CEN/TC 331
BUSINESS PLAN

November 2023

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT[1]

Postal Services play a key role for EU citizens and businesses in the single market. The EU postal and delivery sector contributes to the economy of the Union in various ways:

- the sector generates revenues of EUR 79 billion per year[2], which corresponds to 0.5 per cent of the EU's total GDP,
- the postal and delivery sector employs around 1.7 million people across the EU[3], corresponding to 0.8 per cent of the employed population,
- the postal and delivery sector is an enabler of e-commerce domestically, intra-EU and globally – a fast growing industry in Europe and currently worth EUR 344 billion,
- many players are active in the postal and delivery sector in the EU. They include the universal service providers, competing providers active in the letter delivery business, logistics and express providers (e.g. UPS and FedEx), and alternative delivery operators (e.g. Amazon)

The sector is going through important transformations in terms of:

- digitalisation: more users communicating digitally and shopping online,
- change in product mix: a decline in letter post and an increase in parcel volumes (more than ten per cent per year between 2013 and 2017),
- changes in the competitive landscape: digital communication alternatives competing with letter post product and new delivery players entering the parcel segment
- more focus on the environment: the postal sector is an important stakeholder in driving carbon efficiency
- transformation of postal operators: postal operators providing new services, using more efficient technologies and transforming their business models.

E-COMMERCE AND PARCEL DELIVERY

Until now European standardization of postal services was focused on letter post. With the growing importance of e-commerce, a shift is taking place from letter to parcel delivery.

Streamlined, accessible, high-quality cross-border delivery services can build trust in cross-border online sales. The Commission aims to improve delivery services for consumers and SMEs, ensure cost-effective solutions and promote interoperability of delivery services between operators, and operators and e-retailers.

The goals are to:

- Build trust in delivery services and encourage online sales to be compliant to security and customs requirements for electronic advanced data;
- Promote interoperability of parcel-delivery operations;
- Create a Digital Single Market for the European Union.;

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[1] Copenhagen Economics 2019, Research for TRAN Committee – Postal Services in the EU, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

[2] Data for 2017

[3] Data for 2018

- Enhance the regulatory oversight of parcel delivery services from 0 – 31,5 kg weight range, to increase the transparency of certain single-piece tariffs and to assess tariffs for certain cross-border parcel delivery services.

An Accenture study shows trends for what consumers want. These are in short:

1. **Delivery control**

Consumers are demanding a better last mile service that keeps them in control of how, when and where their parcels are delivered

2. **Delivery locations**

As choices broaden, consumers want new delivery options such as lockers or pickup locations that enable a secure, 24x7 and sometimes anonymous delivery option.

3. **Delivery timing**

While there is significant investment in speed, CEP (Courier Express Parcel) companies should focus on giving consumers a range of delivery times (often at different price points) that provides flexibility.

Therefore standards have to facilitate the interoperability between players in the postal chain that will enable consumers to be in control of their deliveries while broadening their choices of delivery locations and timings.

EUROPEAN POLICY

Postal services play a key role in an effective and dynamic EU Single Market and they are of crucial importance to businesses and EU citizens alike. The European Commission works on improving the quality of delivery and access to postal services, and aims to complete a well-functioning Single Market for postal services.

The postal sector has been opened to competition in a gradual and controlled way. The core aims of European Commission's EU postal policy[5] are to:

- ensure high-quality universal postal services for consumers and businesses at affordable prices
- improve the quality of services, in particular relating to routing times
- establish independent national regulatory authorities that have sufficient resources and are entrusted with postal regulation (oversight, statistics, authorisation, tariff control, accounting, complaints procedures etc.)

The importance of postal services for the economic prosperity, social well-being and cohesion of the EU make them an important area for Commission action.

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[4] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/postal-services/eu-postal-services-policy_en

The objectives for postal services have been implemented in EU law through the Postal Services Directive - **Directive 97/67/EC**. This directive established a regulatory framework for European postal services and was amended by Directive 2002/39/EC and Directive 2008/6/EC. In April 2018 also the Regulation on crossborder parcel delivery services 2018/644 was adopted.

EU POSTAL POLICY AND STANDARDIZATION

Since 1993, the European Commission has promoted and supported the process of technical standardization in the postal sector. The Postal Directive recognizes the vital role standardization plays in benefitting postal customers, such as by providing a standardized measurement of quality.

The European Commission has requested CEN, through Standardization Requests, to develop standards in support of these policy objectives at several occasions over the course of the last two decades. The last standardization request (M/548) which was accepted by CEN in 2016 requests CEN to develop European standardization deliverables or where necessary to revise existing standards in support of Directive 97/67/EC as amended by Directives 2002/39/EC and 2008/6/EC, and in order to enhance interoperability of parcel-delivery operations and thereby contribute to promoting the creation of a Digital Single Market for the European Union.

In addition, the work of CEN/TC 331 supports the following EU policies, among which

- Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final),
- REGULATION (EU) 2018/644 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on cross-border parcel delivery services.
- Better regulation for better results – An EU agenda (COM(2015)) of 19 May 2015.
- COM (2015) 192, Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe: The need to enhance the quality and affordability of cross-border parcel delivery has been identified as a priority in the EU's policy to facilitate e-commerce, and to create a Digital Single Market for the European Union.
- COM (2013) 886 – A Roadmap for completing the single market for parcel delivery: Action 4: Promote enhanced interoperability of parcel delivery operations to support efficient cross-border trade and Action 5: Enhance consumer protection.
- COM (2012) 698 - EC Green Paper – An integrated parcel delivery market for the growth of e-commerce in the EU: 5.1 Improving consumer experience and convenience (Service level), 6 Governance for an integrated European parcel delivery market (interoperability).
- SEC (2011) 1641, "A coherent framework to build trust in the Digital single market for e-commerce and online services".

BENEFITS

Benefits of standardization in postal services are:

- **Interoperability**: create a greater level of interoperability between operators along the postal value chain, and better coordination between e-retailers and parcel delivery companies.
- **Accessibility**: provide Europe wide applicable solutions, fine-tuned and well tested that make the network more accessible to all players avoiding inefficient investment in IT
- **Convenience**: greater convenience, quality of services, transparency for consumers and cost effective delivery solutions.

- **Swift development** of new services (and improving existing services) by providing proven and standardized solutions that can be used as a foundation.

The work of CEN/TC 331 also supports European Legislation. Although most of the standards adopted by CEN are subject to voluntary implementation, the Postal Directive requires implicitly the use of European standards in some cases. For example, EU countries are required to ensure that the quality of service is measured under standardized conditions.

STAKEHOLDERS

The following stakeholders within the postal value chain have been identified for which the work of CEN/TC 331 is relevant:

- European Commission, DG Move, DG Grow, DG Connect

- Postal operators

- Universal Postal Union (UPU)

- National authorities, such as

  o Regulatory authorities and ministries

  o Customs and tax authorities

- Business clients

- Business partners, including transport

- Consumers and customer associations

- Equipment's and consumable manufacturers

- Not for profit standardization bodies, like GS1/entities in the field of supply chain management

All the CEN national members are entitled to nominate delegates to CEN Technical Committees and experts to Working Groups, ensuring a balance of all interested parties. Participation as observers of recognized European or international organizations is also possible under certain conditions. To participate in the activities of this CEN/TC, please contact the national standards organization in your country.

LIAISON ACTIVITIES

The CEN Technical Committee takes into account the measures adopted at international level, and in particular those decided upon within the **Universal Postal Union (UPU).** The UPU's standards cover letter and parcel services and are invariably updated due to altering business requirements and consumer demands.

Co-operation between UPU and CEN was reinforced by the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2001. In the MoU, the parties agreed on the terms of collaboration: "Where both parties express an interest in a particular area of work within the field of postal standardization, the parties shall agree the mode of co-operation to be applied in the work area concerned." The UPU works closely with postal handling organizations, customers, suppliers and other partners, including various international organizations[6].

Due to the digitalization along the postal value chain, secured electronic postal services and related trust services have gained significant importance. To ensure seamless interoperability of related postal and telecommunication standards, CEN/TC 331 established an ongoing collaboration with ETSI ESI.

The strong potential of e-commerce and the growing concerns about sustainability of the big amounts of packaging supports the TC331 collaboration with CEN/TC 261 Packaging that covers primary packages and secondary transport packaging and unit loads, whatever the materials, shapes, contents, distribution system adopted.

CEN/TC 331 Postal services

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of CEN/TC 331 are to improve interoperability and quality of services in the postal value chain.

RELEVANCE

The Postal Directive, in particular its article 20, recognizes the importance of the role of standardization for the benefit of postal customers. There is a widely shared consensus on the need to update standards to contribute to maintaining high quality universal services in the rapidly evolving environment of the postal market. In addition, because of the contribution of standards to interoperability, the standardization work of CEN/TC 331 also contributes to the productivity and efficiency of the postal sector.

SCOPE

The scope of the CEN/TC 331 includes the postal market which ranges from non-express letters to parcels including the extension to the digital postal services linked with the postal products or services. The work of CEN/TC 331 is mainly focused on the interfaces between stakeholders in the postal value chain and various aspects of the measurement of quality of service. In addition, CEN/TC 331 works on digital postal services, (automatic) identification and tracking of mail items, apertures in letter boxes, receptacles, address data, and forms.

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5 Catalogue of UPU Standards, available at http://www.upu.int/uploads/tx_sbdownloader/Catalogue-of-UPU-standards.pdf

STRATEGIES

The work of CEN/TC 331 reflects the developments in the postal market and takes into account the needs of all stakeholders in the postal supply chain. To achieve this the following strategies are followed:

- CEN/TC 331 takes into account the needs of all stakeholders in the postal supply chain and in particular the customer (mainly individuals or SME).

- The postal market evolves rapidly. Standards should therefore be reviewed on a regular basis and updated when necessary.

- CEN/TC 331 should address the standardization work with a global scope in mind, because the postal market is a global market. Close collaboration with UPU is therefore essential.

- The cost of implementation of a standard is an important factor for its adoption. A cost–benefit analysis should therefore be carried out to assess the desirability of a new standard and before the development of a standard starts.

- Outreach activities should take place to inform stakeholders about the work in CEN/TC 331 and to promote the uptake of standards, see also: https://www.centc331.eu/.

ORGANIZATION

The chart below shows the structure of CEN/TC 331 and the responsibilities of the main actors. Each actor is described in more detail hereafter.
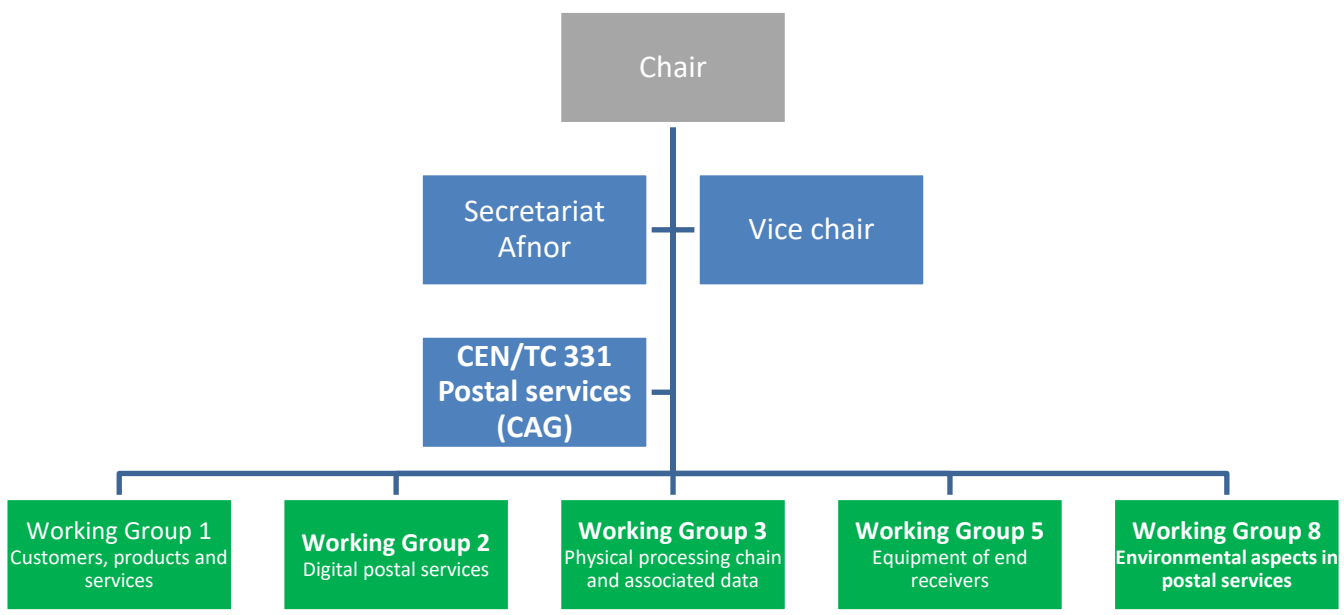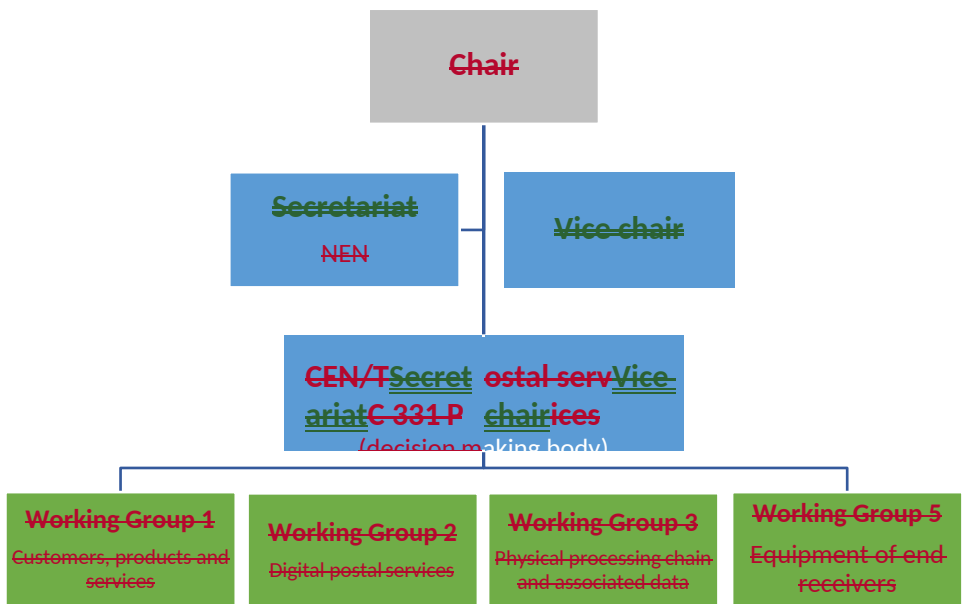
Chair / Vice chair

The Chair coordinates the work of the TC and its WGs, monitors implementation of decisions and the application of procedures to ensure appropriate progress, conducts meetings ensuring that all points of view are heard and considered.

Secretariat

The Secretariat provides management support services associated with the running of the TC, including: management of meetings, formal processing of the standardization deliverable and project management.

CEN/TC 331

The CEN/TC 331 plenary is a decision-making body. The members of the TC decide on starting new work, comment on draft deliverables and vote on final standards.

Working Group

CEN/TC 331 has a number of Working Groups (WG) in which the actual work is carried out. Each of these groups is dedicated to a more specific aspect of the overall subject.

Working Groups

Working Group 1
Customers, products and services

This Working Group (WG) is focused on standards for quality of service measurement, so that products and services meet the expectations of customers. The starting point of WG1 is to provide a definition of the services and their quality requirements.

The goals of the WG 1

- To enhancing the perception of the customers of the levels of quality of service,

- To improving the confidence of the customer in the postal chains,

- To helping the dialogue between the regulatory bodies and the postal operators,

- To improving the effectiveness of postal market at the entire European level.

by developing useful standardized tools to monitor and to help improve the quality of the postal services.

36 experts are nominated from 14 countries: Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, UK

Working Group 2
Digital postal services

This WG is focused on digital postal services, like the hybrid mail, secured electronic postal services, postal registered email, reverse hybrid mail, the electronic identity services.

The goals of the WG 2 are oriented to the support of the development of the new digital markets around the physical postal exchanges, including the interconnectivity to UPU postal supply chain management solutions and electronic advanced data for the exchange of data on item level between stakeholders and competent authorities.. To afford wider postal sector stakeholders access to these solutions, to foster electronic data exchanges with designated and other operators via standard UPU electronic data interchange (EDI) messages, and allow these stakeholders to assist in raising and resolving anomalies in the postal supply chain.

30 experts are nominated from 13 countries Austria, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, Switzerland, Slovakia, Croatia and Spain, and 2 liaison organizations (ETSI and GS1).

Working Group 3
Physical processing chain and associated data

The scope of this WG is standardization of information exchanges in the entire physical process chain for mail and parcels, including technical equipment like the sorting machines (letters, parcels) with the associated data flows (sorting plans, address management, MIS, track and trace events, technology for tracking etc. It also includes methods for safe, secured and contactless delivery and contactless proof of delivery.

The objectives are to improve the efficiency of the entire process chain with an end to end point of view, including all the aspects of the process (direct like mail sorting or indirect like postal address management, security controls, etc.)

The aim is to reduce complexity, enhance interoperability and improve quality in the process chain for mail and parcels. This provides benefits to postal operators and other actors, as well as the end customer. It helps to improve the handling of cross border mail and parcels.

40 experts are nominated from 15 countries: Sweden, France, UK., Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Poland, Spain, Norway, Slovakia, Croatia, Switzerland, Slovenia, Finland and Austria. They represent postal operators as well as machine operators/constructors and authorities. There are no subgroups/task groups organized under WG 3; project leaders are appointed for the specific Work items. WG 3 arranges at least two physical meetings/year usually held the day before the TC plenary meetings, and online-meetings are held in between if necessary.

Working Group 5
Equipment of the end receivers

The objective of this Working Group is to create standards for equipment of end receivers that shall ensure functionality, usability, ergonomics and compliance to legal frameworks. Thus, facilitating the usage for all potential users.

This WG is focused on the equipment at hardware and IT interfaces between delivery or collection operators and end receivers, like individual and / or collective letter and parcel boxes.

WG5 consist of representatives from manufactures, postal operators and consumer organizations and has currently members from 13 countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Spain, Switzerland and the UK). The number and composition of members actively participating in the meetings varies depending on the project worked on.

Working Group 8
~~Equipment of the end receivers~~Environmental aspects in postal services

The scope of this working group is to promote solutions to achieve efficient and environmentally sound delivery from the final hub to the final customer.

The objectives of the working group are to provide recommendations to increase operational efficiency to reduce environmental impact, to develop guidance on solutions to enable environmentally sound delivery and to identify criteria to define more sustainable delivery.

The postal sector is already addressing the need for more accurate measurement of GHG emissions through EN 17837 / Parcel Delivery Environmental Footprint (PDEF). EN 17837 falls within the scope of WG8 and sets the standard for enhanced reporting of emissions to customers and regulators, as well as the identification of hotspots within the parcel delivery chain - based on recognised carbon accounting methodologies.

WG8 has twenty members from eight countries (France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) and a liaison (International Postal Corporation).

~~The objective of this Working Group is to create standards for equipment of end receivers that shall~~

~~ensure functionality, usability, ergonomics and compliance to legal frameworks.~~

Allocation of work among the experts of the working groups

As there might be topics falling into more than one of the working groups, CEN/TC 331 will discuss such a work item via the CAG meeting between the convenors of the working groups. During this conversation it is advised what expert or working group will be in the lead and what experts will be joining the work, either in a consulting manner or in a cooperative way and working on the standard together.