

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL STUDIES AND PUBLIC
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THE ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

*The universal postal service in a global postal market - structures,
mechanisms, developments*

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I. KEY WORDS

Universal Postal Service
International administrative cooperation
Postal Union
Collaboration for the implementation of the universal postal service
Strengthening the capacity of postal administrations

II. INTRODUCTION

The developments of the last decades justify the characterization of the economies of developed countries as "economies of services", determining the intensification of the concerns of specialists to overcome the relative backwardness of theory in relation to practice. These concerns were primarily focused on the definition of the concept of service, a difficult problem due to the extreme heterogeneity of services.

The name of the post originally meant an idea, which corresponded to the purpose of that institution. In the course of time, however, over time, however, that institution has transformed itself, so that today we will search in vain to whom the name of the post belongs, from the multitude of services that are performed under this name.

The post, a democratic institution, followed step by step the development of human civilization. The postal sector is the engine of the national economy, it represents the largest distribution network in the country, practically it is an essential infrastructure of the national economy.

Although postal services are historically and culturally unique, they are also universal and indispensable to us all.

The evolution of civilization, the permanent development of the productive forces, would have been held back if the postal and telecommunication service had not been permanently developed.

The development of postal and communications networks have given new dimensions to postal services, which, in addition to ensuring state and interpersonal communications, ensure economic, industrial, scientific communications, etc. The needs fulfilled by postal services have evolved over the centuries in the light of technological progress and the development of society. Communication becomes an essential economic function, governments gradually saw postal services as an important factor of national cohesion.

*About their importance, Constantin N Minescu, in 1916, says: "The modern post office is one of the most democratic institutions and, in this capacity, it serves interests of the highest order, such as: State affairs, the interests of large merchants and industrialists, as well as those of the most insignificant village, the interests of the rich, like those of the poor, and through ingenious combinations, develops and transports all kinds of manifestations of human activity, throughout the world, making any distance and border disappear."*¹

Postal services arose and existed from the need for communication, and their existence was realized thanks to three elements: the only communication channel, the monopoly status conferred by the status of a state institution and implicitly, the lack of competition.

This doctoral thesis originates from a need identified by the author, as a user of communications and more specifically of the postal service, to whom he dedicates his professional activity regarding the recognition and highlighting of the importance of this sector of activity.

Postal networks are an irreplaceable resource and essential basic infrastructure for supporting social and economic well-being around the world.

The universal postal service represents an essential element in the organization of society, through which communication is articulated in its various fields: personal, business, administrative, etc.

Thus, the object of this paper is the analysis of the universal postal service in a global postal market, insisting on its structure, mechanisms and evolution in the context, in which postal services must capitalize on technological advances, especially new information and communication technologies, in order to continue to expand and facilitate access to services, strengthening the coverage of the universal postal service throughout the single postal territory served by the global postal network.

As it progresses, the thesis highlights the essential elements of the importance of the role played by the Universal Postal Union in the field of the global postal sector, showing how it was created, what functions it performed and how this international body was introduced into the complex world of the United Nations.

Starting from the fact that the universal postal service is considered a service of general economic interest (SIEG), i.e. its provision is in the public interest, I proposed to map the way in which the member states of the Universal Postal Union understand to assume the obligation to provide services within the scope of the universal service, since a postal operator, like any economic agent, pursues a single goal: profit.

The novelty of the analysis carried out during the work is given by the fact that until now, at the level of legislative regulations, no solutions have been identified aimed at reform policies that would

¹ Minescu C., History of Romanian Posts, State Printing Office, Bucharest, 1916, pag.5-6

allow the adoption of the necessary means to promote the transformation of the universal postal service by the governments of the states, as guarantors of providing the universal postal service.

Current experiences with postal reforms demonstrate that the process of amending postal laws can be contentious and constraining if we refer to time, by way of consequence, a comprehensive review of the defining elements of the universal postal service should lead to the development of a legislative framework that can remain in place for years on a multi-annual planning horizon.

In this context, the author of the paper proposes, starting from the changing needs and developments of users in the postal sector that impact on the sustainability of the universal postal service and challenge its role in society, a model conceptualization of the universal postal service in the perspective of 2030.

This transformation is not a negation of the traditional universal postal service, but rather an option for the growth of the postal sector, building on its past achievements.

The main objectives of a new postal regulatory framework will need to reflect current trends and developments in the postal services market.

The results of the scientific approach highlighted the fact that, in the absence of a regulation harmonized with technological changes, postal service providers can choose to reduce the scope of services from the universal postal service or increase prices in areas where they register high costs, leaving thus the inhabitants of those areas without the necessary facilities.

A new regulatory framework should facilitate or at least leave room for the introduction of innovative solutions and the provision of services with low initial costs. From the perspective of a well-functioning market, a universal postal service should ideally focus on essential elements of postal service provision that would not be offered under normal competitive conditions and for which there are no technically and economically viable alternative solutions.

We propose that the results of the research can be used by the factors that can determine the updating of the primary legislation on postal services in order to review the universal postal service as well as to compensate the net cost related to its provision, in accordance with the legislative novelties adopted at the European level, taking into account the needs and characteristics of the national market, recognizing the importance of ensuring a legislative framework that meets the needs of the national market, in a global context.

IV SYNTHETIC PRESENTATION OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

The doctoral thesis is structured in three parts, an introductory chapter, a chapter presenting Conclusions and final recommendations, respectively a part containing the bibliographic references used in writing the paper.

In the first part of the paper, it started from the observation that one way to highlight the importance of communications in the world we live in is to try to show the role played by the international organizations that govern them, and for this no example could serve better than that of the Universal Postal Union, which, with an experience of over one hundred and fifty years, continues to do important work for the world-wide ordering of the transmission of written thought and an excellent collaboration in the dissemination of culture and in as many missions as a postal operator can fulfill as an indispensable auxiliary to all activities: commercial, economic and industrial.

I have tried to show the objectives and activities of the Universal Postal Union through an analysis of its organs and the various instruments that make up the Treaty by which it was established and which govern this organization and to make known other aspects of this body, whose universal vocation indicates a vanguard position among international organizations.

The work does not pretend to be historical, although I initially had to resort to historical data to reflect the situation of international mail before 1874, that is, before the establishment of the Universal Postal Union. It is the stage that shows how, due to the effects of the increasing expansion of the means of communication, the commercial, intellectual and social activity of each country takes place, the crossing of borders, forcing the states to conclude more postal agreements, which connect the countries to each other and which ultimately lead to showing the need for the creation of an international postal organization, whose first stone was laid at the Paris Conference of 1863.

I began by showing the problems posed by international postal relations and the various attempts that were made throughout the 19th century to create an organization that would serve as a framework for solving the inconveniences that arose in practice and for the unification of criteria regarding postal communications, followed by an in-depth analysis of the organization, structure and functioning of the Universal Postal Union.

General and legal aspects related to the restricted regional postal unions due to their connection with the Universal Postal Union, within their independence, were also presented, dedicating ample space.

The universal postal service is part of an economic and social structure, basic for international relations between peoples and, at the same time, for daily national activities, which are highly developed and with logistical support from the postal operator.

Deepening the knowledge about the Universal Postal Union, the organization that has favored the development of communications between peoples at a global level through the effective coordination of international postal services, could be a way to contribute in some way to highlighting the importance of communication.

Little or nothing is known about the organization of this service at the national level, and very little about the World Organization dealing with international postal administrations, apart from certain general aspects.

This doctoral thesis is intended to be a modest contribution and to highlight the importance of the Universal Postal Union, a specialized agency of the United Nations which, for many years before the creation of this Organization, provided important services to the international community.

Man today wants to be informed quickly and regularly, and it is the duty of the Universal Postal Union to offer every cooperation to make this possible.

The Universal Postal Union has always been one of the main transmission links of human thought, assuming nowadays an increasingly important role in cultural, economic and social development and in encouraging relations between peoples.

This international postal organization, which proved its strength even in the critical moments of the two world wars, deserves to be known in detail and among other things this is followed in the first part of the work.

In the first part, we carried out an in-depth analysis of the concept of universal postal service, highlighted for the first time in the acts of the Universal Postal Union, and its place in a global postal market.

The evolution of postal services in general was addressed, with a focus on the research of universal postal services at the global and regional level.

The role of postal services, engine of the service economy in general, is allocated to them since they are the only public services that have a permanent operation, the message is authentic and confidential, at the same time it ensures privacy and discretion and last but not least it is guaranteed by the state.

The main research tool is the analysis of specialized literature. In the framework of the undertaken research, the emphasis was placed on complementarity, on mutual validation of the instruments and data sources. Obtaining official data from the Universal Postal Union and the Restricted Postal Unions, the European Commission, the European Committee for Postal Regulations, the postal operators, is also a valuable tool in achieving the research objective.

It can be said that this analysis can allow us to understand more deeply one of the pioneering organizations of international bodies and at the same time so that it can serve as a practical complement for a better understanding of the international postal reality.

The aim pursued in the second part of the work, entitled "The process of development and consolidation of the capacity to provide the universal postal service by the states of the world", is the description of the current situation and the documentation of the research stage of the topic, with the desire to identify elements which can be used to develop a new, more comprehensive definition of universal postal service and provide some of the key components needed to complement the current regulatory framework by providing a set of recommended guiding principles.

The universal postal service, by definition, must be evolutionary, that is, it must receive improvements, both in terms of diversifying the available alternatives and in terms of minimum quality standards in its provision.

The second part describes the main characteristics of the global postal sector, with a focus on the universal postal service obligations imposed on the national postal operators designated by the state authority as the guarantor of the provision of the universal postal service, in the current regional context and global.

In the postal world, the universal postal service obligation plays a very important role, facilitating the inclusion of citizens and enabling commercial and public activities by providing the necessary postal service in remote areas.

To ensure that a basic level of postal services is provided on equal terms for all citizens, governments around the world impose the so-called Universal Postal Service Obligation on postal service providers.

In a liberalized environment, governments and regulatory authorities want to continue providing services within the scope of the universal postal service, that is, to ensure that customers can access certain basic postal services under fair conditions, regardless of their geographical or other characteristics.

The obligation to provide some postal services through the universal postal service aims to cover a social need that would otherwise not be covered by the market under commercial conditions, in the absence of regulation.

This fact, however, raises fundamental questions about how, in practice, the universal postal service obligation can be preserved in a liberalized market:

– how is it determined, who should provide the services within the scope of the universal postal service and how should they be provided ? Should the universal postal service provider be selected using a market mechanism, or should it be determined by the regulator?

– who should/can provide services within the scope of the universal postal service, the designated postal operator or all market operators ?

-what are the basic services in the scope of the universal postal service, respectively those minimum requirements required to guarantee the provision of the universal postal service to all citizens at an affordable price and at a certain quality that must continue to be included for the concept to make sense (and what can be suppressed) ?

Technological, economic and social changes are expected that can only be partially assessed today, this means that the universal postal service cannot remain unchanged for decades, but will have to adapt quickly to the new needs of society and be designed in the most flexible way possible.

In this context we ask ourselves what are the needs of a modern and dynamic society (for example, the need for information, to connect to commerce/authorities/social resources) to which the universal postal service must respond ?

- what would the absence of the regulation of the obligation to provide services in the scope of the universal postal service imply for the provision and quality of the universal postal service and what specific user segments would it impact ?

– how much does it cost to provide services within the scope of the universal postal service? Measuring the cost of providing universal postal services is a complex exercise both in terms of the theory behind the concept and the practicability of available methodologies.

For example, the designated postal operator must carry out the logistic planning of its transport and delivery routes through the optimal design of a delivery network for the services included in the scope of the universal postal service in order to be able to meet the universal service obligations, since the highest cost related to the provision the universal postal service, between 40% and 50% of the total costs is the delivery process.

Therefore, by improving the planning, design and management of the various resources of the delivery process, a significant cost saving can be generated in the process or, what is the same, a great bottom line benefit for the designated postal operator.

– how should the universal postal service be financed ? Why does a net cost occur and how is it assessed ?

The cost of an obligation is generally assessed by the net cost method: it is equal to the additional margin that the postal operator would realize in the absence of this obligation (the so-called "hypothetical" situation, because it is not respected), the obligation imposed on the postal operator prevents him from realizing this additional margin.

The fact that the decrease in the volume of correspondence has also generated a decrease in income is a reality of our days, thus making it difficult to finance the obligations generated by the

provision of the universal postal service, and these realities leading to the need to reconfigure the universal postal service, in order to reduce related costs.

In this context, some countries have chosen to change or start reflection to change the scope of the universal postal service.

The answers to these questions can provide relevant premises that can be the basis for the redefinition of universal postal service obligations.

When it comes to services within the scope of the universal postal service, there is such an extensive amount of information and yet there is not enough information to determine what the correct definition of universal postal service is.

To decide which services should be included in the scope of the universal postal service, a state must take into account its international commitments (international conventions, especially the Universal Postal Union Convention, and performance standards), national economic and cultural policies, the specific needs of society, the current situation of the services and, above all, the financial/economic and operational viability of the provision of these services.

Nothing can be more counterproductive than a law which includes, as basic services in the scope of the universal postal service, those services which are inadequate in terms of quality and accessibility.

This wealth of information is found in academic papers, articles on universal postal service and universal postal service obligations, surveys designed to determine the wants and needs of stakeholders, and information on how much it costs to provide universal postal service, and what costs would be avoided if the obligations relating to the provision of the universal postal service were relaxed.

Against this background, we considered it necessary to develop a study that deals with the key components of the obligation to provide services in the scope of the universal postal service, that is, those elements less addressed from a scientific perspective.

The research hypotheses stemmed from the experience gained over the years in the field of postal services combined with the need to research a niche field, difficult to access, that of regulating the provision of the universal postal service, and are based on the study of specialized literature on policies public, the legislation specific to the postal field and on the vision of those involved in decisions and those who carry out postal activities on the issue represented by the concept of universal postal service.

As for the actual writing, I followed a research plan built around three major pillars, categorized as follows: documenting the current state of what I wanted to research, planning the research, and conducting the research study. The first step was the bibliographic research. The purpose of this approach was to select those works that approached the researched subject.

After this stage, I continued the research with the study of works with a special character, Romanian and foreign. The efforts were easier compared to the previous stage, due to the smaller volume of studies, with specialized studies and articles having a special role.

After completing the two stages, I selected only the studies that were related to the subject of the paper, an important number of studies not being used or relevant in its elaboration, although they were completed.

There are limitations, in the sense of the non-existence of a document/volume that strictly refers to the researched topic.

A careful analysis of the existing specialized literature as well as relevant good practices, which can contribute to the development of a new concept relative to the universal postal service in a rapidly changing market, has been carried out.

Most of the data, information about the researched topic was discovered or verified in virtual format.

This is a synthetic exposition of the research stage of the subject that I had for documentation in the second part of the doctoral thesis.

In the third part of the paper, it is highlighted that Romania, in its capacity as a member state and co-founder of the Universal Postal Union, also a member of the European Union, respects the requirements and obligations that fall to it through the postal operator *Compania Națională Poșta Română S.A.*, appointed to provide the universal postal service on the national territory, having defined and included the same services that are found in the scope of the universal postal service and at other international postal operators, in this case correspondence and postal parcels, that they also comply with the requirements related to: the shape, size and weight conditions for postal items, the structure of the postal network, the performance targets, circulation times, maintaining the number of deliveries, the existence of the mechanism for resolving complaints of users of postal services, requirements met that qualify it as a good supplier of the universal postal service on the territory of Romania.

Also starting from the fact that the regulation of ensuring the provision of services within the scope of the universal postal service is at the heart of any postal law that regulates the postal service, at the national level, I propose to present and analyze the net cost compensation methods, as a result of the fulfillment by the designated national postal operator, *CN Poșta Română SA*, of the obligations circumscribed to the scope of the universal postal service.

The purpose of the third part is to explore the challenges to be overcome by the national postal operator when implementing a net cost calculation methodology based on a reference scenario.

There is no consensus in the postal sector as to the most appropriate method of calculating the cost of the universal postal service. Until now, this activity was almost useless because the services

were provided under a public monopoly, but the process of liberalization made it essential to evaluate and standardize this cost.

And for the drafting of the doctoral research material related to the third part of the paper, I followed a research plan built around three major pillars, classified as follows: documenting the current state of what I wanted to research, planning the research and conducting the research study. The first step was the bibliographic research.

I studied works of a general nature in order to accumulate relevant knowledge and data about the Romanian postal services, the designated national postal operator, the regulatory authority in communications, etc. We followed aspects related to the organization, activity, methods and means used in the activities circumscribed to the scope of the universal postal service, the collaborations and the exchange of information between the postal operator and the national regulatory authority.

Since the focus of scientific research is concentrated around the relations between the national postal operator and the regulatory authority, relative to the regulation of the conditions regarding the provision of the universal postal service, most of the studies carried out have focused on the scope of the universal postal service and the alternatives for its financing.

There were limitations, in the sense of the non-existence of a document/volume that strictly refers to the researched topic.

V.CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

By reconfiguring and making flexible the services included in the scope of the universal postal service, it will contribute to the provision of services at the intersection between the digital and the physical world, while also having a positive impact on the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as the number of days of letter distribution will be reduced.

We can say that even in the most digitized countries, there is still a need to ensure that postal services within the scope of the universal postal service are reliably provided, even if users do not send or receive mail every day.

Technological advances in the fields of artificial intelligence and predictive analytics help postal operators to better understand and anticipate the needs and specificities of different users. Automation of logistics and distribution makes it possible to serve rural areas in a more specific and economical way.

Post offices are less frequented. At the same time, new technologies are emerging that make it possible to guarantee access to services and in mobile mode and no on-site personal service.

The national postal operator designated to provide the universal postal service must benefit from greater flexibility in the provision of services in order to be able to react appropriately to the evolution and dynamism of demand.

The flexibility of universal postal service obligations will generate efficiency, guaranteeing in all cases the quality of the public service provided to customers of postal services within the scope of the universal postal service. A suitable option in this sense is some areas where there is not enough demand for a five-day delivery, for example, as long as the quality of the public service is guaranteed.

Reducing the number of delivery days, as happened in Italy, for example. In Italy, (as an exception allowed by the Directive²), distribution is done on alternate days in those areas with less density, this situation affects approximately 25% of the country's population, but it represents a concrete way to make universal postal service obligations more flexible.

The outsourcing of the postal network, as happens in countries such as France or Great Britain (two different models), can represent for the designated postal operator a flexibility of universal postal service obligations.

In France, where the designated postal operator is 100% public, an outsourcing model has been promoted for almost 50% of the network. For example, in some cities, postal service is provided by other small businesses, which are appointed in consultation with the city council.

Currently, there are no legal requirements relative to the existence of a minimum number of access points, and the future plan should not be more rigid, the provisions contained in the legislation governing postal services, ensuring in any case the quality of the service.

Not establishing the minimum number of post offices and access points, as an obligation of the postal operator designated for the provision of the universal postal service, may constitute another way of making the obligations incumbent on him more flexible.

Compensation for the net cost of providing services within the scope of the universal postal service should focus on those areas where volumes are low and do not allow profitability.

Analog processes are increasingly replaced by digital channels. The growing use of QR codes during the coronavirus pandemic reinforces the trend. The proliferation of smartphones and the Internet is also changing purchasing behavior and increasing online ordering. Consumers are spending more and more money on intangible or digital goods and experiences.

² European Parliament and Council Directive 97/67/CE / December 15, 1997 on common rules for the development of the internal market of Community postal services and the improvement of service quality, published in the Official Journal of the European Community no. L 15 / 21 January 1998, amended and supplemented.

Furthermore, with digitization and smart logistics, consumption, production and distribution are no longer tied to specific locations. The following technological advances will further accentuate this lack of localization.

In a context of shrinking postal markets and reduced service requirements within the scope of the universal postal service, it is still in the interest of users to ensure a minimum level of postal services at a specified quality.

However, the level of quality of the universal postal service that would best meet users' needs varies greatly between countries. Therefore, the regulation of a universal, reconfigured and modernized postal service clearly remains relevant.

Unlike most industrialized countries, especially European ones, which enjoy a functioning universal postal service, many countries in Latin America are still in the development phase of postal services within the scope of the universal postal service.

In Latin America, there are significant segments of the population that are not connected to the postal network, do not benefit from adequate prices, and as a result, mail volumes per capita are relatively low. In this context, the postal network cannot fulfill its role as an economic catalyst.

On the other hand, most Latin American countries benefit from low labor costs. As a result, mail sorting automation is considerably less than in industrialized countries, which have higher labor costs relative to the cost of capital.

These differences mean that the regulations for universal postal service in Latin America cannot be the same as those in European countries, where postal networks are fully developed and the provision of universal postal service is the rule, not the exception.

In Latin America, for example, the postal networks are incomplete and need a different regulation to be able to ensure the provision of services within the scope of the universal postal service, which is why we highlighted these differences, as well as the potential economic consequences.

The effects of implementing new forms of universal postal service, especially in the digital field, can often be accompanied by uncertainties, which is why there is the possibility of conducting pilot tests in certain regions of a state. These trials would allow testing of new and innovative forms in a region, before introducing them on a national scale.

Taking into account the fact that digital communication will be more and more widespread and accepted, in conjunction with the increasing pressure relative to the financing of the universal postal service, the services for which the demand is decreasing (letter delivery and newspapers, access network, cash transactions at post office counters), so a reduction in delivery frequency and delivery speed can generate significant savings.

It should be emphasized that Directive 97/67/EC on postal services requires that services within the scope of the universal postal service are provided at least five working days a week.

Recently, some countries have reduced the frequency of delivery, and others plan to follow. Although the Postal Services Directive currently provides substantial flexibility in this regard, it is not clear how much the frequency of delivery could be reduced (in some areas or for certain products) under the Postal Services Directive, and whether the CJEU would confirm such flexible interpretations should the matter be brought to trial in the future.

In the context of the question of the sustainability of the provision of the universal postal service and the improvement of efficiency, flexibility is necessary and welcome, but we must not lose sight of the fact that access to services within the scope of the universal postal service should remain subject to uniform minimum requirements at national level, although the focus should no longer be on terms of access, but on service.

At the same time, the designation of a universal postal service provider for the entire territory of a country and for all services included in the scope of the universal postal service could represent a potentially burdensome aspect for the designated national postal operator, meaning that other approaches could be considered for to ensure the provision of services within the scope of the universal postal service, in particular for defined services (eg newspaper delivery) or in specific geographical areas (eg on islands).

As the physical component of payment traffic loses its importance, it is possible to decouple it from the services that fall within the scope of the universal postal service. It is advisable to keep cash transactions within the scope of the universal postal service as long as there are no digital means of payment with characteristics comparable to those of cash (use without infrastructure, anonymity).

Last but not least, when discussing the future sustainability of the universal postal service, it must be pointed out that the funding models applied so far for the universal postal service have had little success and that the further relaxation of the regulatory framework can have a positive impact on solving the problem of financing the universal postal service.

The net cost of providing the universal postal service can be considerable and, if the universal postal service provider were to bear these costs alone, this would place the designated national postal operator at a disadvantage compared to its competitors.

Compensation must be targeted at the most vulnerable areas and guarantee the cohesion of the rural world.

The results of the study carried out by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, published by the European Commission last July, do not clarify possible solutions relative to the financing of the universal postal service, given the possibility that the proposal for a new directive foresees the end of protected areas.

This unanswered question is fundamental to the postal sector in most EU member states, but not only. It is important not to forget, on the one hand, that the compensation fund is contested by many economists as an unsafe financing method and, on the other hand, that it is difficult to rely on state aid due to the national budgetary constraints of the states members.

An alternative proposed by some players in the postal sector is to limit and reduce the scope of the universal postal service in order to reduce costs. However, if adopted, such an alternative would seriously undermine the structure and economy of the postal sector and have devastating effects on the social and territorial functions of the universal postal service. At present, postal services reach many peripheral regions at the expense of regions that generate more revenue for these services, a situation that needs to be maintained.

Consequently, one of the main policy objectives for this sector should be to ensure long-term viability given the dramatic decline in mail volumes, public funding should fully cover the increase in the net cost of providing to services within the scope of the universal postal service, in the context in which the provision of the universal postal service has become more and more expensive.

The subject of the long-term viability of the universal postal service is not sufficiently addressed at present, taking into account the many benefits that the universal postal service brings to society.

As the universal postal service must respect the principle of economic viability. The issue of financing the universal postal service is crucial. If the revenues obtained from the provision of services within the scope of the universal postal service do not or cannot cover the net cost of the service, public resources should fully reimburse the designated postal operator for the costs related to ensuring the provision of the universal postal service.

Without public funding, net cost undercompensation would inevitably have a regressive impact on the quality of the universal postal service and would unfairly affect the financial stability of postal operators designated universal postal service providers, which is why the principle of full net cost compensation (including a certain margin that allow necessary investments) of the universal postal service by the member states through national funding, should be operationalized.

The issue of assessing and compensating the costs of the universal postal service will also represent one of the main policy issues in the postal sector in the future, as the designated postal operators face a huge challenge to survive in a competitive postal market and to fulfill the obligations imposed by state related to the universality of the postal service obligation.

Universal postal service providers that implement a proper strategy will certainly have a significant role in a global postal market in the future as well. This fact is especially evident when we consider that the demand for postal services at the point where the physical and electronic worlds meet is increasing.

And as the world spins endlessly into space, the emblem of the Universal Postal Union reminds us that this international organization is constantly making sure that the seven continents remain properly connected through the universal postal system.

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