

The digital postal network

.POST Group Business Plan 2022–2025

Berne, February 2022

Introduction

This document sets out a strategy for the .POST Group and the UPU-sponsored top-level domain .POST. Its objective is to define one line of thinking which reflects and illustrates UPU members' expectations and the values of the wider postal community in the development of .POST.

The Internet is rapidly changing. The key assets of the worldwide postal network are trust, interoperability, interconnectivity and visibility as a worldwide brand. These are high-value assets in the rapidly changing digital world created by the development of the information society. The postal sector can use .POST as a platform to leverage these assets in the digital world, thereby strengthening and expanding business opportunities. .POST should be considered as the digital trust infrastructure that helps Posts focus their digital strategy, and supports them in their digital transformation.

The .POST infrastructure serves as a platform for digital security services, giving domain owners the opportunity to add additional security to digital applications.

The .POST Group intends to bring cohesion to postal digital strategies and a level of maturity amongst member countries in their digital transformation in order to:

- provide postal operators worldwide with attractive Internet domain services for economic, social and commercial aspects of their business;
- increase the security of postal digital services; and
- provide a place for collaborative innovation between all stakeholders for new postal digital services.

The .POST strategy 2025 is aligned with the UPU Abidjan Postal Strategy.

I. Vision of the .POST Group

“Enable the postal sector to be seen as an essential component of the global digital economy and connected governments”.

II. Mission of the .POST Group

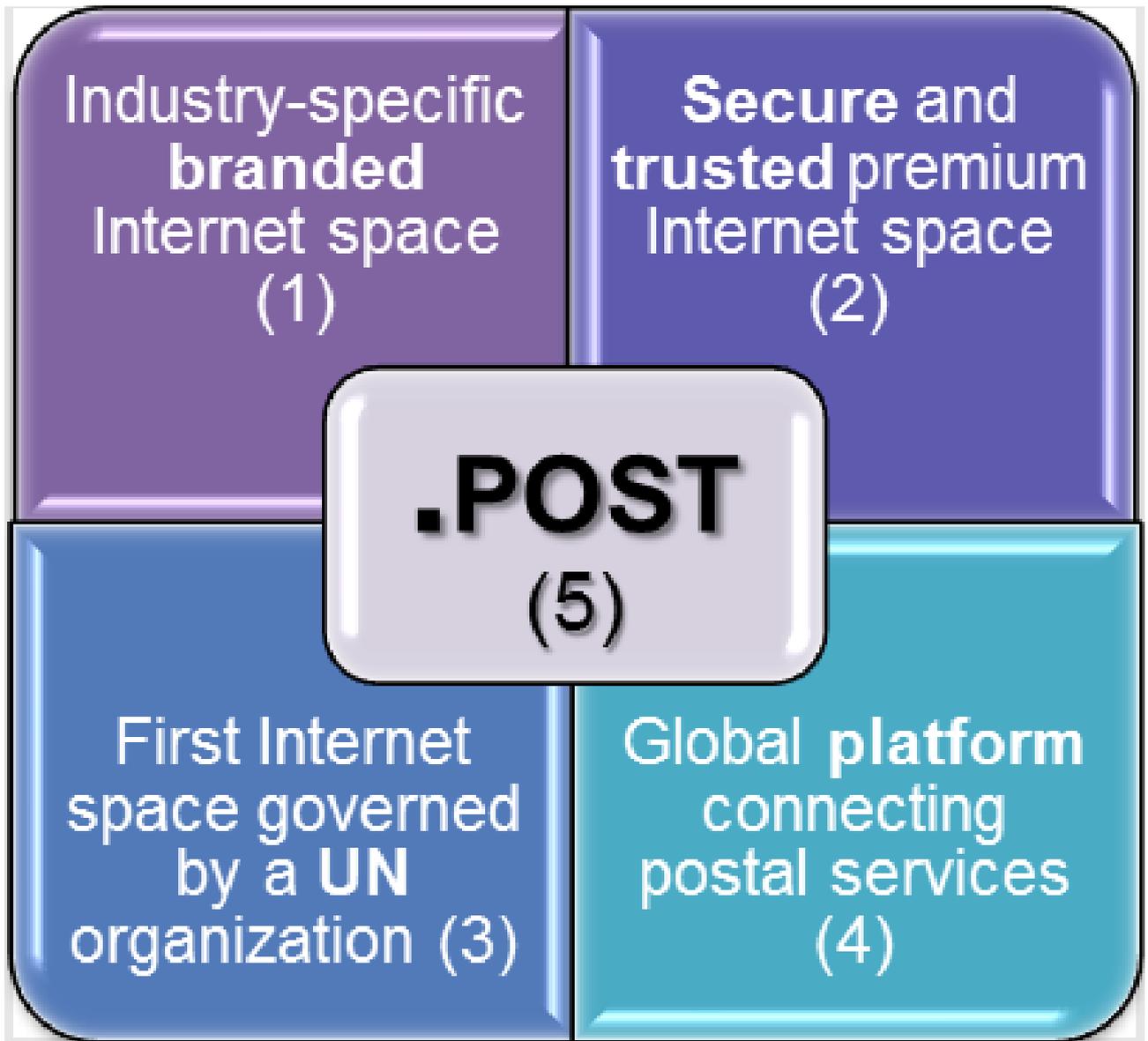
- Enable discussion, encourage dialogue, and share knowledge within the community, facilitating a collaborative digital development environment;
- Develop .POST to represent the postal sector on the Internet;
- Secure Posts on the Internet and support them in providing their customers with reliable and secure Internet-based services;
- Offer a multi-service .POST platform with viable products to strengthen and extend Posts' business with innovative, Internet-based services;
- Promote innovation, integration and inclusion of Internet-based postal activities based on .POST.

The vision and mission together guide the overall direction of the .POST Group and the development of .POST. To achieve them, a clear business plan is described in this document.

III. What is .POST?

- An Internet identity for the postal sector;
- A secured Internet domain where every registrant is known and validated, providing a trusted foundation for online transactions;
- A digital security enabler, allowing digital services to be securely delivered thanks to the high security standards, practices and services offered by .POST domains;

- An enabler of interconnectivity of Internet-based postal services based on UPU standards; and
- A provider of innovative digital postal services.



How .POST can strengthen and extend postal business in a digital world

The key assets of the worldwide postal network, namely trust, interconnectivity and visibility as a worldwide brand, are highly valuable in the fast-changing world of the information society. .POST provides a platform from which the postal sector deploys these assets to the digital world in order to strengthen and expand business opportunities, and help governments to develop the digital economy.

The .POST community can leverage state-of-the-art security to safely deliver digital services. Where resources and adequate digital skills may be lacking, .POST domains are an effective way to access high security standards, as a set of risk mitigation measures.

These security foundations enable .POST domain owners to differentiate services on this more secure platform, providing the most secure customer experience of any top-level domain.

Security services – offered to .POST members that adopt the “security-as-a-service” delivery model – will automatically be available for each digital service published under a .POST domain.

IV. Situation analysis

Internet TLD landscape

As of June 2020, there are 1,514 top-level domains (TLDs) currently in use according to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the non-profit organization that regulates and coordinates the Internet domain namespace. A dramatic increase in new TLDs occurred in 2011 when ICANN expanded the number of gTLDs by allowing organizations and companies to apply for their own unique TLD. There is now a broad mix of business plans, from low-cost, high-volume TLDs to highly restricted high-security TLDs requiring verification and validation prior to registrant completion, usually involving higher price points (as with .bank and .trust).

The .POST top level domain is a sponsored TLD for the postal community. There are only 15 sponsored TLDs¹ (.aero, .coop, .edu, .mil, .gov, etc.) and around 75 community TLDs² (e.g. .bank, .insurance, .pharmacy, .music, .eco, .shop, etc.).

Given the heightened commercial interest in owning top-level domains, and the increased importance of digital infrastructure assets in all industries, TLDs are now regularly sold via auction for millions or tens of millions of dollars³. So the UPU has a valuable asset to nurture and develop for the industry.

According to VeriSign, Inc. there were 363.5 million domain name registrations across all TLDs as at 31 April 2021⁴ with almost 44% of these names in .com and .net. .POST has fewer than 100.

Digital postal services developments

Since the first UPU report on measuring postal e-services development was published in 2008, there has been strong growth in the importance of information communication technologies and digital transformation within the Post's business strategies. Increased focus has been placed on services that support e-commerce, e-government and e-payments and which digitally enhance core services.

Mobile phones are becoming a necessary part of our daily lives. In a number of mobile communication markets, the mobile penetration rate now exceeds 100%. About 90% of the time smartphone users spend on their phone is on non-voice activities. Combining mobile and computer technologies is an important part of the digital transformation of postal businesses.

For the postal community, these new horizons mean making major investments, mastering new technologies, and protecting mobile devices and applications against cybersecurity threats and weaknesses, so as to prevent unauthorized access and breach of confidential data.

Much progress has been made in the area of strategy and capability development, with a significant number of Posts reporting that they have increased funds dedicated to digital, have developed a new dedicated digital market strategy, have hired digital experts, and have invested in digital development. However, the extent to which Posts are operating digital services still varies widely as they struggle to access secure and affordable solutions, indicating that the potential is far from fully exploited.

Tools developed for the postal community should facilitate entry into this new technological environment. It is incumbent on the .POST Group to think about how it can participate in this technological transition and to propose solutions for members to help them succeed in their digital transformation.

¹ icannwiki.org/STLD

² icannwiki.org/Community_TLD

³ authenticweb.com/brand-tlds-digital-strategies/dot-web-acquired-for-135-million

⁴ www.verisign.com/en_US/domain-names/dnib/index.xhtml?section=executive-summary

Cybersecurity risks

Cyber risks continue to increase daily. A McAfee report in 2020⁵ estimated that global cybercrime losses exceeded one trillion USD, or around 1% of global GDP – a 50% increase since 2018. Two thirds of surveyed companies reported some kind of cyber incident, and over half said they did not have a plan to both prevent and respond to a cyber incident.

According to the International Telecommunication Union’s Global Cybersecurity Index⁶, many countries and regions lag in key areas. These include:

- Cybersecurity skills training, which must be tailored to the needs of organizations and their employees;
- Critical infrastructure protection, which requires enhancement to meet new and evolving cyber threats;
- Individual data protection, which requires continual reinforcement as online activity expands.

Growing reliance on digital solutions necessitates ever stronger, yet also accessible and user-friendly, protection measures.

Key sectors such as the Post require dedicated measures to close cybersecurity gaps.

V. The position of .POST in this environment

The .POST domain’s marked competitive advantage is the clear definition of a registered and regulated postal community, demonstrating the importance of Posts in the global digital economy and ensuring connected governments and citizens (digital inclusion).

Critical values of .POST include:

- Cybersecurity: the advanced cybersecurity standards and policies that the UPU has adopted ensure that .POST is the safest top-level domain for the postal sector to operate digital services, providing highly reliable and secure access for the customer;
- Visibility and branding: .POST will increase the visibility of UPU members in the global digital economy and strengthen the brand’s security attributes to differentiate postal services in order to build market share and enhance opportunities for direct return on investment.

VI. Strategy of the .POST Group

The .POST Group is a user-funded body of the UPU, and the strategy for the .POST Group, as defined in this business plan, contributes to and operates within the framework of the UPU strategy for 2021–2025.

The .POST Group will seek and develop opportunities in areas directly related to .POST.

The .POST Group will provide solutions, reports, training, awareness campaigns, workshops and assistance to all members, dealing with all UPU stakeholders: governments, regulators and designated operators (full members); and other postal sector stakeholders (associate members).

The .POST Group will engage its members in implementing standards and performance expectations. Members are the driving force of .POST growth.

The .POST Group will improve the overall security of digital solutions run by its constituency under .POST domains by delivering managed security services through the security-as-a-service paradigm.

⁵ www.businesswire.com/news/home/20201206005011/en/New-McAfee-Report-Estimates-Global-Cybercrime-Losses-to-Exceed-1-Trillion

⁶ www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx

The .POST Group will encourage and promote information-sharing, awareness and skill-building initiatives among its constituency in order to foster international, regional and local cooperation among different parties in the service value chain, with the common aim of mitigating current and forthcoming cyber threats specifically affecting the business of postal operators.

The .POST Group will respond to changes in the market and members' needs, taking into consideration the latest digital developments and UPU research. The .POST Group will pursue options and actions that respond to these changes and ensure that .POST meets the needs of the postal sector with relevant products and services.

.POST Group members will have access to collaborative and cooperatively driven technology solutions, through which they can offer their customers secure innovative and revenue-generating services.

The .POST Group will develop new streams of revenue and pursue strong positioning in order to ensure .POST remains relevant and sustainable for all its members and the wider UPU community.

.POST Group members receive continuous support and assistance to secure their digital services.

VII. Links with the UPU Abidjan Postal Strategy and Business Plan 2021–2025

.POST and .POST Group activities are directly referenced in the Abidjan Postal Strategy under:

- Strategic pillar 1 – Forum
 - 1.1.15 .POST events and advocacy
- Strategic pillar 2 – Provider of affordable technical solutions
 - 2.2 8 .POST IT solutions

In addition, actions in this business plan can help deliver results for the following programmes:

- WP 1.1.16 DIG 3 – Digital transformation development and advocacy
- WP 2.1.16 DIG 4 – Digital transformation and capacity building
- WP 2.2.14 Digitalizing communication between the IB and UPU stakeholders
- WP 2.2.6 Security – IT solutions

VIII. Responsibilities of .POST Group members

The success of .POST is dependent on the contribution and performance of its members.

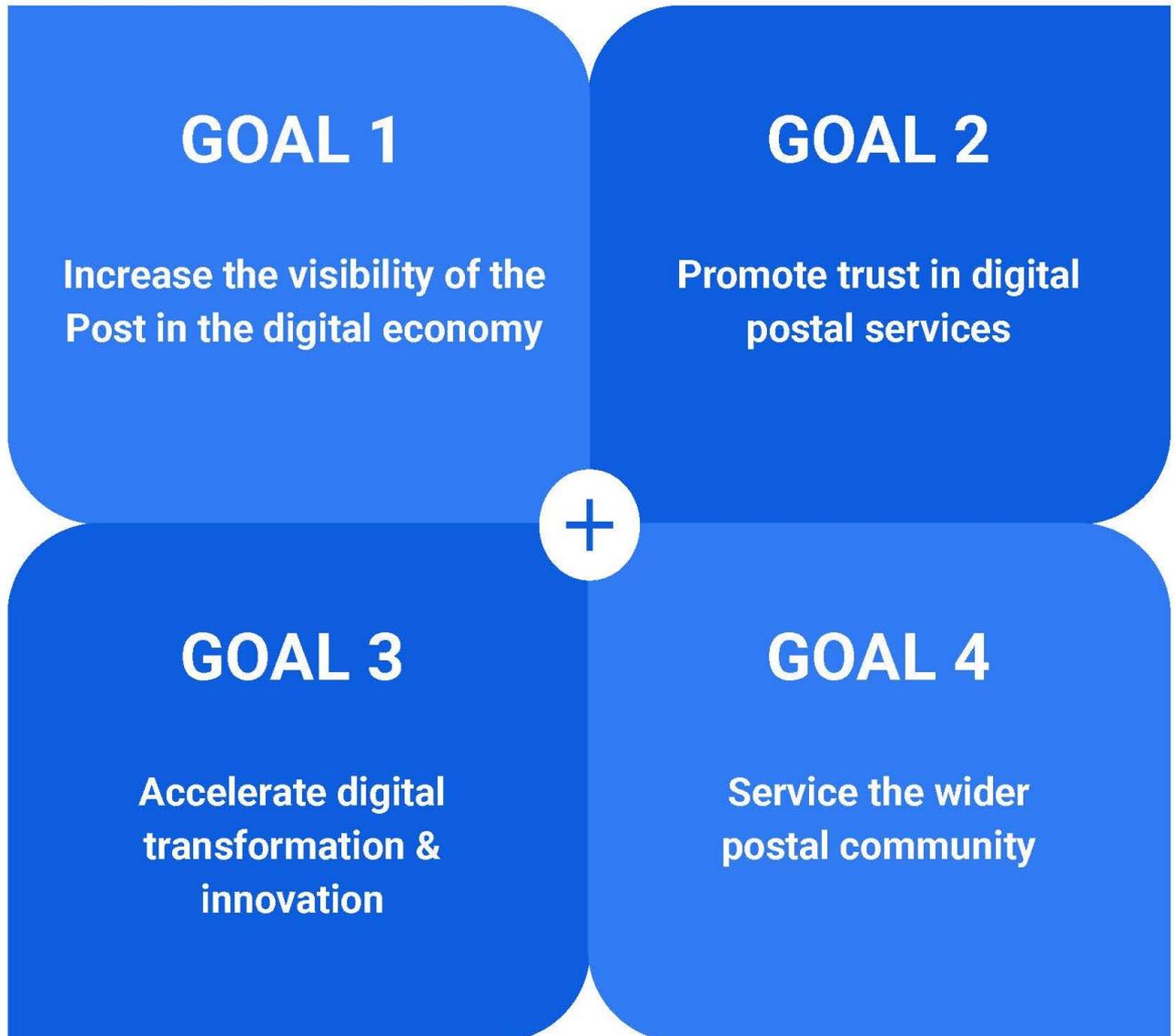
Members of the .POST Group commit, where possible, to using .POST as their preferred TLD for secure digital services by 2025.

While the objective of strengthening the role of the Post on the Internet remains a global one, each member must commit to .POST by identifying what advancements can be made, quantifying them and executing the necessary actions within the .POST Group.

The .POST Group will work with all members to identify opportunities for improvement and support them in their improvement actions aimed at achieving annual increases in the use of .POST.

IX. .POST Group strategic pillars

The .POST Group will operate with four goals:



X. Activities of the .POST Group

The .POST Group will provide all members with registration services, policies, solutions, training, workshops, information, reports, guidance and assistance to ensure that their usage of .POST and deployment of digital services under .POST is continually growing and improving. This includes supporting the registration of internationalized domain names in Arabic, Chinese and Spanish.

Priority is given to developing the .POST platform and ensuring that it remains trusted, via a dedicated anti-abuse monitoring portal.

The .POST Group will develop a self-sustaining business model for its cybersecurity services that offers clear value to its members.

The .POST Group provides all its members with a secure domain name environment to enable them to offer trusted services on the Internet. This is done to help position the postal network as a trusted Internet platform to support members in improving their digital capability and ensure they are offering their services in a safe and secure environment.

The .POST Group will advocate for greater recognition of the role of the Post in the information society and Internet governance.

The .POST Group will ensure representation in UPU groups that deal with UPU technical standards.

The .POST Group will work with other UPU programmes to ensure that .POST is the first choice in the deployment of Internet-based solutions.

The .POST Group will investigate and explore the development of innovative solutions based upon member needs and proposals from associate members.

General activities for 2022–2025

Goal 1: Increase the visibility of the Post in the digital economy

Key projects

- UPU registrar services for direct registration of UPU and members' domains requests
- Ongoing support and facilitation to full and associate DPG members
- Administration, billing and website management and .POST newsletters
- .POST marketing and communications strategy
- Building awareness among members of .POST registrations, initiatives and service offerings
- .POST underserved regions membership campaign (small island developing states, Middle East and North Africa and least developed countries strategy development and capacity building interventions)
- Survey of members' needs
- ICANN accredited registrar services for general .POST domain registrations
- Establishment of e-mail, website hosting/design, e-commerce platforms and other services for members
- Renewal of UPU–ICANN 10 year agreement
- Refreshing of agreements for registry services and data escrow services

Indicators of measurable outcomes

- Increase in DPG members (full and associate)
- Growth in .POST domain registrations
- Increase in range of services available for DPG members at domain registration via registrars including email, website hosting/design, e-Commerce platforms
- Growth in usage of domains by DPG members
- Increase in .POST awareness among UPU community
- DPG membership revenue growth
- Increased participation of DPG members in Steering Committee and General Assembly meetings
- Increased traffic on info.post
- Future sustainability of the .POST project

Goal 2: Promote trust in digital postal services

Key projects

- Ongoing review, updating and implementation of .POST cybersecurity policies/standards/guidelines
- Cybersecurity compliance monitor launch (cybertrack.post)

- UPU cybersecurity policy training – deployment of .POST learning management system
- .POST pilot cybersecurity information sharing and analysis centre
- Cybersecurity education and awareness campaign – cybersafe.post

Indicators of measurable outcomes

- Increase in domain owners' compliance with .POST cybersecurity policies
- .DPG members providing active public cybersecurity awareness campaigns

Goal 3: Accelerate digital transformation and innovation

Key projects

- STAMPSDAQ platform launch under .POST
- Ship2MyID pilots under .POST
- .POST digital innovation hub study
- Establishment of .POST app store/marketplace
- Search consolidation study across .POST e-commerce websites

Indicators of measurable outcomes

- DPG members using the STAMPSDAQ platform
- DPG members using the Ship2MyID platform
- Enhanced availability of .POST services from app store
- Increased interconnection of .POST e-commerce websites
- DPG services revenue growth

Goal 4: Service the wider postal community

Key projects

- International Internet governance and policy analysis – compliance and impact on .POST:
 - ICANN System for Standardized Access/Disclosure (www.icann.org/ssadodp)
 - European Commission Network and Information Security Directive 2 ([www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)689333](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2021)689333))
 - Impact of DNS abuse policy and regulations (www.icann.org/dns-security-threat)
 - Budapest Convention Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime (Council of Europe) (www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/the-budapest-convention)
- Implementation of CA decision on opening up registrations for .POST registrant groups 5 to 11

Indicators of measurable outcomes

- Increase in .POST domain registrations by non-UPU members
- Increase in compliance with international and regional policy developments