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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

**of Directive 97/67/EC on common rules for the development of the internal market of  
Community postal services and the improvement of quality of service amended by  
Directives 2002/39/EC and 2008/6/EC  
(Postal Services Directive)**

*Accompanying the*

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND  
THE COUNCIL**

**on the Application of the Postal Services Directive  
(Directive 97/67/EC as amended by Directive 2002/39/EC and 2008/6/EC)**

{COM(2021) 674 final} - {SEC(2021) 388 final} - {SWD(2021) 309 final}

The EU postal services (letter mail and parcels) sector is a key enabler of the economy and of trade, underpinning other sectors and contributing to the growth and resilience of the EU economy. Companies of all sizes use postal services to build their business, supply goods and receive payments. All levels of government and public administrations rely on postal services for public communications, and vulnerable users and citizens in rural remote areas need postal services to remain connected to an increasingly digitalised economy. The postal services sector hence plays an essential role in ensuring the right to communication and in promoting territorial, social and economic cohesion. With many EU citizens confined in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, postal services have proven more important than ever, providing not only affordable and quality postal services but also delivering products for medical purposes and providing other publicly relevant services such as, for example, financial services to citizens.

The regulatory framework governing postal services has been in place for more than 20 years. Directive 97/67/EC<sup>1</sup> (the “Postal Services Directive”) came into force in 1997 with the aim of providing for harmonization of national universal service obligations while at the same time gradually introducing competition in the postal services sector. It was amended in 2002 to provide for further market opening, and again in 2008 to complete full market opening. With the exception of these two amendments and the Regulation on cross-border parcel delivery<sup>2</sup> adopted in 2018 to provide more transparency and regulatory oversight regarding parcel delivery operators, the EU postal services framework has remained the same since 1997. During this period, however, postal services markets have undergone a major shift largely driven by technological innovation, digitization and e-commerce. Letter mail has increasingly been replaced by electronic communication, especially in the context of e-government. At the same time, e-commerce has led to a significant increase in parcel delivery services. This transformation, which has become increasingly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, has affected both demand and supply in all Member States (albeit to a varying extent).

Prompted by the fundamental changes to the market context the Commission carried out an *ex-post* evaluation to assess whether the Postal Services Directive has achieved its objectives, is still fit for purpose and matches the present and future needs of postal users and operators.

The main conclusion of the Evaluation is that maintaining some form of universal postal service for all EU citizens is justified, although with an appropriate level of flexibility for Member States to design postal policies at national level. At the same time, the evaluation has identified issues that are not sufficiently reflected in the current Postal Services Directive or where the Directive has not delivered expected results: (i) universal postal services offer declining benefits to society while universal service provision has become increasingly costly; (ii) the achievement of an internal market and stimulating effective competition in the letter mail segment; and (iii) an insufficient use of standards, which reduces legal certainty and may

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 97/67/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 1997 on common rules for the development of the internal market of Community postal services and the improvement of quality of service, as amended by Directive 2002/39/EC and 2008/6/EC, OJ L 15, 21.1.1998, pages 14 to 25.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/644 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on cross-border parcel delivery services, OJ L 112, 2.5.2018, pages 19 to 28.

lead to interoperability issues. In addition, the large price differentials between tariffs for domestic and cross-border deliveries would also deserve particular attention.