

## The European postal debate


The European Union's approach is to secure the universal postal service and to gradually open the postal market to competition to deliver choice and better services for customers. A new Postal Directive was adopted at the end of January 2008 and Member States have until 31 December 2010 to transpose it into national legislation.

The new Postal Directive is confirmed as follows:

- No change to the definition of the universal service i.e. one clearance and delivery at least five working days a week. Uniform tariff is maintained for single piece mail but price flexibility is allowed for bulk mail as long as it is cost-orientated.
- A choice of financing mechanisms for the universal postal service and a new annex setting out a common methodology;
- Full market opening for most Member States from 1 January 2011.
- Permission granted to 11 named Member States to have another 2 years to prepare for full market opening until 1 January 2013 (Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

Postcomm supports the European Commission's approach to securing the universal postal service through the development of effective competition and a level playing field.

On 1 January 2006, Postcomm decided – after lengthy and thorough consultation with postal stakeholders – to open the UK market to full competition. One important reason to do this was to provide an incentive for Royal Mail to improve its quality of service and customer focus. This approach seems to have worked.



Royal Mail's quality of service record has improved steadily since competition (in the bulk mail sector) was introduced in 2003, and continues to do so now that the market is fully open.

### Useful links

- **[www.psc.gov.uk](http://www.psc.gov.uk)** – Postcomm's website, for further information on all aspects of the postal market, including UK and international market reports

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Postcomm is the independent regulator for postal services in the UK. This is one of a series of fact sheets designed to provide background information on key issues in the postal services sector. Contact us at 6 Hercules Road, London, SE1 7DB. **Tel** 020 7593 2100, **Email** [info@psc.gov.uk](mailto:info@psc.gov.uk)

A large print version is available.

Please telephone: 020 7593 2100 or

Email: [info@psc.gov.uk](mailto:info@psc.gov.uk)

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