue enriching its current functions," says Avsec.

"In the future, we would like the eCom API to encapsulate third party services to complement a varied spectrum of capabilities the UPU offers through its software. Therefore, whenever there is an opportunity to speak about this innovative solution, at forums or workgroup meetings, we try to engage everyone to test it and thus to contribute to its future advancement," he adds.

## Success story

The first and the most advanced user of the eCom API is Tunisia's La Poste Tunisienne. Tunisia was the first country to come on board Ecom@Africa, the UPU's initiative to facilitate the enhancement of e-commerce through African Posts and help them revive their business as they face declining letter-mail volumes and traditional postal services.

"Barriers to e-commerce in Africa are many and varied. We need one platform that can address all the challenges comprehensively. Ecom@Africa powered by the Post is the solution," said UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein at the Fifth Extraordinary Session of the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU) in Antananarivo, Madagascar, in July 2018.

In March 2017, Tunisia organized an Ecom@Africa onsite assessment, followed by signing a cooperation agreement with the UPU in July. The UPU has recommended that Tunisia Post install the Customs Declaration System and upgrade its IT tools. For this purpose, the operator is deploying the eCom API, thus giving local micro, small and medium-sized enterprises easier access to international markets through the Post. **OM**

# COUNT ON US

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Nearly 200 countries and territories have been affected by COVID-19, forcing billions of people to adopt strict measures to cap the spread of the virus. In many countries, the Post has continued providing essential services to help their communities weather the pandemic.

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TEXT: Kayla Redstone  
PHOTO: An Post







With more than 650,000 offices and 5.2 million staff, the postal network is unrivalled in its ability to reach citizens on a daily basis. Postal workers have remained active on the frontlines during the course of the pandemic, with Posts now designated as an “essential service” in many countries.

Though the designation as an “essential” service may be recent, Posts have a long-held mission to provide essential services to the people residing across the territory they serve.

In all UPU member countries, the Post is bound by a universal service obligation meant to ensure that all citizens have access to essential communication services. At first, this meant access to posting letters, but the Post’s role has changed and expanded along with customer needs. Some have leveraged their network, their affordability

and their close relationship with communities and businesses to offer new sets of services outside the traditional communications, such as social, financial and trade services.

With many customers now self-isolating at home, Posts around the globe have responded rapidly with new, tailored social services, assisting them at their doorstep and reframing how governments, businesses and citizens view the centuries-old service. The UPU is supporting this expanded social role with a new platform for sharing their experiences and lessons learned.

Bringing together examples of how Posts have diversified to meet the needs of customers and government ministries has also made the Post’s value more visible, observes the UPU’s director of Policy, Regulation and Markets, Siva Somasundram.

“When we are requesting greater government support for the Post and an expanded role in their implementation of government social policies, we can point to these examples and case studies,” he says.

### UPU project

James Hale, who works on the UPU’s social postal services project, says his colleagues were impressed by the quick response of postal operators to assist their communities during this difficult time. In March, they began collecting, analyzing and sharing the experiences of postal operators around the world.

“We wanted to create an efficient way to inspire and support Posts in supporting the public during the pandemic,” he explains.



Photo: Correos de Costa Rica

Examples of social, financial and trade services offered in response to COVID-19 can now be found in a dedicated space on the UPU's website. Commentaries compiled by the UPU take a deeper look into how the ideas were developed, implemented and resourced.

Examples of ramped up postal social services are plentiful. The UPU's resource centre lists some 30 examples and counting, grouping them into thematic categories: health and well-being, community cohesion/development, data collection/provision, and access to government services. The team's commentaries help identify some of the success factors in implementing these new initiatives to help other Posts interested in doing the same.

In Ireland, for example, An Post was able to rapidly implement a raft of new services, including a home check-in service for the elderly and vulnerable, free postage-paid postcards for every household in Ireland, free home mail and parcel pick-up services, the delivery of government advice, newspaper delivery, and the provision of

## Examples of social, financial and trade services offered in response to COVID-19 can now be found in a dedicated space on the UPU's website.

activity books for children. Success in this case came down to a supportive corporate culture, with the Post having offered both formal and informal community services before the pandemic struck.

Australia Post focused its efforts on health services to support the country's elderly and vulnerable. The Post managed to implement a new next-day pharmacy home delivery service within one week of having the project approved, thanks to its dedicated project team and support from both the Australian Department of Health and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

Helping students continue their education remotely was a priority for France's La Poste. With support from the country's Ministry of Education, the postal operator was able to provide two new services focusing on families who did not have the necessary technology for their children to complete their school work at home as schools were closed.

## Financial & trade services

The project was also extended to research new financial and, later, business and trade support services.

For many years the UPU has worked to drive home the message that the Post can be an attractive partner to help bolster financial inclusion as 1.7 billion adults remain unbanked. The postal network already provides financial services to 1.5 billion people.

Posts have expanded their financial services offerings during the pandemic, delivering social payments, remittances and other banking services at customers' doorsteps.

Portugal's postal bank, Banco CTT, launched a special mobile app in early May that allowed customers to find information about queue times so that they could avoid crowds while carrying out their banking.

The postal network has also been recognized as an accessible and affordable channel to help micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) deliver their goods worldwide. UPU Digital Economy and Trade Programme Manager Paul Donohoe explains that Posts responded to the shut-down of offline channels by offering small businesses payment platforms, online marketplaces and special pick-up and delivery services to help them reach consumers.

"For these businesses to sell to their market they had to go digital, so they needed support services to go online. Posts helped fill that gap," says Donohoe.

He says some Posts had already been offering access to these types of services, but they had not been developed or promoted before the pandemic struck – then they became more necessary than ever.

Correos de Costa Rica's Pymexpress platform became an important resource for the country's MSMEs during the crisis. Originally launched in 2017, the platform offers MSMEs access to an online marketplace, payments, collection and delivery services at preferential rates. More than 500 small businesses joined the platform in March and April alone, bringing its membership to more than 5,000.

Some of these programmes are even being offered free-of-charge, thanks to the support of government programmes.

"The pandemic has made governments realize that the Post provides an array of essential services to society, so this has spurred some concrete action," he adds.

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**"What is clear is that a subset of services have become very relevant during the pandemic, and that some posts implemented these as a direct response"**

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Photo: An Post

## An Post: a culture of caring

Ireland's An Post is a standout example. The postal operator implemented a raft of new services by the beginning of May, including a home check-in service for the elderly and vulnerable, free postage-paid postcards for every household in Ireland, free home mail and parcel pick-up services, the delivery of government advice, newspaper delivery, and the provision of activity books for children.

Corporate culture played a large role in the Post being able to implement initiatives so quickly when needed. According to An Post staff, mail carriers already had a strong culture of providing informal services to help those on their daily delivery routes, so employees supported the speedy roll out of more formal duties. Many ideas for new services were contributed by mail carriers themselves, explains An Post Public Affairs Manager Angus Laverty.

"The interaction is happening organically. The postmen and women will have a chat and make sure the person has everything they need. If there are any requests, we can feed them back to the county-based community support services set up by the local authorities," he says.

Preparedness planning also played a role, with the organization having an established and reviewed business continuity plan that was last updated in late 2019. A special response team put in place at the start of the pandemic also helped keep information flowing across the organization and led to greater flexibility, even as many staff worked from home.

Read the commentary: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/ODdKlw3hXNiyz/>



Photo: Australia Post

## Australia Post: keeping the population healthy

At the start of the pandemic, Australian authorities were keen to find a way to keep providing those isolating at home with essential medicines and other health-related products. The Australian Department of Health and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia then turned to Australia Post for help.

The Post was able to launch a nationwide next-day pharmacy delivery service just one week after approval from the government and the guild. A 25-million AUD grant ensured that the service could be offered free-of-charge to pharmacies and their customers.

Support from both the government and the Pharmacy Guild were key in the project's success, as was the Post's efficient organization. It established a special Pandemic Response Team (PRT) to ensure projects like this could be implemented quickly. It included staff from a broad array of disciplines – from those specializing in postal products and operations, to corporate strategy and communications – and worked through evenings and weekends.

Using existing products and services to feed into new programmes also helped launch the project rapidly. The team coupled Australia Post's Express Post service with its MyPost Business (MPB) digital platform to start the pharmacy deliver service; the focus was on getting the programme up and running first, then fine-tuning and perfecting later.

Read the commentary: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/ytM3QcPSTb5cR/>

## Beyond the pandemic

Although the COVID-19 resource centre is new, the UPU's Social Services Project team has already been compiling information about social services offered across the sector for several months. In some cases, the pandemic has simply accelerated Posts' implementation of new initiatives.

"What is clear is that a subset of services have become very relevant during the pandemic, and that some posts implemented these as a direct response," says Hale.

He explains that there was plenty of anecdotal evidence to show that Posts were diversifying their portfolios by adding more socially-driven services into their offering. Many of these services were successful, suggesting that the Post could be a suitable partner to help governments achieve their socioeconomic development initiatives.

With funding from the Government of Japan, the UPU was able to launch its social services project in December to help paint a broader picture of social services across the sector and provide some quantifiable data. Hale sent a questionnaire to operators in the

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With many Posts around the world reliant on government resources, government support can also be a determining factor in a Posts ability to roll out new services.

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UPU's 192 member countries as a first step. Of the 109 replies, some 80 percent said they were already offering social services, providing their communities access everything from education, to health and government services and beyond.

Hale adds that while projects to implement these social initiatives often took months before the pandemic, Posts managed to implement them within a matter of a few weeks during the crisis. Conversations with those developing the services in postal operators revealed understanding customer

needs, forging new partnerships, building on existing products and resources, creating dedicated project teams and communication as some common success factors for Posts implementing new projects.

## Government support

With many Posts around the world reliant on government resources, government support can also be a determining factor in a Post's ability to roll out new services.

In the case of An Post, the government featured the Post's actions in its regular press briefings and the operator became an important partner in the country's national response effort. Government support also played a role in the success of the initiatives launched by La Poste and Australia Post.

Susan Alexander who works at the UPU as its postal regulation expert says the UPU has been using the project's findings to advocate for the Post as a channel for governments to achieve their socioeconomic goals beyond the pandemic. The UPU recently sent a letter to all member governments urging their support for the Post.

The project is also prompting support from other stakeholders.

"The International Bureau was also contacted by a union representing postal workers, seeking examples of new services that our members have introduced, in preparation for a meeting with the government ministry about postal diversification," Alexander adds. **KR**

While projects to implement these social initiatives often took months before the pandemic, Posts managed to implement them within a matter of a few weeks during the crisis.

*For more information about the project and the case studies referenced in this article, please see the dedicated web page: [www.upu.int/en/activities/postal-social-financial-and-trade-services-during-covid-19/about-postal-social-financial-and-trade-services-during-covid-19.html](http://www.upu.int/en/activities/postal-social-financial-and-trade-services-during-covid-19/about-postal-social-financial-and-trade-services-during-covid-19.html)*



Photo: La Post

## La Poste: delivering education

France's La Poste played an important role in ensuring schoolchildren could continue learning while at home during the country's lockdown. With support from the Ministry of Education, La Poste introduced a service to connect the 200,000 students across France without access to online learning platforms to their teachers.

The first project saw the Post deliver computer equipment from schools to homes across the country. A second initiative, called "Homework at home", had La Poste deliver hard copies of online schoolwork to students and then back to teachers for grading. A third of educational establishments signed up for the "Homework at home" service, which was implemented by a team of only 20 staff in a matter of two weeks.

In this case, experience bred success. La Poste had already been working on the initiatives with the Ministry of Education, which meant they were easily fast-tracked when students were told to study from home. La Poste has also introduced many other social services throughout the years, including social care and e-health services. Social services are even ingrained in the company's strategic plan.

Read the commentary: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/7A0ThTwqfXgBO/>



# Meet the expert

James Hale has been working on the UPU's Postal Social Services Project for more than half a year. More recently, he has narrowed his focus on social services Posts have offered to help their communities cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. He explains the project to **UNION POSTALE**.

INTERVIEW BY: Kayla Redstone

*What was the motivation behind launching this project and sharing these resources?*

Citizens, charities, governments and the private sector have mobilized to respond to COVID-19, working to reduce the spread of the virus and care for the sick. However, there is also a range of indirect social impacts that need to be addressed. Most notably, isolation at home and social distancing restrict people's access to food, medicines, education and social contact. In March, we became aware that designated operators were responding to the pandemic by rapidly implementing new social services. The aim of our project was to create a platform for Posts to share their stories, and for the UPU's International Bureau (IB) to publish analyses of how Posts were able to implement new services quickly. Essentially, we wanted to create an efficient way to inspire and support posts in supporting the public during the pandemic.

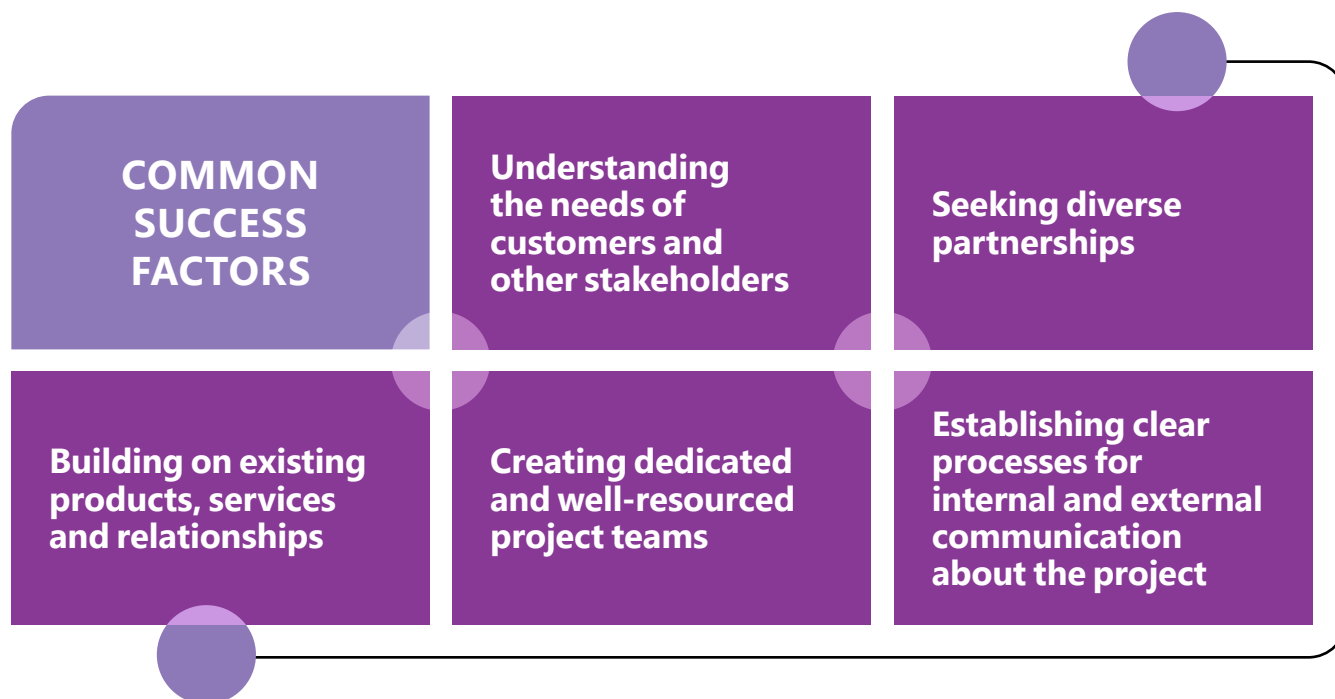
The IB is well-placed to coordinate this sharing of expertise.

*How do these COVID-19 services compare to social services offered before the pandemic?*

Many posts were already offering social services, although it is still too early to evaluate whether demands for existing services have increased in the last few months. What is clear is that a subset of services have become very relevant during the pandemic, and that some Posts implemented these as a direct response. For example, more Posts are now involved in the delivery of prescription medicines, food aid and children's homework, as well as home-checking of seniors and other vulnerable residents. We have also seen Posts form direct partnerships with factories that produce masks and alcohol hand wash in order to secure broad public access to these essential items.

*What are some of the most innovative services you've seen developed in relation to the pandemic?*

Correos de Costa Rica and Jersey Post have both used private companies to deliver prescription medicines to the most vulnerable. These are interesting examples of Posts making use of the broader resources that became available during the crisis. In Costa Rica, private car-rental companies offered to supply vehicles, fuel and drivers for free to help the Post deliver critical medicines to residents. Because fewer people were renting cars during COVID-19, this initiative allowed these companies to keep their staff active, while also contributing to the national pandemic response. Similarly, in Jersey, taxi drivers helped to temporarily expand the postal delivery fleet in support of its new medicine delivery service.



*What kind of response have you received from member countries?*

The response has been positive, with many Posts sending us examples of their COVID-19 initiatives for inclusion on the new platform. The IB was also contacted by a union representing postal workers, seeking examples of new services that our members have introduced, in preparation for a meeting with the government ministry about postal diversification.

*How has this project and the increased publicity of postal social services changed the perception of the Post with its stakeholders?*

Whilst the primary aim of this platform was to facilitate rapid knowledge sharing between Posts, it also serves as a library of examples for the IB to use in its advocacy work. A recent letter from the IB to the governments of member countries called for urgent support for the postal sector. It made the point that Posts should be treated as critical infrastructure, and that they are being used by governments to deliver a range of social and financial services to the public. This project has also been accompanied by extensive social media coverage and news articles, which aimed to reinforce the message that Posts can play a key role in improving people's wellbeing and prosperity, particularly during this challenging time.

*Based on your research, are there any common threads leading to the success of these services and their implementation?*

We still expect to receive many more examples of how posts are responding to the pandemic, and the current list of examples is very diverse. However, during a series of interviews with Posts about their new services, we identified the following common success factors:


- Understanding the needs of customers and other stakeholders
- Seeking diverse partnerships
- Building on existing products, services and relationships
- Creating dedicated and well-resourced project teams
- Establishing clear processes for internal and external communication about the project

*You're working on a broader social services project in parallel to this. Could you tell our readers a bit about that project?*

This project was launched in November 2019 to document and provide broad guidance on postal social services, with funding from the Japanese Ministry of Information and Communications. The IB was already aware that UPU members were providing services in sectors such as health, social care and

education. However, there was a need for an overview of these services, and a better understanding of the motivations for Posts to diversify in this way.

One hundred and nine UPU members responded to our questionnaire, providing numerous examples of their postal social services. These ranged from offering document translation for immigrants and delivering a national awareness campaign on human trafficking, to the collection of batteries and unused medicines for safe disposal. The reasons given for offering such services included generating additional revenue, increased business resilience, added value for customers and ensuring the Post remains broadly relevant to implementing government policy.

Case studies and a guide to postal social services will be published at the end of this year, so we are very keen to receive more examples from Posts. We also want to know about checklists, protocols or other tools that could be shared. Please send these examples, along with any questions or requests for support to [pss@upu.int](mailto:pss@upu.int). 

# Keeping the mail moving: an interview with the UPU's Director of Postal Operations

COVID-19 has raised challenges across the postal network, but the UPU's Operational Continuity Unit (OCU) has been tackling these issues to keep the network running. Abdelilah Bousseta, the UPU's Director of Postal Operations and head of the OCU, explains the challenges and lessons learned in keeping the mail moving during a global pandemic.



INTERVIEW BY: Kayla Redstone

*We've seen COVID-19 described as among the most challenging crisis since the Second World War. What impact has this had on the postal operators, their supply chain partners and the UPU?*

The COVID-19 crisis is having a substantial impact on postal operators, their supply chain partners, the UPU and the whole postal industry. These impacts will not go away with the pandemic – they will have a lasting effect on the UPU and the postal industry going forward.

The crisis has highlighted the fact that the Posts are an essential component of the global economy, providing a lifeline to all inhabitants of the world. Posts are critical not only for delivering traditional letter-post, parcel-post and express services but also for delivering medicine, remittances, government payments and are even called upon to facilitate voting in elections.

Throughout this pandemic period, the UPU's mission of "securing the organization and improvement of postal services and promoting international collaboration" is proving to be especially relevant. The UPU's



secretariat has been coordinating and ensuring the continuation of vital communications between postal stakeholders, and has been finding solutions to help UPU member countries to keep the mail moving.

*What were some of the toughest operational challenges the postal sector has faced during this crisis?*

The biggest challenge to overcome has been to keep the mail moving. The COVID-19 crisis has put unprecedented pressure on the international postal network. Though many countries consider Posts an essential service, allowing them to continue their operations despite countrywide lockdowns, the UPU has processed urgent messages from 137 UPU member countries in relation to the pandemic. The messages have signaled service disruptions related to measures taken to halt the spread of COVID-19, such as flight cancellations and social distancing. This has lengthened delivery times in some postal corridors and closed others altogether.

**“The crisis has highlighted the fact that the Posts are an essential component of the global economy, providing a lifeline to all inhabitants of the world.”**

International mail flows in particular have been affected by the cancellation of international flights and closure of airports. The postal network relies heavily on passenger airlines to transport mail.

In response to these disruptions, the UPU contacted postal operators inviting them to reach out to their surface cargo providers and to share any information on available transport capacity, including rail, sea and road. We have also been in communication with new carriers providing different modes of transport to ask them to consider cooperating with Posts. The UPU has encouraged postal operators and carriers to work together and to uphold the keystone universal service obligation – or USO – which seeks to provide everyone on this planet with post.

These information-sharing initiatives have resulted in an impressive number of innovations and new methods of transport over land, sea and air. In partnership with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the UPU has encouraged governments to fast-track procedures and relax restrictions to keep air cargo supply lines, including mail transport, open in the wake of widespread passenger flight cancellations. The UPU has also worked closely with postal operators and railway organizations to turn the pilot studies into a viable reality.

Given the current situation, the train network is one of the alternative options for moving the huge volumes of mail between Asia and Europe. Between the middle of March and today, 21 mail-only block trains have transported nearly 8,000 tons of mail. The use of trains to deliver mail is a success for the Universal Postal Union.

Surface transportation by road and sea are other effective means we have established to supplement air transport, and they are now becoming more and more important elements of international postal network.

*You've established a special Operational Continuity Unit to help deal with the crisis – what has been its mission during the pandemic?*

At the beginning of the pandemic, the UPU's Directorate of Postal Operations (DOP) quickly set to work to ensure that the mail – not only letters, but medicines, medical equipment and other essential goods – could keep moving despite the worldwide crisis. Our work spans across three dimensions.

The first step was to put in place a mechanism to monitor the situation. We achieved this by creating the Operational Continuity Unit (OCU), which comprises experts covering different areas from transport and security, to IT and quality of service. The transversal team meets daily to coordinate the UPU's actions on operational issues related to the pandemic.

This leads to the second part of our mission, which has been to mitigate the impact of the crisis on postal operations. This is where our energy is focused at the moment.

**“International mail flows in particular have been affected by the cancellation of international flights and closure of airports. The postal network relies heavily on passenger airlines to transport mail.”**

For example, the team has developed a dedicated table listing all operational measures taken by Posts as a result of COVID-19. This table is available on a central database available to all member countries and allows them quick and easy access to see data by country.

Another significant aspect of our work has been assisting with transport issues. The OCU has been looking for alternatives to help airlift postal item dispatches held in the Offices of Exchange (OEs), providing up-to-date information on the current availability and status of air cargo carriers, information on border crossing status for road transport, networking with a new supply chain partners and the supporting the creation of new routes. We've prepared a table consolidating all alternative transport information available to us, including new solutions by rail, cargo flights and sea routes and have provided promotion and legal advice on other alternative routes.

Together, we have been able to coordinate the first mail-only block train from China to Europe, carrying thousands of tons of mail. Through close cooperation with supply chain partners, the UPU was able to establish a legal framework and sort out operational issues to establish this new route, which has helped keep mail flowing between the continents.

Another significant element of our daily work has been keeping in contact with and supporting our members. We are in contact with our members on a daily basis to help them resolve operational issues and challenges, but also to collect best practices to share with the entire membership. We've prepared communications explaining the tools and resources we've created to assist them during this time. We're also monitoring the impact of the crisis in terms of volumes.

The third and final dimension of our mission will focus on the lessons learned from the pandemic so that we can move forward with projects aimed at improving the resilience of the global postal network.

*This crisis has led to intense cooperation between the UPU, other international bodies and governments to resolve issues very quickly. How do you see this cooperation continuing once the crisis is over?*

During the crisis period, the UPU collaborated with the International Civil Aviation Organization, International Air Transport Association, World Customs Organization, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Organisation for Cooperation of Railways, the International Coordinating Council on Trans-Eurasian Transportation in order to keep the mail moving.

The International Bureau also strengthened coordination with the Restricted Unions of the UPU, taking into account their fundamental role in the different regions. These organizations, which traditionally collaborate with the UPU in several fields, play a decisive role in the context of gathering information during the pandemic and facilitate increased contact with operators in each region.

The UPU has always worked with international bodies and governments to achieve common goals in an efficient manner. The excellent collaboration and coordination that exists between the UPU and these organizations will continue after the crisis.

*You mentioned "lessons learned". How do you think this crisis will change the way postal operations are carried out going forward?*

Clearly, there is a pre-COVID and post-COVID way of doing things. Though there is still more work to be done, I can already draw together some important lessons we have learned throughout the last few months. It is likely that postal operations will evolve regarding transportation, digitalization, market focus and multilateralism.

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## The third and final dimension of our mission will focus on the lessons learned from the pandemic so that we can move forward with projects aimed at improving the resilience of the global postal network.

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The pandemic highlighted that we must diversify our means of transporting the mail. Before COVID-19, Posts relied on commercial passenger flights to transport their international mail. This dependence on one single channel was catastrophic for mail transport at the beginning of the crisis. Although we were able to establish alternative routes quite quickly during the pandemic, it is clear that we must continue cultivating alternative transport channels in order to provide our members with more diversified options. The Regulations to the Convention will be modified as appropriate.

The crisis, particularly the need to social distance, has also sped up the need to move to digital processes wherever possible. Digitization was a choice before the pandemic, but it is now a must. It is likely that customers will prefer to continue to receive "contactless delivery" for the foreseeable future. Delivery innovation, such as the use of parcel lockers and electronic signature

capture will be key to providing flexible delivery options. Gaps in digitization have disproportionately impacted developing countries, so we are now accelerating projects to connect countries with the UPU's digital networks through the Customs Declaration System, International Postal System and other IT tools.

Postal activity during COVID-19 has also confirmed that Posts are moving from a model based on the movement of letters or documents to one based on the movement of goods. The measures introduced to limit the pandemic have increased the decline of letters, while e-commerce has increased the volumes of small packets and parcels, according to the UPU's data. Postal operators will need to continue shifting their simplified and paperless operational processes to focus on the seamless transport and delivery of these items.

Last, but certainly not least, the pandemic has reinforced importance of multilateral cooperation and the UPU's role in making this cooperation possible. We could not have solved the global postal network's challenges without having these frameworks in place.

As a UN specialized agency, we are able to bring all players to the table, whether through intergovernmental or interagency cooperation. We were able to solve bilateral issues between Posts and transport carriers and between countries. We were able to work with other UN and international organizations to lobby governments and regulators to facilitate the exchange of international mail by keeping cargo flights moving, ensuring close cooperation with Customs agencies, recognizing the Post as an important partner for distributing essential services and ensuring it has the proper support to keep operating. No other organization is in the position to do this.

I think people can definitely see how the UPU is relevant, especially in difficult times, as together we are able to develop concrete solutions for the sector and all who use its global network. **KR**

# Diagnosing the postal sector

New UPU research shows postal volumes have plummeted in the pandemic's onset, delving into the sector's current pain points and offering outlooks for the future.

TEXT: Kayla Redstone



The report, titled "The COVID-19 crisis and the postal sector", shows that international postal volumes have fallen 21 percent between 23 January and 14 May 2020, compared to the same period last year. The drop is the largest recorded by the UPU since the organization began collecting electronic data exchanged between its postal operators.

The drastic decline in volumes comes as no surprise as much of the world is reeling from the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. In April the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted global gross domestic product (GDP) would decrease 3 percent in 2020; in late June the IMF revised its prediction, expecting a near 5 percent drop in global GDP this year. To put this into perspective, GDP shrank by 0.1% during the global financial crisis. On top of this, the World Trade Organization expects a 13 to 32 percent decline in global merchandise trade.

As the UN specialized agency for international postal cooperation, the UPU has been monitoring the situation closely, using official postal statistics and indicators constructed from electronic data interchange messages on postal shipments exchanged between countries to diagnose the pandemic's short- to medium-term impacts on postal business.

"The Post's relevance has become clearer than ever as citizens reach out to them for essential services as they remain in their homes. While postal operators around the globe have continued to work diligently for their customers throughout the pandemic, they have also experienced many set-backs caused by the very measures put in place to stop the virus' spread," said UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein.

## Supply chain challenges

Although the Post has remained operational as an essential service despite lockdowns in many countries, the report shows that the sector is facing immense challenges across the supply chain. From transport disruptions and labour shortages, to increased processing costs – COVID-19 has affected both quantity and quality of postal services. More than 130 of the UPU's 192 member countries have submitted disruption notices through the UPU's Emergency Information System (EmlS).

The cancellation of many passenger flights – one of the most common means of transporting international mail – also created major gaps in the supply chain until new routes could be found.

Using electronic data interchange messages exchanged between Posts, the UPU was able to quantify the delays through a stranded mail ratio – or the gap between exported items and their receipt in the importing country within a given week. This data showed that it now takes nearly twice as long to ship a postal item abroad. For every 2.1 items sent, only one has been received by the importing country within a week, compared to the 1:1 ratio during the same period last year.

UPU economist Mauro Boffa explains that, while delivery times are improving in some regions as restrictions are lifted, it was 71% more difficult for exports to reach the final country of destination during the peak of the crisis than during normal times.

Customs wait times are also putting pressure on mail quality, with outbound parcels taking an average of 71 hours and inbound parcels taking up to 64 hours to process, compared to 1 hour and 2 hours, respectively, during normal times

**“Although the domestic market holds a bigger share of postal business, international business has been growing at a faster rate in recent years. This crisis has made the international market more vulnerable”**

### International vs. domestic

Reductions in customers’ disposable income, compounded by delivery delays, could also be causing the drop in international postal volumes, according to the report. This could lead to more customers to turn to their domestic markets, rather than ordering goods online from abroad.

Boffa explains this could be worrying for the long-term growth of the postal business, as the international parcels market has shown promising potential to offset continued declines in letter volumes. The cross-border parcels market grew 13 percent in 2018 alone.

“Although the domestic market holds a bigger share of postal business, international business has been growing at a faster rate in recent years. This crisis has made the international market more vulnerable,” he adds.

### Outlook

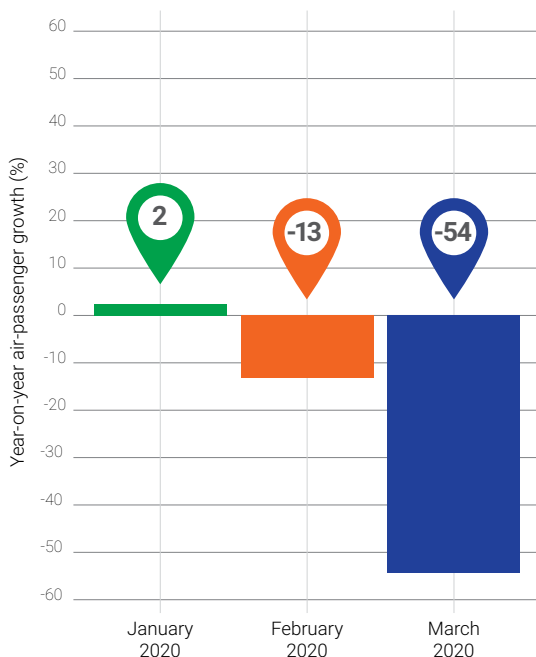
According to the report, postal development and diversification will play a large part in determining how Posts fare in the wake of the pandemic.

Boffa explains the three possible outcomes for postal operators in the long-term: the pessimistic, the expected and the optimistic.

In the pessimistic scenario, Posts will be unable to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 due to continued labour shortages, supply disruptions, continued health measures and general economic decline. This will accelerate the long-term decline of their letter-post business and their failure to address new customer needs.

What’s more likely is that the health and economic effects of COVID-19 will be temporary and Posts will eventually recover and manage to seize some opportunities, such as increased

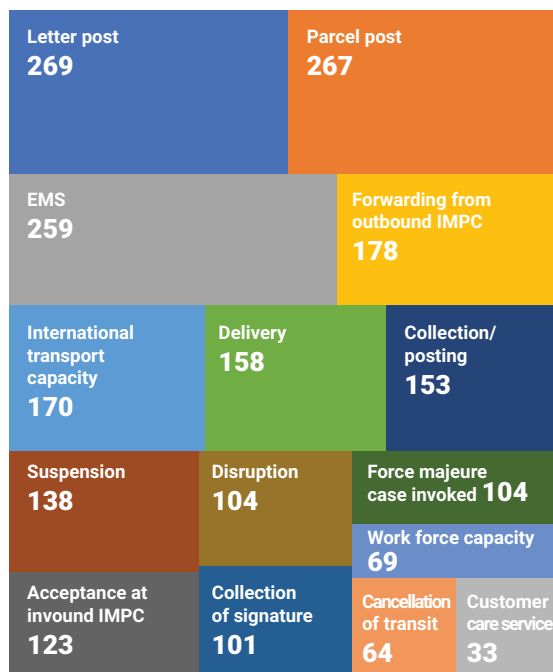
### DROP IN GLOBAL PASSENGER TRAFFIC



Source: ICAO air transport statistics.  
Notes: Growth rates with respect to the same period in 2019.

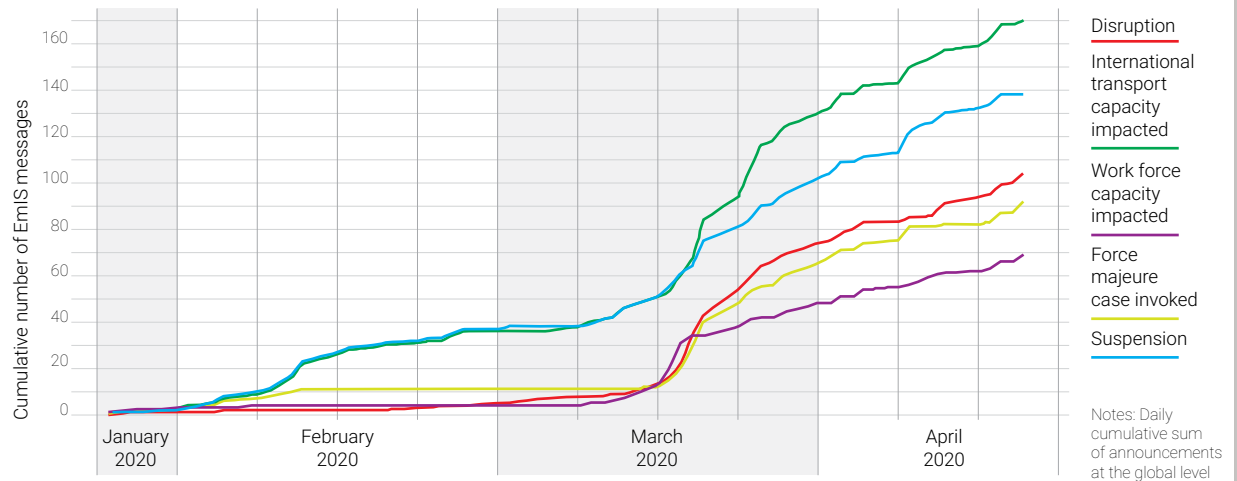
### INCIDENTS IN THE NETWORK

Areas impacted and number of announcements



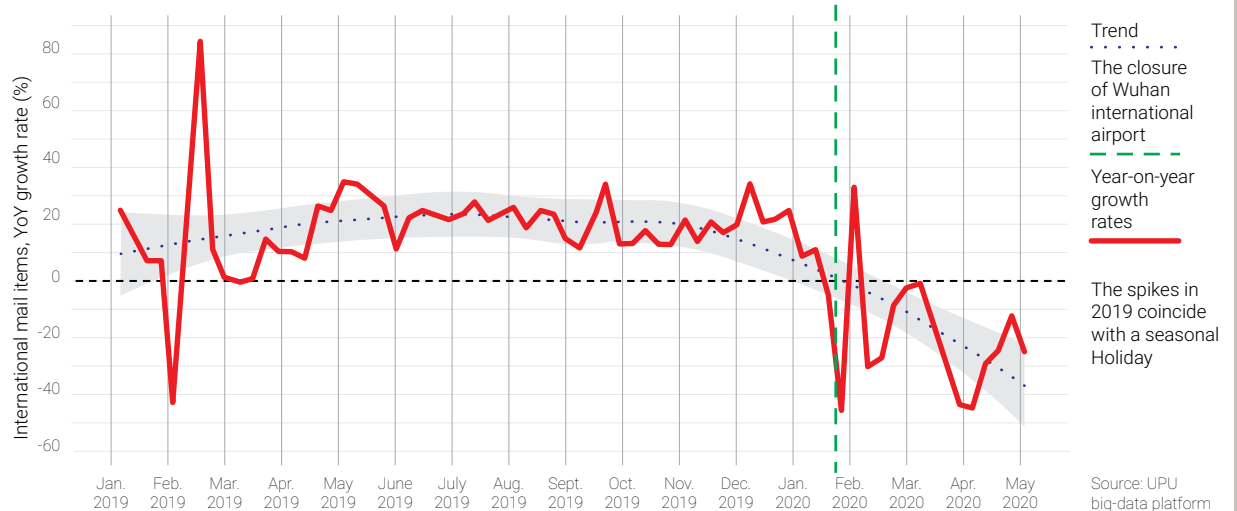
Source: UPU EMLS messages (17 April 2020)

## EVOLUTION OF DISRUPTIONS IN THE POSTAL NETWORK



Source: UPU Emergency Information System EmIS messages.

## INTERNATIONAL LIGHT LOGISTICS GROWTH RATE



demand for postal services and new services and partnerships developed in response to customer needs during the pandemic. However, these opportunities will not be significant enough to reverse long-term declines, as customers may revert to offline channels again once measures are eased.

If policy-makers and Posts take the right measures, they could successfully weather the storm. In this scenario, the Post likely has a highly developed network, which allows it to recover quickly. It would also be able to reverse the long-term decline by taking advantage of the surge in demand for parcels, driving demand for postal services, and therefore providing more revenue to invest in structural transformation.

### Policy needs

The report urges to give attention to Posts as a partner for achieving their socioeconomic goals and helping offset the impact of the pandemic on communities as an alternative channel for consumption, work and communication.

Although some Posts may have seen an increase in demand for domestic services, they should not stop supporting postal operators.

“The fact that we think the lockdown triggered more demand for e-commerce goods shipped through the postal sector in some countries does not necessarily mean postal operators were less affected by crisis,” says Boffa. “There has also been an increase of operating costs for Posts dealing with supply issues and labour availability – the postal service is labour intensive.”

Posts will still need the support of policy-makers to cope with ongoing supply chain disruptions and to help protect postal employees as they continue to interface with the public as essential workers. Furthermore, they can help postal operators achieve growth post-pandemic by supporting postal development and the diversification of postal services into parcels and logistics, payments and citizen services.

Learn more about the pandemic’s impact on the postal sector here: [www.upu.int/en/covid19report](http://www.upu.int/en/covid19report). KR



Immensely proud to announce the gradual return of staff starting on Monday, 6 July.

We may have been working apart, but together we have continued to serve our 192 member countries and numerous other stakeholders. My sincere appreciation to everyone for all their hard work in these challenging times.

Thank you UPU.

**Bishar A. Hussein**  
UPU Director General

### **We've implemented new measures to keep staff and visitors safe.**

Signs around the building indicate that only one person should ride the elevator at a time to align with the Swiss government's social distancing recommendations.

Signs at the entrances let them know that they should enter one at a time to align with the Swiss government's social distancing guidelines.

Hand sanitizer dispensers located at each building entrance and on each floor ensure they can protect themselves and others.

Meeting halls have been equipped with proper spacing between participants – marked by desk pads – and separate entrance and exit doors, based on the Swiss government's guidelines. Rooms will be sanitized after each use.

New floor markings in high-traffic areas indicate how staff and visitors should queue to ensure a 2-metre distance between each person.

Posters and roll-ups of the Swiss Confederation's COVID-19 guidelines have been placed around the building, informing staff and visitors how to protect themselves and others.

New distance markings, table spacing and disposable gloves have been introduced in the cafeteria to ensure staff can protect themselves while taking their lunch break.



#KEEPUPUSAFE



### Featured SDG: Goal 1

## END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

**As a member of the United Nations family, the UPU is committed to working toward achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets adopted by the United Nations in September 2015 serve as a roadmap for the international community to build a sustainable future and foster social advancement and human well-being. Their implementation calls for active and collaborative partnerships between all countries and stakeholders.

The postal sector can play a key role in achieving these goals at the national, regional and international levels. Posts, with their expansive networks and public service focus, can be strategic partners for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This edition, we've featured Goal 1, which strives to end poverty. Here's an example of how the Post has already made a contribution:



## BANGLADESH

The Bangladesh Post Office has been contributing to the country's Vision 2021 to lift millions of Bangladeshis out of poverty. In particular, it has issued over 11 million mobile money orders, worth 7 million USD, and has launched the postal Cash Card service which has built a customer base of 52,000 cardholders, many of whom live in rural areas.





# 10 REASONS WHY UPU EXISTS

## 01 GUARANTEEING THE SINGLE POSTAL TERRITORY

The UPU's 192 member countries and the postal networks they administer make up the world's largest distribution network. Freedom of transit for postal items is guaranteed within the single territory, and UPU members agree to respect the rules for international mail exchanges.

## 02 LINKING NETWORKS

The interconnection of postal networks is crucial to the effective operation of international postal services. The UPU plays a major role in standardization and the creation of technical solutions to exchange electronic data, payments and other information.

## 03 IMPROVING QUALITY OF SERVICE

Without quality of service, it is impossible to develop markets and gain customers' trust. The UPU has developed a number of systems, solutions and capacity-building initiatives to help Posts improve their quality of service.

## 04 DRIVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The postal network is a motor driving a country's economy, facilitating hundreds of millions of physical, electronic and financial transactions all over the world each day. The UPU assists its member countries in introducing or developing inclusive and sustainable financial services.

## 05 FACILITATING TRADE

With globalization and the growth of e-commerce, Posts are ideal partners in facilitating trade – particularly for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The UPU provides a legal, regulatory, and technical framework to support the development of MSMEs through the postal infrastructure.

## 06 IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTAL SERVICES

The concept of universal postal service is fundamental for the UPU. The right to quality basic postal services, covering a country's entire territory and at an affordable price, matters now more than ever. Through workshops and expert missions, the UPU is helping countries define the universal postal service and introduce a regulatory framework for the sector.

## 07 WORKING TO REFORM THE SECTOR

Postal sector reform remains a major priority for development cooperation. The UPU works in many areas to offer countries structured assistance with reform: raising the profile of postal reform among international financial institutions; facilitating the exchange of best practices; and developing guides for the monitoring, support and assessment of reform.

## 08 DEVELOPING MARKETS

The postal market is changing rapidly as it adapts to the opening up of competition and technological advances. The UPU analyzes these changes, and publishes economic and other studies to ensure that member countries and the main sector players have a clear vision of regional and global trends, and identify the factors helping or hindering the development of postal services.

## 09 SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A deeply woven part of their countries' socioeconomic fabric, postal services play their role in sustainable development for both the sector and the planet. The UPU supports postal operators in their efforts to incorporate sustainable development into their activities.

## 10 COORDINATING WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

As an intergovernmental organization and specialized agency of the United Nations, the UPU is the only body representing and negotiating on behalf of the postal sector in its entirety. The UPU responds to a number of global issues in cooperation with other specialized institutions.

# Swiss Post looks to the future

Swiss Post has released its new 4-year strategy for the 2021 to 2024 period. Aptly named “The Swiss Post of Tomorrow,” the strategy focuses on the continuous provision of first-class quality public service.

TEXT: Olena Muravyova

The strategy is meant to ensure the 170-year-old operator’s ongoing modernization.

“‘The Swiss Post of Tomorrow’ is a growth strategy. However, we aim to achieve growth targeted to our traditional core competencies of logistics and communication. These are our strengths and this is where we can make the greatest contribution to Switzerland,” said Swiss Post CEO Roberto Cirillo in a statement about the strategy.

Switzerland’s postal service has been ranked top in the world for three years running according to the UPU’s Integrated Index for Postal Development (2IPD). Among 172 countries, Switzerland achieved standout results for the resilience and relevance of its network, with strong demand for its products and services, as well as a capacity to innovate, diversify its revenue streams, and develop sustainably.

Despite its achievements, the Post is working to increase its profits, which been declining for some years due to the rising gap between letter mail and parcel volumes and a low-interest environment. With the new strategy, the company hopes to generate profits to help self-fund the universal postal service across Switzerland and its other activities.

The strategy will have the company focus on guaranteeing the privacy of information in postal deliveries. Over its history, Swiss Post has safeguarded this principle in physical mail – now it will extend this focus to secure digital communication in areas where the sensitivity of data is essential, such as healthcare.

“A key *raison d’être* for Swiss Post is that we deliver information confidentially from sender to recipient... Swiss people’s awareness of the value of digital confidentiality and control over their own data will be much greater over the coming years than it is today,” explains Mr. Cirillo.

Over the next 4-year cycle, the company plans to maintain its network of nearly 800 post offices and open up to other service providers and authorities, providing additional access to their customers. Swiss Post offices would then become service centers, bringing in additional revenue, and familiarizing the public with new digital

services. This vision of future post offices will also safeguard jobs for the company’s employees.

Swiss Post also intends to maintain its strong leadership position in public transport with its PostBus service. The company is looking to install terminals and digital access points on the road to meet Swiss customers’ growing demand for services enabling mobility. Sustainability will be a focus for developing these services, with the Post investing in alternative solutions such as electric vehicles.

“We are very aware of our responsibility to the environment and are striving to use fully carbon-neutral shipping solutions,” states Mr. Cirillo.

Swiss Post will implement the new strategy by first modernizing its organizational structure, focusing on securing jobs and hiring in areas where additional support is needed, such as IT and courier services. It will also organize training for letter carriers, raising the profile of the profession.

Describing his personal goal for the future of Swiss Post, Mr. Cirillo says, “Remaining relevant to the people of Switzerland is important to us. But that means keeping pace with them. We’ll have done a good job if people see Swiss Post as powering modern Switzerland.” **DM**



Photo: Swiss Post



Photo: China State Post Bureau

While supply-chain disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have left global postal volumes reeling, China's postal business has grown in the first five months of 2020.

TEXT: Kayla Redstone

China's State Post Bureau reported an 8.9 percent year-on-year increase in postal revenues between January and May 2020, despite the impact of the COVID-19 and measures taken to halt its spread.

The State Post Bureau reported that revenues from China's postal business had reached 404.13 billion yuan (57.2 billion USD). Express delivery services saw a 9.9 percent increase in revenues and an 18.4 percent increase in volumes during the January to May period, compared to last year.

## China's postal industry booms despite COVID-19

Growth is also accelerating. Revenues grew 18.5 percent year-on-year in April. In May, revenues were up nearly 22 percent on the same period last year, totalling 95.11 billion yuan (13.5 billion USD).

Express volumes surged 41 percent in May compared to the previous year, with 7.38 billion items sent that month alone.

### Growth factors

The State Post Bureau credited e-commerce for the rapid growth, as more consumers have switched from brick and mortar retail to online channels to reduce their exposure. As a result, more middle-aged, elderly and rural consumers are beginning to use e-commerce for the first time. On the other hand, more businesses are selling goods online for the first time to offset the decline in in-store visits.

An e-commerce shopping festival held in late April and early May drove online sales and therefore delivery needs. In addition to this, China Post branches have begun connect

those unable to attend markets with fresh produce via online platforms. The initiative, which was popular with citizens and included livestreams to market the products, helped farmers continue operating and ensured that produce prices remained stable. The Jinhua Post Branch reported that it received nearly 2,000 orders within the first three days of the programme alone.

According to the State Post Bureau, operators have coped with the increasing demand for services by investing in capacity improvement measures such as hiring additional staff, implementing safety measures, purchasing additional vehicles and opening new operations sites.

They have also improved collaboration with e-commerce platforms to better predict shipment volume peaks and spread the load across the network. Adopting new technology such as big data, intelligent computing and automation has also helped operators handle the surge in volumes. **KR**

## Canada

**CANADA POST** will explore the possibility of offering postal banking as part of its cooperation with the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association (CPAA), a union of rural postal workers. Under this agreement, Canada Post will invest 500,000 CAD (approx. 367,000 USD) into the study of how rural post offices could provide banking services such as money transfers or cashing government cheques. Currently, Canada Post collaborates with MoneyGram and provides limited financial services without required bank accounts.

## Chad

**CHAD'S SOCIÉTÉ TCHADIENNE DES POSTES** et de l'Épargne has launched innovative services to reinforce its image and to enhance its market position in the face of stiff competition from private sector companies. These innovations include the electronic money transfer service "Wari", express mail service "PostExpress", installation of new mailboxes companies and improvement of postal counters in post offices. On 3 June 2020, the Chad's Ministry of Posts, New Technologies of Information and Communication inaugurated the Post's renovated headquarters.

## China

**CHINA POST** has shipped more than 2,000 tonnes of mail to 36 European countries by rail. The trains leave from provinces, including Shanghai and Zhejiang, and arrive in Vilnius, Lithuania, where the mail is distributed to its European destinations. Six trains have made the journey so far. The China-Europe postal trains offer clear advantages, such as stability of logistical expenses and time for transportation.

## Costa Rica

**CORREOS DE COSTA RICA** has managed to deliver 41,625 packages with medications to chronic patients in 47 healthcare centers across the country between 23 March and 7 May. This project is part of the postal operator's efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic. It was implemented with the support and cooperation of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund and the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency Attention.

## Czech Republic

**ČESKÁ POŠTA** has been using its postal network to distribute food and essential products to the community to combat the COVID-19 crisis. The postal operator has also organized contactless mail deliveries. During the quarantine, recipients could collect their postal items from their mailboxes or at post offices within a month. In order to protect its personnel, the operator has also provided mail carriers with 9,200 bottles of disinfectant spray, and its post offices with 40,000 bottles.

## Jersey

**JERSEY POST** has extended its Call&Check service allowing for scheduled visits to check in on customers. Now, through Call&Check Lite, customers can register themselves or their loved ones to benefit from free telephone calls from the Call&Check team twice a week during the quarantine in case they need extra help. The postal operator started the initiative within the framework of the government's "Connect Me" service, which aims to fight the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Malta

In cooperation with the National Health Authorities, **MALTA POST** has delivered 125,000 informative letters to vulnerable people urging them to stay home and thus decreasing the risk of the pandemic's spread. Malta Post is following many precautions in its operations, including two-meter distancing in post offices and contactless home deliveries. Customers can also collect their mail from the operator's 24/7 Easipik parcel lockers located in post offices in Malta and Gozo.

## New Zealand

**NZ POST** will receive 130 million NZD (83.6 million USD) over three years under the government's budget in order to support the development of postal services. The funding for the Post also includes nearly 150 million NZD (96.5 million USD) in equity investments from its shareholders to balance post revenue lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve its financial resilience. The funding will allow NZ Post to keep providing postal services to approximately 2.5 million addresses across the country and to build additional postal infrastructure.

## Oman

**OMAN POST** is now providing international courier deliveries to more than 220 destinations in the world. The new International Premium Express Mail (IPEX) service allows priority shipping of documents and parcels up to 25 kg and is part of the operator's Express Mail Service (EMS). Courier deliveries to major cities of the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) countries takes 24 hours, while other destinations in GCC can be reached from 48 to 72 hours.

## Philippines

THE PHILIPPINE POSTAL CORPORATION has launched an appreciation initiative called “Salamat Po”, or “Thank You” in English. It allows children to write letters of gratitude to postal workers who have been brave on the frontlines during the pandemic. The participants can send their letters by email and share them on Facebook. PHLPost in collaboration with the Department of Education hopes this advocacy programme will rekindle an interest in letter-writing and help children develop their composition skills.

## Spain

Through its postal network, CORREOS has distributed almost a million masks to 163,665 transport carriers across the country, such as trucking companies, buses, and taxi drivers. The Ministry of Transport of Spain purchased the masks. The operator has organized their deliveries from the postal Automated Treatment Center in Vallecas, Madrid, to regional centers and then to all 2,395 post offices. To collect their masks, the drivers had to show their national identification documents.

## Thailand

THAILAND POST, in cooperation with the country’s Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Public Health, has delivered medical masks from factories to provinces across the country to fight the pandemic. The service involves nine factories producing 2.3 million masks per day. Provinces have distributed the masks to essential personnel such as doctors, nurses, public workers, etc. The first shipment contained 200,000 masks that the postal operator delivered to 22 provinces in Central Thailand.

## Ukraine

JSC “UKRPOSHTA” joined the Express Mail Service (EMS) global delivery network. The service will be available at nearly 1,000 postal facilities in all regional centers of the country. From 1 June, more than 4,000 automated post offices have started accepting EMS items for dispatch. This includes documents and goods weighing up to 30 kg.

## United Arab Emirates

EMIRATES POST has delivered 2 million domestic and international postal items since the beginning of 2020. The largest contributor has been e-commerce, which accounts for one in every three deliveries. Emirates Post has been investing in improvements in its last-mile delivery. The postal operator has done this by simplifying integration processes and cash-on-delivery, resulting in 99.8% of shipments have been delivered on the date promised. This exceeds the original delivery record of 96% across the country.

All items by Olena Muravyova

## United States

THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE (USPS) has assisted the US Navy in arranging charter mail flights to Bahrain and Djibouti in order to help clear the backlog of mail destined for Europe caused by the cancellation of many trans-Atlantic commercial flights. The US Navy has moved 40,000 lbs of mail from Chicago to Bahrain and Djibouti, and from there on to Europe. The US Navy has been making flights twice per week from US Base Camp Lemonnier to deliver medical supplies to Europe.

## Viet Nam

VIETNAM POST has been assigned to develop a national addressing system by the Vietnam Ministry of Information and Communication to enable the development of e-commerce services. The postal operator will create the system based on its postcode database and its “Collecting address data” software. Customers can find and share address codes online. The system will also provide QR codes and a detailed description of addresses. To date, the operator has assigned codes to over 23 million addresses in the country.

# UNION POSTALE

## Advertising rate card 2020

Union Postale is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. Each issue is published quarterly in several languages, giving advertisers a regular opportunity to reach out to their audience.

Some 12,000 copies of Union Postale are sent to named distribution lists annually. The bulk of these readers are the top decision-makers from national Posts and ministries from the UPU's 192 member countries. They include chief executives, operations managers, technical experts, industry regulators and government ministers.

Around 1,000 further copies of the magazine are also distributed each year during meetings of the UPU's decision-making bodies, the Postal Operations Council and Council of Administration, attended by thousands of delegates from member countries and special industry events, such as Post-Expo.

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\*From the 2019 readership survey

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