

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION



Established in 1874, with its headquarters in Berne, Switzerland, the Universal Postal Union is the world's second oldest international organization. With 192 member countries, the UPU is the primary forum for postal cooperation between governments, Posts, regulators and many other postal sector stakeholders.

HOW THE UPU WORKS

At each quadrennial Universal Postal Congress, the UPU's 192 member countries come together to make rules, set policy and approve a new strategy for the next four-year work cycle. The strategy for 2021-2025, known as the Abidjan Postal Strategy, has three pillars:

1

Strengthen the UPU's mandate as the foremost forum for postal sector development

2

Reinforce the UPU's role as a provider of innovative and affordable technical solutions for postal sector stakeholders

3

Enable the UPU to become the prime information and knowledge centre of the postal sector

As a United Nations specialized agency, the UPU has a mandate to promote global socio-economic development and help its members contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

The UPU helps ensure the provision of a truly universal postal service, with physical, financial and electronic dimensions. It does this primarily by:

- establishing multilateral cooperation and agreements;
- developing technical and quality-of-service standards;
- providing technical assistance and development cooperation;
- regulating worldwide traffic of international mail;
- monitoring market trends;
- making recommendations for modernizing postal products;
- fostering dialogue among all postal sector players.

Though Congress is the supreme authority of the UPU, several other bodies coordinate the UPU's work throughout the cycle:

UNIVERSAL POSTAL CONGRESS

192 member countries

COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION (CA)

41 member countries

Political body of the UPU

Studies regulatory, administrative and legal issues

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Represents the interests of the wider postal sector

Reports to the CA

POSTAL OPERATIONS COUNCIL (POC)

48 member countries

Technical and operational body of the UPU

Deals with operational, economic and commercial aspects of postal business

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU (IB)

250 staff

Secretariat of the UPU, located in Berne, Switzerland

Provides logistical and technical support to UPU bodies

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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.

8 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.

9 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.

