

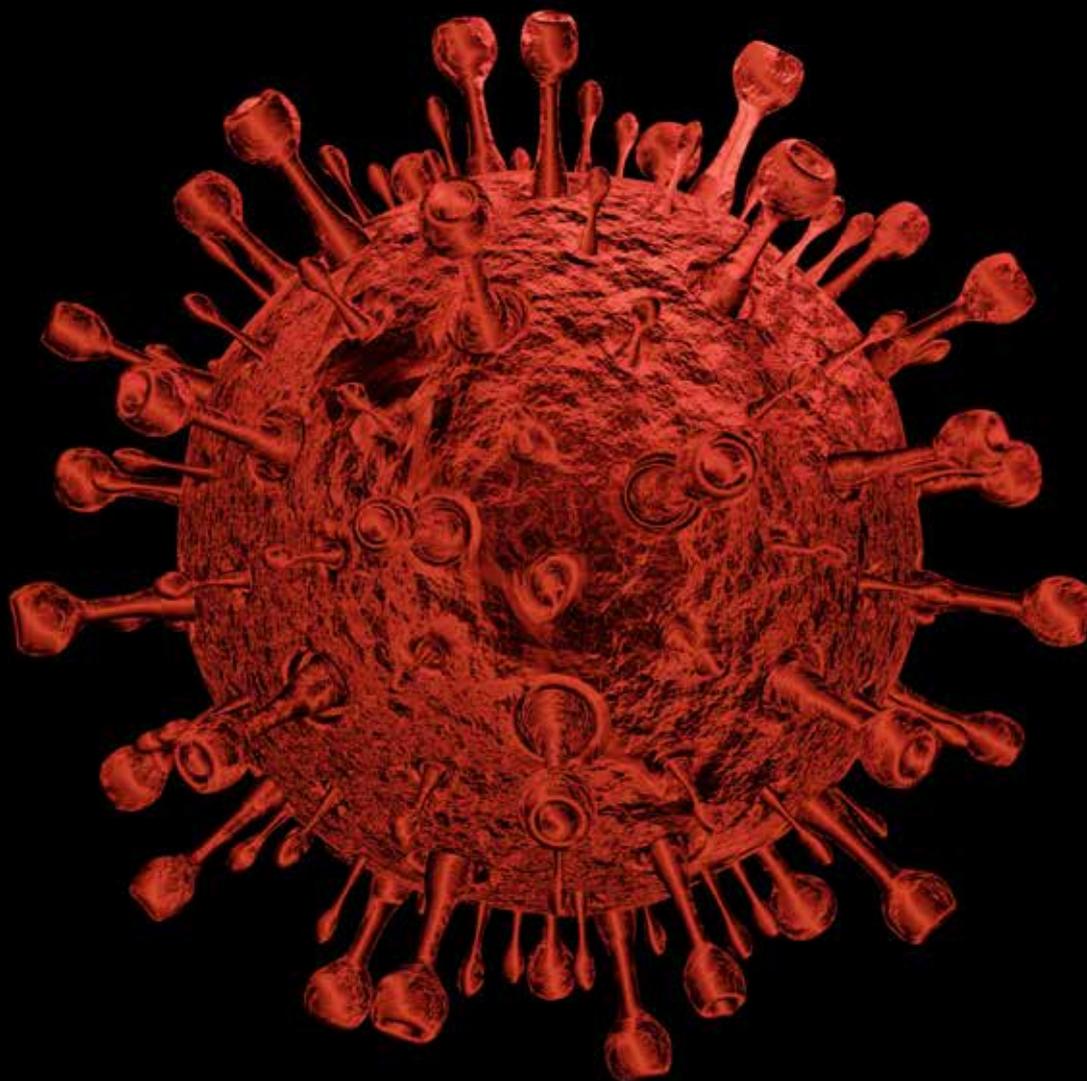
# UNION POSTALE

Moving the postal sector forward since 1875 | Spring 2021



UPU

UNIVERSAL  
POSTAL  
UNION



# COVID-19 ONE YEAR LATER



# CALL FOR DONORS

As a multi-stakeholder facility, Post4Health provides a flexible platform for donors to increase synergies and have a greater impact.

In order to operate, Post4Health relies on voluntary funding from governments, national Posts, the private sector and development partners.



La Poste Group (France) is supporting the Post4Health Facility with a total amount of 100,000 USD.



The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication of Japan (MIC) has announced a 300,000 USD support to Post4health.

No one is safe until everyone is safe. With over three billion people living in rural or isolated areas, the successful delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine is arguably the greatest logistical challenge ever faced by humankind. The Universal Postal Union's Post4Health facility aims to catalyze the capacity of postal operators to deliver health products, policies and services to people everywhere. In doing so, it will leverage access to one of the world's biggest networks, spanning 192 countries, 650,000 postal facilities and more than five million employees.

As the UN organization responsible for the postal sector, the UPU leads the way to strengthen Posts' value proposition in delivering health policies, products and services with Post4Health.

The pandemic has highlighted the support that postal operators can give to communities, national economies and public authorities in uncertain times, making the Post an essential service during lockdowns. Aside from core services, operators have once again proven the postal network's value as a key infrastructure by delivering a full range of

new social and economic services, including health-related services such as distribution of tests, personal protection equipment and medicines. With COVID-19 vaccine campaigns being rolled out, Posts are well placed to directly contribute to the success of those campaigns by providing delivery solutions for the vaccines where possible, along with the medical equipment and supplies needed for the vaccination process.

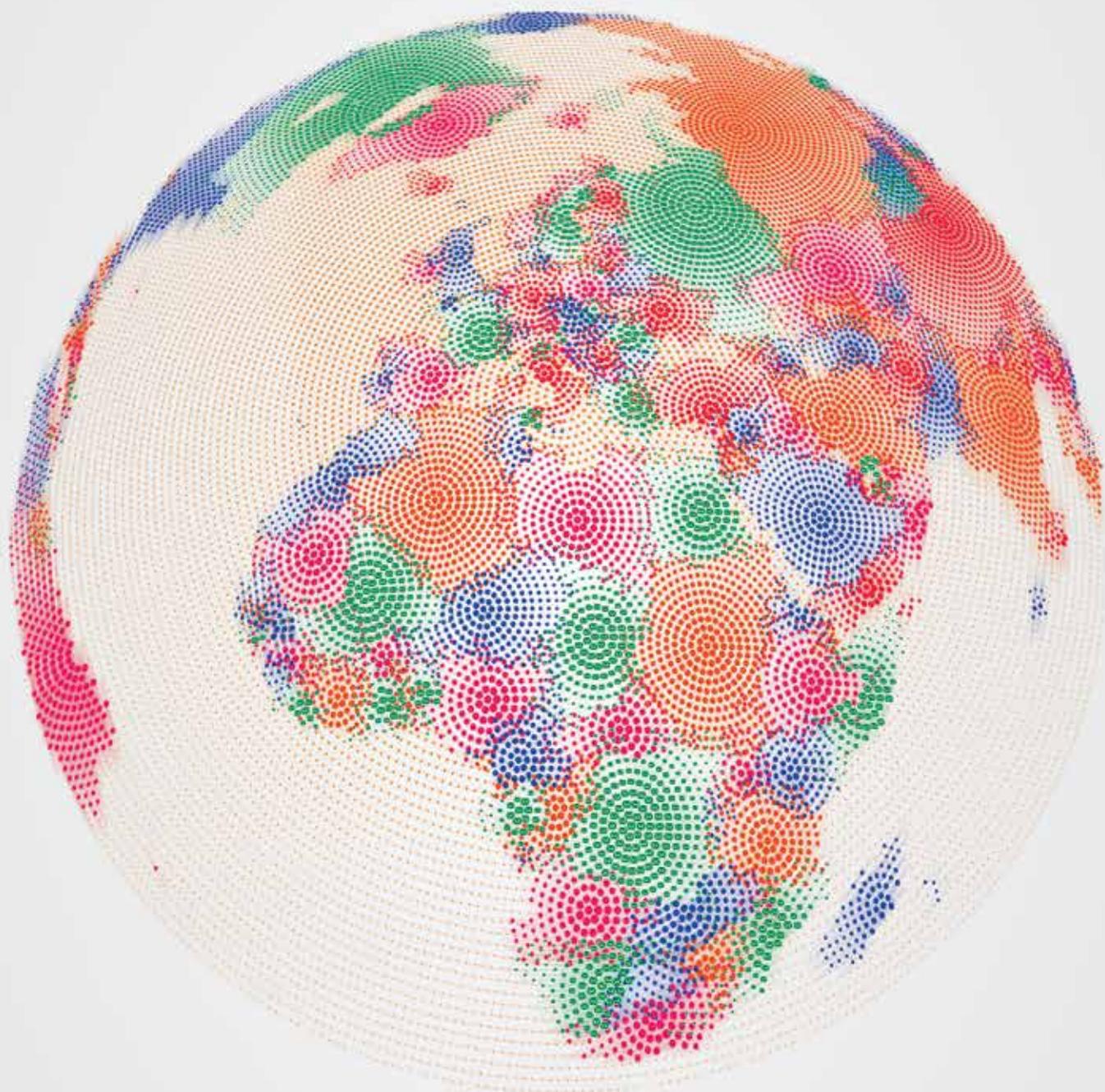
There is a protracted global logistics challenge in the early stages of vaccine deployment and delivery, owing to specific ultra-cold chain supply chain constraints. However, as different varieties of vaccines are developed, with different levels of cold chain requirements, there will be a rapid need to scale up worldwide delivery.

The most urgent global objective of the UPU Post4Health initiative is to leverage and mobilize the postal network for the last-mile delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and of related medical equipment and materials, wherever possible and feasible, and also for advocacy and information campaigns.

Through Post4Health, the UPU will work with governments, national and global health authorities, and postal operators, form partnerships and create and operate a unique, advantageous ecosystem to not only help deliver responses to the current pandemic, but also provide broader health services through the Post.

For more information, please contact: [post4health@upu.int](mailto:post4health@upu.int)

# Quality information from innovation



## GMS

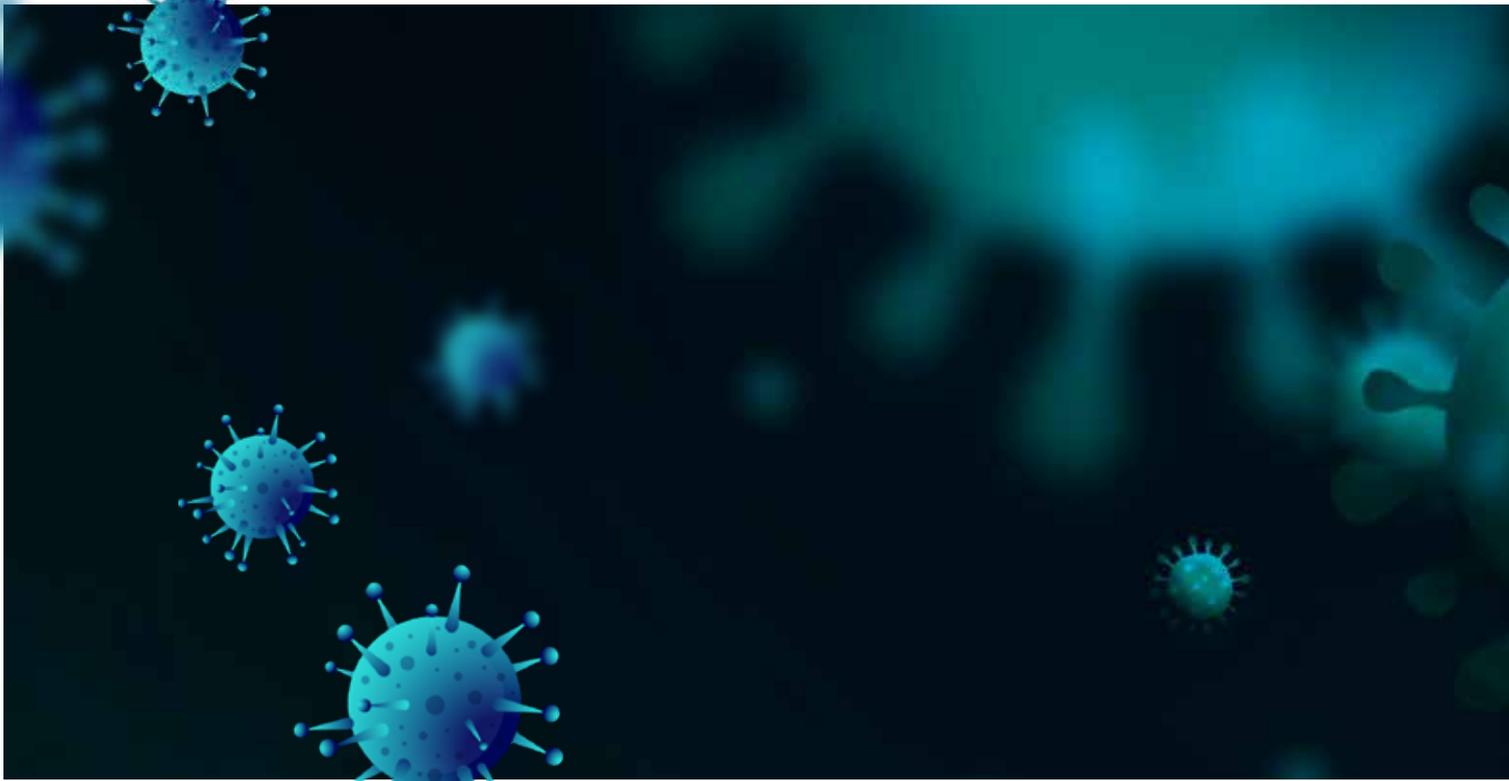
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Measuring mail performance with RFID technology was just a dream for many UPU member countries. Not anymore. Thanks to GMS, Posts can now benefit from a state-of-the-art solution that uses passive RFID at a very affordable price.

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**UPU** | UNIVERSAL  
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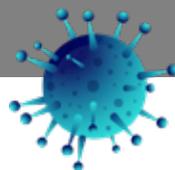
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FEATURE

**Deutsche Post  
DHL Group helps  
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vaccine globally**

DPDHL officially began international distribution of Covid-19 vaccines back in December 2020 – one year on from when the first case of the virus was identified in China.

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## COVER STORY

# UPU, POSTS AND THE PANDEMIC

On March 16, 2020, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) shuttered its headquarters and postponed travel abroad as a result of Covid-19. One month later, it took the tough decision, along with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, to postpone the 27<sup>th</sup> Universal Postal Congress to August 2021.



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It was March 2020 and New Zealand Post was preparing to issue stamps commemorating the country's participation in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Within one week, the games were postponed and New Zealand entered a national lockdown to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## UNION POSTALE

UNION POSTALE is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. It is published quarterly in four languages and takes a closer look at UPU activities, featuring international news and developments from the postal sector.

The magazine regularly publishes well researched articles on topical issues facing the industry, as well as interviews with the sector's leading individuals. It is distributed widely to the UPU's 192 member countries, including thousands of decision-makers from governments and Posts, as well as other postal stakeholders. All regard it as an important source of information about the UPU and the postal sector at large.

UNION POSTALE is also published in French, Arabic, and Chinese.

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## Spring 2021

*Refers to the season in the country of publication.*

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# ONE YEAR LATER

Union Postale is one of the oldest magazines produced by an international organization. During its existence, it has seen industrialization, wars, famines, space travel and the rise of the Internet. Every one of these events has touched our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has done the same. It has changed us all.

This is why, on the first anniversary of the pandemic, Union Postale offers readers a special edition devoted to showing how the virus has affected the international postal sector in the last year. The special edition reflects on the efforts of the Universal Postal Union (the UPU) to support posts and how postal operators were forced to quickly change their business models.

I am struck by the phrase that you should only look back to see how far you have moved. As I said in a recent speech, the spirit of innovation has helped drive postal operators forward, and I have seen the same unique spirit animate my colleagues at the UPU Headquarters. Together, we have all looked at the impact of the virus and tailored our efforts accordingly. In doing so, the UPU has reinforced its relevance to the sector as a whole.

One of the articles in the special edition looks at the experiences of those in the line of duty. Those like Nikos Manikis an urban postman for Hellenic Post, Greece, who spoke proudly of his experience delivering a delayed Christmas present to an eight-year old boy. "He was jumping for joy when I arrived with the gift," Manikis is quoted as saying. The articles brings home not only the joy that the post can bring to people, but also the motivation and dedication of those who work on the frontline.

We also spoke to the leaders – the CEOs – who had to manage the pandemic. Meeting the needs of consumers, while maintaining the safety and health of their staff was a primary concern. People like Gabon Post's CEO Michael Adande who talked about the postal industry being a lever for the implementation of public policies under all circumstances and in all places. These are the experienced leaders who will hopefully help us seize new opportunities after the pandemic, particularly in the area of digital transformation.

Finally, the special edition celebrates the stamps inspired by the pandemic. Stamps such as the one issued by New Zealand post that connected the country's public through the use of bear images. As Antony Harris, head of stamps and collectables for New Zealand Post, noted, the stamps were not simply about the practical means of sending letters, but about acknowledging the importance of human links. I can think of no better way of expressing the work not just of postal operators, but also of the UPU.

When I look back, I do feel we have moved forward. The last year has been one of almost limitless sadness and tragedy, but we have all stayed connected. Indeed, over this deadly year of years, we have not forgotten who we are as individuals, or as members of a much wider community. That is a considerable achievement. It is also one that, with our focus on global communications, the Universal Postal Union has played a sizeable role.

**Bishar A. Hussein**, Director General,  
Universal Postal Union

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"...over this deadly year of years, we have not forgotten who we are as individuals, or as members of a much wider community".

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EDITOR'S NOTE

# CONTAGION

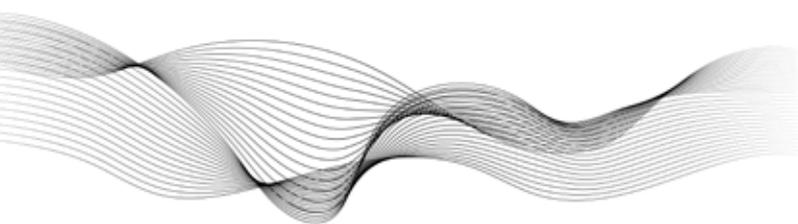
In March, the world marked the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic. A virus that has touched every country and every community. At the time of writing, COVID-19 has infected 121 million and caused the deaths of 2.67 million people across the world. COVID-19 also led to a global downturn and left previously healthy economies teetering on the cliff-edge of disaster. All of these outcomes have affected the international postal sector. As one of the world's leading magazines on postal matters, Union Postale dedicates this edition to an exhaustive examination of the events of last year. When viewed together, they represent an engaging narrative about how the industry coped during a deadly global crisis.

David Dadge, Editor-in-chief

# Jorge Solano Méndez, CEO, Correos de Costa Rica

Jorge Solano Méndez, CEO of Correos de Costa Rica, saw that, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, there were also opportunities to analyze the state of operations and look toward the needs of customers in an ever changing future.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud



Jorge Solano Méndez, CEO of Correos de Costa Rica, saw that, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, there were also opportunities to analyze the state of operations and look toward the needs of customers in an ever changing future.

The situation in Costa Rica at the beginning of the pandemic was, as with many nations, challenging. The country's health authorities implemented social distancing, car restrictions, work from home programs, and requirements necessary to attain protective supplies. There were weeks of complete air, land and sea border closures to the Central American nation creating uncertainty for trade, parcels and worldwide shipping.

It was a test of leadership, to avoid becoming paralyzed by fear and uncertainty, to remain calm and identify strengths and advantages and put those to work for the company, he said.

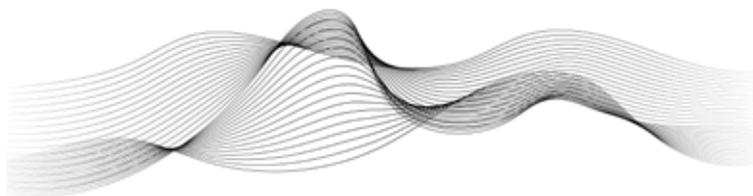
"Last year has shown us how important it is that - on a personal, professional and business level—we are prepared to face a changing environment, be agile in the implementation of new initiatives and to change the strategy as many times as necessary without fear of failure and open to experimentation," Solano said.

Like many postal operators, package deliveries reached all-time highs driven by the restricted movement of people who still needed to purchase essentials and other supplies.

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**"It was a test of leadership, to avoid becoming paralyzed by fear and uncertainty"**

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“In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in an increasingly technological picture, Correos de Costa Rica bet on diversifying and not keeping the image of a company dedicated exclusively to delivering letters,” Solano said.

In 2020, Correos de Costa Rica delivered 9.8 million packages, with a record in December of 550,000 items, a 64 per cent increase over December 2019.

The massive switch to package delivery, however, exceeded the post’s distribution capacity and affected delivery times.

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## “Correos de Costa Rica bet on diversifying and not keeping the image of a company dedicated exclusively to delivering letters”

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The post responded by launching a third party collaborative delivery service in which they paid per piece delivered.

“This new (service) allowed us to make on-time deliveries throughout the national territory, even at unconventional hours, without the need to increase the payroll or the fixed costs of the company,” he said, adding that it also created new income opportunities for people who lost their jobs in the pandemic.

Correos de Costa Rica launched a company-wide spending containment plan to mitigate the negative economic effects on company finances, he said. An emphasis was placed on two key factors. First, the post worked to retain employment for all mail employees despite the decline in various services brought on by the pandemic. And second, the company

worked to ensure continuity of business to maintain services necessary for clients.

The postal operator also promoted certain programs nationwide in order to assist the government in fighting COVID-19.

These included the free delivery of Health Care Social Security and medicine for chronic patients.

The post delivered 88,700 packages of medicine between March and June. It sold and delivered 98,600 bottles of hand sanitizer at cost between March and July. And the post delivered more than 6,000 university diplomas from both private and public universities.

The post promoted other services vital to meeting customers’ needs.

Its’ logistics service, Pymexpress, has been one of the company’s most successful services since it was launched in 2017. During the pandemic, SMEs relied on this service to send 1.16 million packages throughout the country, which was an increase from 457,200 packages sent in 2019.

The post’s domestic courier service allowed customers to coordinate their pickups online. And the post’s online marketplace,

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## We need to understand The post delivered 88,700 packages of medicine between March and June.

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Yalo, gave SMEs a virtual platform for their products. This service also integrates with all logistics services offered by the postal company.

“The pandemic put us face-to-face with the acceleration of what was already inevitable: intensive use of technologies to digitize processings, virtualize interactions and proposed alternatives to traditional aspects of the customer relationship with the company,” he said.

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## “The post must remain cautious about expenses and investment while also looking for efficiencies”

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He emphasized that such innovations are built on partnerships with public and private sector actors and require the organization to seek business opportunities constantly and allocate resources for innovation.

“It’s a time to think about the customer experience of our services, rethink traditional services, consolidate the most successful ones and start those projects we had planned to launch,” Solano said.

As the post looks to the future, with the effects of the pandemic not yet behind it, Correos de Costa Rica faces very low growth expectations in 2021. It will not fully recover lost revenue from last year, Solano said. Therefore, the post must remain cautious about expenses and investment while also looking for efficiencies. **TG**



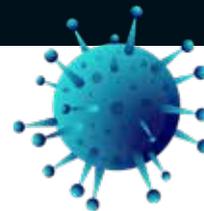
# UPU, POSTS *and* THE PANDEMIC

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On March 16, 2020, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) shuttered its headquarters and postponed travel abroad as a result of Covid-19. One month later, it took the tough decision, along with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, to postpone the 27<sup>th</sup> Universal Postal Congress to August 2021.

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**TEXT:** Helen Norman



Today, just over a year since the world experienced the first effects of Covid-19, the UPU's offices remain closed – only staff considered essential to the critical services of the UPU can enter the building – and the majority of travel remains off limits. The pandemic, which has resulted in the largest number of lockdowns worldwide at the same time in history, has had a great impact on the UPU and on the postal sector in general. But, it is not all bad news.

Bishar A Hussein, UPU Director General, says, "Almost every postal operator has been able to adapt and change their business model during this crisis. That is an incredible achievement. If we continue that spirit of innovation, I believe the momentum from the Covid-19 pandemic will drive the industry forward long after the crisis has ended."

The UPU has supported its members throughout the year with the right tools, programmes and knowledge to embrace that spirit of innovation and to tackle Covid-19 head on.

## Operational continuity

During the pandemic's early days, the UPU quickly started receiving messages from posts regarding restricted or suspended services through the Emergency Information System (EmIS). The UPU acted quickly to ensure it had the right support in place for its members.

In March, it created the Operational Continuity Unit (OCU) within its Directorate of Postal Operations (DOP) to coordinate its response to Covid-19.

Abdelilah Bousseta, UPU's director of postal operations, heads up the unit. "The unit coordinates all operational activities related to Covid-19, including the provision of guidance and tools, as well as dissemination of information in response to members' needs during the pandemic."

To date, OCU has published more than 700 Covid-19-related messages through the EmIS. It has continuously monitored and provided information on the different international transport options for cross border delivery, published the EmIS on transport capacity issues and the EmIS status reports in relation to Covid-19.

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To date, OCU has published more than 700 Covid-19-related messages through the EmIS.

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The OCU has also worked closely with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to share data on the global postal supply chain, and consolidated best practices relating to social services and financial services.

"Covid-19 has put unprecedented pressure on the international postal network," Bousseta says. "The UPU has received urgent messages from nearly 71 per cent of member countries in relation to the pandemic. The messages have signaled service disruptions related to measures taken to halt the spread of Covid-19, such as flight cancellations and social distancing. This has lengthened delivery times in some postal corridors and closed others altogether. This is having an effect on global postal volumes and quality of service."



## Cross border mail

International mail flows have been the hardest hit during the pandemic, as a result of the grounding of numerous passenger flights. The OCU team has explored alternative transport options for operators: "A table consolidating information on the availability of certain routes served by cargo carriers is now available to interested operators. They can access it via the Quality Control System's (QCS) big data tools," he explains.

The UPU also strengthened its relationships with the International Air Transport Association, the International Civil Aviation Organization, European Cargo Services and The International Cargo Association, to encourage member states and posts to use more cargo planes for cross border delivery. Vietnam Post is a great example of a post that has entered into partnerships with cargo airlines and private carriers to forge new routes and supply chains for mail delivery.

"We also worked closely with postal operators and railway organizations to turn pilot studies into a viable reality," Bousseta continues. "At present, given the current situation, the train network is one of the very best solutions for moving the huge volumes of mail between Asia and Europe. Between the middle of March and today (February 18), 21 mail-only block trains have transported nearly 8,000 tons of mail," he continues.

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**"We also worked closely with postal operators and railway organizations to turn pilot studies into a viable reality"**

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DOP has continued to implement projects to strengthen the postal network. "Thirty projects amounting to US\$11.3m have been launched to ensure the continuity of the global postal network," says Bousseta. "Among them was the launch of the Electronic Advance Data project involving 143 postal operators from all regions of the world. We plan to accelerate this project over the next year, using our Customs Declaration System (CDS), International Postal System and other IT tools, to ensure more operators are complying with all standards worldwide."

Meanwhile, the OCU has now transitioned to a DOP Management Committee. It plans to continue working to enhance the developed tools since the outbreak and maintain the EmIS database. "We are also continuing to work with WCO to encourage customs authorities to be flexible and accept postal shipments with any of the accompanying legitimate UPU documentation," Bousseta says.

## Technology at heart

The UPU's Postal Technology Center (PTC) has assisted the OCU to achieve its goals over the past year. PTC's first task when the pandemic hit was to support the UPU's 250 staff to work remotely. It also had to implement new virtual ways to support the UPU community remotely.

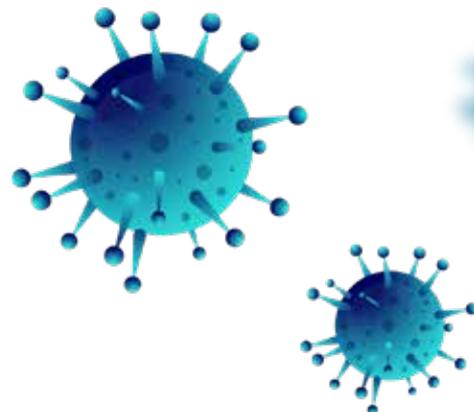
PTC's director, Lati Matata, says, "The PTC has always maintained very close physical contact with the UPU community via onsite missions and technical training workshops. The travel restrictions due to Covid-19 had a devastating effect on this activity. To compensate, PTC deployment experts immediately switched to using remote access tools. The PTC's Regional Technical Centres, located in Bangkok, Dar es Salaam, Montevideo, Moscow, Rabat and Tunis, adopted the same approach to support the postal operators in their region. I am pleased to note the PTC and the Regional Technical Centers provided 63 remote deployment and support missions in 2020," he adds.

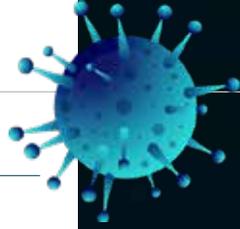
The PTC also launched a new modern e-Learning platform ([training.ptc.post.org](https://training.ptc.post.org)) to supplement lost training options. To support the rapid digitization of the postal processes, the PTC accelerated projects to deliver IT tools for the gaps in the postal supply chain. "This includes mobile apps for customer customs declaration data capture, the Domestic Postal System (DPS) and IT integration capabilities with commercial and public regional networks for transport, customs handling and postal payments," Matata explains.

## Quality control

One of PTC's most important network monitoring IT tools is the Quality Control System (QCS). "The PTC maintains the UPU IT network, Post\*NET, which transfers postal item data between every postal operator," explains Matata. "This data, representing billions of data sets exchanged every year, is stored in a secure platform maintained by PTC. The QCS, which is built on top of this big data platform, provides reports and measurements on postal operators' performance at every step of a postal item's international collection and delivery cycle."

According to Matata, QCS is well placed to provide very deep insights into the health of the postal supply chain. "QCS highlighted, for example, how the cessation of international postal transport lines had a devastating impact on UPU's global postal supply chain, especially for our smaller postal volume posts located in the developing and least developed countries," Matata says.





QCS is well placed to provide further value into the new domains of postal security and customs

According to Matata, QCS is now enhanced with reports and tools to support the healthy functioning of the postal supply chain, highlighting transport delays and volumetric variations. "QCS is well placed to provide further value into the new domains of postal security and customs, such as the identification of dangerous goods, and the electronic advanced data checks for postal items in transit respectively," he says. "Finally, the big data platform's support for advanced data analytics and machine learning technologies combined with the QCS reporting shows great potential for predictive reporting in the next UPU cycle."

The PTC has now begun piloting an Innovation and Partnership development programme to drive the focus to new services it can offer customers. "One tangible benefit for members is the integration of market leading third party providers of harmonized customs codes in the UPU CDS, further expediting the postal customs clearance process with accurate product classification information," explains Matata.

"Additionally, to support the efficient collection and delivery within national borders, the DPS will be available for wide deployment in 2021. This will allow UPU postal operators to process domestic and international postal items in a digitally integrated suite of systems from door-to-door. This is the final step in ensuring a complete digitization of the entire UPU postal supply chain," he concludes. **HN**

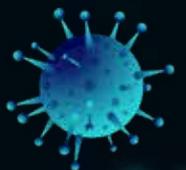
# SUPPORTING LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The UPU's Directorate of Development and Cooperation (DCDEV) has played a key role during the global pandemic in supporting posts in developing countries tackle the virus. Working alongside the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), DCDEV managed the logistics, purchasing and transportation of masks to postal staff in 36 least-developed countries (LDCs).

Rudy Cuadra, director of Development and Cooperation at the UPU, says, "This collaboration enabled us to recover this valuable equipment during a period of global shortage. At a time when aviation has suffered from the decline in traffic due to the pandemic, the research work to find the best way for transportation was done meticulously country by country to find a tailor-made solution."

In December, DCDEV's action plan for 2021 was approved by the UPU. DCDEV will now continue to focus on helping posts in developing countries cope with the Covid-19 crises. "Several posts, particularly those in developing countries, have suffered huge financial losses as a result of the discontinuation of international air transportation and are having difficulty restarting services under the current conditions," Cuadra explains.

"To help we will disseminate a Pandemic Postal Services Recovery Guide, which includes best practice information and aims to support posts, mainly in LDCs, to resume or restore postal activities. We will continue to work on the Operational Readiness for E-commerce 2021 or ORE2 project, which will be implemented in all regions in order to help designated operators to continue to modernize operational processes and use all available IT standardized tools," Cuadra adds.



# SHARING POSTAL OPERATOR BEST PRACTICES

From delivering goods to offering health services, government solutions and SME support, the post has had a key role during the Covid-19 crisis. This has led to some innovative work within the sector.

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In mid-2020, the UPU recognized the importance of sharing this work and developed an online platform ([www.upu.int/The-Postal-Social-Services-Project](http://www.upu.int/The-Postal-Social-Services-Project)) to collect and share examples of how posts are responding to Covid-19.

Siva Somasundram, director of Policy, Regulation and Markets at the UPU, explains more, "The diversity of responses is striking. For example, in Australia, the post established a next-day pharmacy home delivery service for vulnerable citizens. Meanwhile, in France, the post fast-tracked the development of a homework delivery and return service for students forced to home-school without internet access."

Other initiatives shared on the platform include posts establishing e-commerce support services for SMEs, the development of new governmental programs, such as the delivery of pensions to the elderly, and fast tracked personal protective equipment delivery to citizens and businesses. "In the area of SMEs, we know of some excellent cases in Lebanon,

Spain, Costa Rica and Zimbabwe where the post has helped local companies to become e-commerce businesses," Somasundram adds.

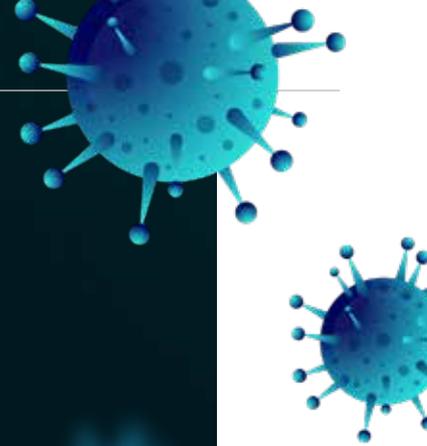
In addition to the online platform, the UPU is set to launch a guide to postal social services in April and a new webinar series on regulatory measures taken in the postal sector with regard to the pandemic. "Later this year, we will also publish the first flagship publication on the universal postal service and postal regulation including an analysis of the measures governments have taken as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic," Somasundram continues.

"And we will help support the new Post4Health initiative, which aims to leverage and mobilize the postal network for the last-mile delivery of Covid-19 vaccines and related medical equipment. This would constitute a short-term response while building longer term capacity for posts in the field of public health," he concludes.

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And we will help support the new Post4Health initiative, which aims to leverage and mobilize the postal network for the last-mile delivery of Covid-19 vaccines

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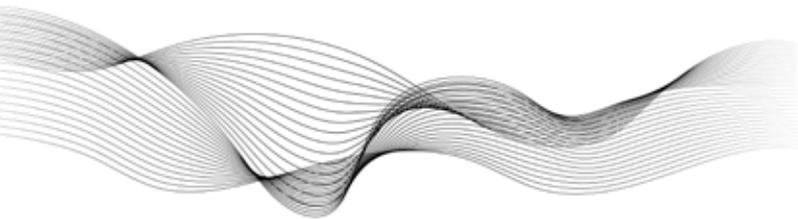
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# Vincent Phang, CEO, SingPost's Singapore and Postal Services

Vincent Phang had been CEO of SingPost's Singapore and Postal Services for less than one year when COVID-19 struck.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud



"The pandemic proved to be a trial by fire for me," Phang said, "but I also saw it as a test of the relevance and resilience of a service that has existed for over a century."

Like so many postal operators, 2020 forced SingPost to face one of its most challenging years. The pandemic crippled international deliveries. Border closures created barriers for cross-border manpower. And a boom in e-commerce led to a heavy reliance on postal operators.

"These placed a strain on our postal operations and infrastructure that was further compounded by scattered COVID-19 cases detected among staff in our central mail processing centre," Phang said. The processing center had to be closed for several days for deep cleaning.

The pandemic spurred the post to explore unconventional solutions.

SingPost employs a large number of people from neighbouring countries who stayed in Singapore while their home countries were in lockdown. SingPost arranged hotel accommodations, meal allowances and complimentary shuttle bus services to make their stay more comfortable.

Staff wore personal protective equipment and work arrangements were changed to help prevent the spread of the virus, he explained. And corporate staff supported delivery operations during the worst of the pandemic.

"All of us worked as one team to tide the company over this difficult period," Phang said.

SingPost continues to face challenges brought on by the pandemic. Global logistics and supply chains are still affected, border closures and lockdowns come and go regularly, and international services must be updated daily in reaction to these developments, Phang said.




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## “The pandemic proved to be a trial by fire for me”

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Prices for air freight has soared and air freight and airport disruptions also mean longer shipment times and long delays.

“We have absorbed these increased costs out of goodwill,” he said, “as it is our firm belief that our customers should not be penalized for circumstances outside their control.”

Despite the challenges of the pain wrought by the global pandemic, despite the death toll numbering in millions and the devastated global economy, Phang said that there were moments where he could feel proud.

“I was heartened by the spirit of camaraderie among SingPost staff, as well as the spirit of service to the nation,” he said. “All of us, and especially the frontline staff, recognize the magnitude of the pandemic, but are resolute in our duties because it is our national responsibility to serve the nation, more so during periods of crisis.”

Phang said he personally visited SingPost bases and facilities to encourage staff, and was witness to the commitment of the company’s staff to persevere through this challenging time.

SingPost also took part in a project, called “Masks Sewn with Love.” It brought together volunteers to sew reusable cloth masks. SingPost was the projects postal partner, shipping tens of thousands of masks pro bono in 798 boxes across the island nation, according to an August press release from the postal operator.

“This is what has sustained SingPost for more than 160 years, and will sustain us through this pandemic and beyond,” he said.

The pandemic, however, “laid bare the limitations of an industry that is overly reliant on manual processes, as well as outdated postal infrastructure in urgent need of revamp,” Phang said.

Manual sorting and distribution left operations susceptible to manpower shocks

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## “It is our firm belief that our customers should not be penalized for circumstances outside their control”

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as were seen during the pandemic. And there were considerable limitations on postal and last-mile operations and infrastructure.

During the pandemic, there was a real need for contactless deliveries with a greater reliance on letterboxes. However, the size of the letterboxes created a barrier when taking into consideration the surge of postal e-commerce packages.

Before the pandemic, SingPost had undertaken an evaluation of its processes with an eye toward the future of the postal sector. One of those projects was a smart letterbox called PostPal. PostPal letterboxes allows for the sorting of mail, it sends customer notifications via the post app and allow customers to collect their packages with a QR code sent to their phone.

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## “This is what has sustained SingPost for more than 160 years, and will sustain us through this pandemic and beyond”

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PostPal was rolled out in December and will expand in the coming year along with several other projects from its “Future of Post” efforts.

“COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for us to enact foundational yet necessary changes to the way we work, preparing for the future even as we react to present circumstances,” Phang said. “This is vital in the face of the evolving postal landscape, as we emerge from the shadow of the pandemic.” **TG**

# COVID-19: TIMELINE

TEXT: Helen Norman

2019

## December

The first reported case of Covid-19 occurs in Wuhan, China. By the end of January 2020, the virus has spread throughout the country and made its way to South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Europe and the US, among other places.

2020

## 23 January

Two days before Chinese New Year, Wuhan goes into lock down, and facemasks and social distancing become mandatory – this approach sets a precedent for other countries and cities in the fight against Covid-19.

As the virus spreads, the Universal Postal Union's Emergency Information System (EmlS) receives messages from designated operators regarding Covid-19-related restrictions and measures.

## 28 January

An EmlS is received from China stating that all mails destined to, or transiting via Wuhan, will be disinfected at processing centers. Over the following two months, the EmlS received nearly 100 messages notifying the postal sector of new restrictions on the international delivery of mail.

## February and March

Covid-19 begins to take a hold outside of China, with Japan, Italy, Iran, and South Korea being some of the hardest hit countries in the early months.

## 11 March

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares the Covid-19 outbreak as a pandemic.

## 26 March

Confirmed cases of the virus are reported in all 27 European Union member states, and by the end of March nearly one third of the world's population is living under coronavirus-related restrictions. Meanwhile, the air transport industry comes to a virtual standstill affecting the international delivery of mail.

## April

According to figures from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) by April 2020, the overall number of passengers falls 92 per cent compared to 2019 levels. In 2020 overall international traffic falls by 74 per cent, or around 1.4 billion passengers.

UPU joins a campaign by the International Air Transport Association to help keep cargo planes moving.

ICAO and the UPU strengthen their relationship to encourage UN member states to continue to support their designated postal operators, air cargo carriers and express mail operators during Covid-19.

World Customs Organization and the UPU work together to stress the importance of cooperation between customs administrations and postal operators to support the global postal supply chain.

### May and June

According to a report called 'The Covid-19 crisis and the postal sector' released by the UPU there was a 21 per cent drop in year-on-year international postal volumes between 23 January and May 14, 2020.

Only one in every 2.1 items sent are arriving at their destination within the same week, as opposed to 1.1 during normal times.

Lockdowns gradually begin to lift around the world and for a few months there is a lifting of some restrictions.

### September and October

The second wave begins hitting many countries and lockdowns are enforced once again. The European Union becomes the epicenter of the pandemic. By the end of September, the global Covid-19 death toll passes one million.

### December

The first vaccines start to become available and global distribution begins. Deutsche Post DHL begins its international vaccine distribution campaign in December, with vaccines delivered to Israel. Deutsche Post DHL delivers vaccines to all continents around the world and handles all approved vaccines along with related products.

### March 11

The UPU launches its new Post4Health facility, which in the future aims to support postal operators with Covid-19-related awareness, outreach and advocacy campaigns, and with an immediate Covid-19 vaccine response. Over the long-term it will assist posts with building sustainable business cases for health services.

Globally, according to WHO figures, as of March 15, 2021, there have been 119,603,761 confirmed cases of Covid-19, including 2,649,722 deaths. As of 16 March 2021, a total of 392,597,654 vaccine doses have been administered.

**119,603,761**  
confirmed cases of Covid-19

**2,649,722**  
deaths

**392,597,654**  
vaccine doses administered

2021



# Deutsche Post DHL Group helps deliver the Covid-19 vaccine globally

DPDHL officially began international distribution of Covid-19 vaccines back in December 2020 – one year on from when the first case of the virus was identified in China. Just over three months later, DPDHL now delivers vaccines to all continents around the world, handles all approved vaccines along with related products, and provides end-to-end trackable solutions.

**TEXT:** Helen Norman

To undertake this huge task, the company drew on decades of experience in life sciences and global logistics. Its Life Sciences and Healthcare division, which is made up of up to 9,000 experts around the world, has experience in handling medical products, meanwhile its Express, Global Forwarding and Supply Chain divisions lead the way in freight and supply chain services.

However, even with such extensive experience under its belt, DPDHL realised early on that the task of transporting and delivering the Covid-19 vaccine presented a challenge like no other. Thomas Ellmann, VP of Life Sciences and Healthcare at DHL, explains, “One of the greatest challenges associated with Covid-19 vaccine distribution is the sheer volume of the campaign. Around 10 billion doses need to be delivered worldwide and around three billion of those are for people who live in regions with less developed logistics infrastructures.

“If you compare that with an average year, which sees around 2.5-3 billion doses given to the population for things like Malaria and seasonal flu, you can really see the scale of the Covid-19 vaccination distribution challenge,” he adds.

According to Ellmann, in tackling this challenge it's important to remember that the "devil is most definitely in the detail". For this reason, DPDHL carried out extensive research into how to secure a stable supply chain for Covid-19 vaccines and medical goods. It teamed up with analytics partner McKinsey & Company to examine the finer details of vaccine distribution and released a whitepaper entitled Delivering Pandemic Resilience in September 2020 detailing its findings. Ellmann was a co-author of the paper.

**Around 10 billion doses need to be delivered worldwide and around three billion of those are for people who live in regions with less developed logistics infrastructures.**

"The whitepaper had three chapters – identifying critical pain points along the Covid-19 supply chain; preparing for the challenge of Covid-19 vaccine logistics; and beyond Covid-19 – a framework to tackle future emergencies," notes Ellmann. "Following the release of this paper, we founded a global task force. This task force works with the pharmaceutical companies, governments, NGOs, and other partners to advise on the concepts needed for successful distribution of the vaccines."

### Keeping your cool

It is no secret that the greatest challenge associated with the distribution of the vaccines currently approved by the World Health Organization is related to temperature. "Some of the vaccines have to be stored at -70 degrees," says Ellmann. "That's challenging even in parts of the developed world, let alone for low and middle income countries. Even for the vaccines that require storage temperatures of -20 degrees additional infrastructure is needed in many countries."



"DPDHL has been active in the shipping of medical goods for the past 20 years, but normally this is done in temperatures between 2-8 degrees and between 15-25 degrees. Shipments requiring colder temperatures do occur, but they are the exception. Now we need to master this exception and in rapid time," Ellmann continues.

DPDHL has invested in a "huge number of ultra-low freezers", notes Ellmann, which can store around 100,000 doses of the vaccine. These freezers are placed in strategic locations from which worldwide distribution is organized.

**DPDHL has been active in the shipping of medical goods for the past 20 years, but normally this is done in temperatures between 2-8 degrees and between 15-25 degrees.**

**"You must not use a box that is entirely closed, because when the dry ice starts evaporating the pressure would build up and that could lead to an explosion"**

The company also worked hard to ensure that it understood and was compliant with the requirements for shipping dry ice, which is used to transport vaccines at -70 degrees. "Dry ice is classed as a dangerous good in air freight, so we needed to make sure we followed all the rules," Ellmann adds.

Staff training was also important. "We needed to ensure that our staff were trained to handle dry ice, and to handle the different vaccines and equipment. We ensured they all had the right personal protection equipment, such as glasses and gloves, and that they understood the requirements of storing the vaccines. For example, if dry ice evaporates its volume increases greatly. Therefore you must not use a box that is entirely closed, because when the dry ice starts evaporating the pressure would build up and that could lead to an explosion."



## Planning and preparation

To avoid mistakes being made, Ellmann stresses that every single aspect of the supply chain should be examined before a vaccine shipment is transported. DPDHL works closely with its partners, including airlines, ground handlers, final mile carriers, packaging suppliers, temperature loggers and security companies, to ensure that every journey is planned well in advance.

Ellmann explains, “We also work closely with the vaccine manufacturers to ensure we have all the latest stability data on required storage and shipping conditions. And we work closely with governments and customs authorities to ensure we don’t have any delays at borders. The last thing you want is a shipment of vaccines stuck at customs because of an oversight earlier on in the process, resulting in the shipment heating up and then rendering the goods unusable.”

Ensuring the right supply chain is in place goes beyond just delivering the vaccine itself. “Having the right medical equipment at the vaccination centers is also extremely important and something that should be planned well in advance. There has, for example, been discussions around whether the vial contains five or six doses. This is a big deal, because if it contains six then you increase capacity by 20 per cent.

But, you can only get six if you have the right syringe, which has a special scale to enable the doctor or nurse to measure correctly.

“We have had people approach us to say that they have forgotten to order these syringes from China, and ask if we can get them some as soon as possible by air freight. But these syringes typically travel via ocean freight, which means that they cannot arrive as quickly as hoped and doses could be wasted. I can’t stress it enough – the devil really is in the detail!” **HN**

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**“I can’t stress it enough – the devil really is in the detail!”**

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# GREENING THE BLUE REPORT 2020

The UN System's Environmental Footprint  
and Efforts to Reduce it

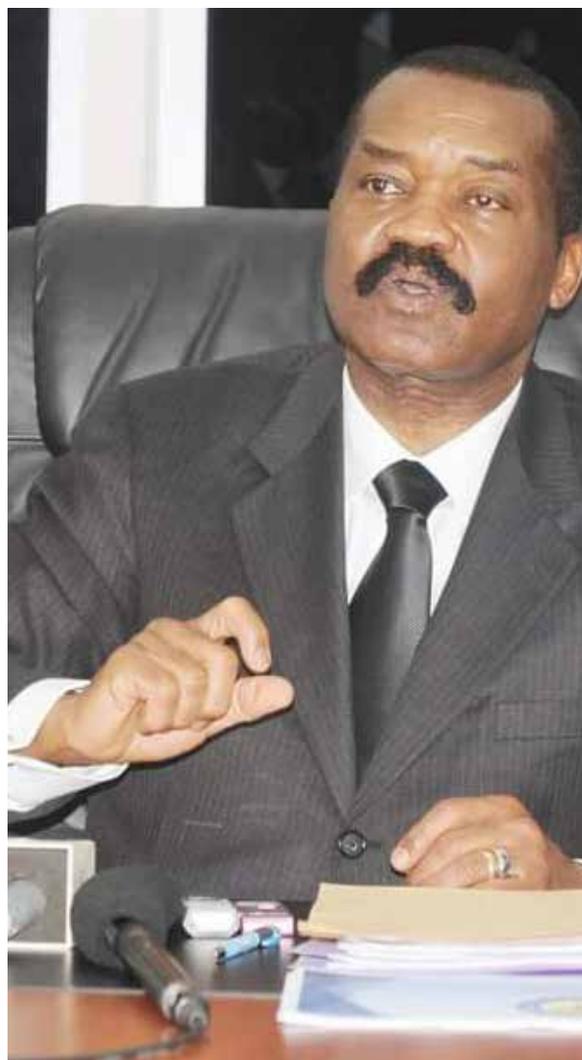


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REPORT 2020

# Michaël Adande, CEO, Gabon Post

Among the many difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, Gabon Post has had to balance the needs of its clients with the safety of its staff while taking into account the vastly different situations facing its expansive regions.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud



Gabon Post's services are offered in 53 locations scattered throughout the country, which covers approximately 268,000 square kilometers (103,000 square miles) with a population of about 2.2 million people.

With an alert organization, constant communication and sometimes-restrictive measures to combat the virus, the post proved its vital role in the support and implementation of public policies, said CEO Michaël Adande.

"This role is one of service to the state and citizens, proving that, should the need again present itself, the post can be relied upon as a lever for the implementation of public policies under all circumstances and in all places," Adande said.

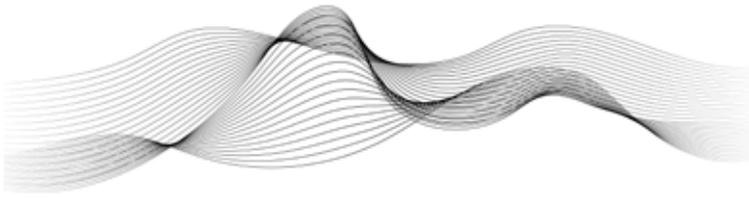
Given its essential function, Gabon Post had to balance keeping its offices open and protecting the health of its workers, most of whom are considered to be among the most vulnerable to the virus, he explained.

The greatest challenge faced by Gabon Post was finding an approach to the pandemic that took into account the post's entire network.

Some 60 per cent of the post's workforce are located in and around the capital, Libreville. There, non-essential staff worked from home. Essential workers rotated weekly between in-person work and home office.

The interior of the country required a different approach. Being isolated from Libreville, residents in the interior were relatively protected from the spread of COVID-19. There the post kept offices open to customers and provided staff with the required sanitary kits, such as masks and hand sanitizers.

Adande credits governments and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the Universal Postal Union, with effectively communicating vital information to designated operators in an effort to stop the spread of the virus through postal activities.




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## The greatest challenge faced by Gabon Post was finding an approach to the pandemic that took into account the post's entire network.

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Gabon Post implemented the relevant government recommendations, Adande said, initial measures, especially those leading to generalized lockdowns across the world, had a severe economic impact on businesses, including Gabon Post.

"The impact was particularly felt within the post's main business line – letter and parcel post – because those activities rely on international exchanges with postal organizations, and the lockdowns broke that chain," he said. "As a result, our revenue fell."

Adande said Gabon Post's second greatest challenge was in providing a continuous and sufficient supply of the necessary personal protective gear to staff, such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and other disinfectant products.

The organization had to be flexible in its efforts to combat the spread of the disease. In the earlier days, Adande said, the post bought large supplies of hand sanitizers and masks for staff. However, these supplies had to be renewed monthly and shipped throughout the country, which came at a large expense.

"When the use of cloth masks became widespread globally," Adande said, "we changed strategy. Staff were encouraged to wear masks made from washable and long-lasting materials, with general management providing the first batch."

Additionally, hand sanitizers were gradually replaced with hand-washing stations, encouraging staff to wash hands often. And offices were sanitized every weekend.

"These measures, coupled with intensive and continuous awareness-raising among staff members by the internal COVID-19 committee, have meant that Gabon Post has been relatively spared from the spread of the virus," Adande said.

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## Gabon Post's second greatest challenge was in providing a continuous and sufficient supply of the necessary personal protective gear to staff.

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And despite the various challenges that Gabon Post faced, its policies meant that the post was able to cautiously continue its missions of universal postal service and public service. In fact, the National Education Ministry relied heavily on the postal network to deliver school kits that were necessary for home learning and online lessons while the pandemic was at its peak, Adande said.

There are still sources of concern, Adande said, such as fluctuations in case numbers nationally and internationally.

"Nevertheless, we hope that, in the next six to twelve months, the pandemic will be contained thanks to the current testing and vaccination campaigns," Adande said.

The post has proved its role as a service to the state and citizens, including the large number of civil servants in the country whose salaries must be paid on time from Gabon Post's counters

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## Postal workers – alongside people working in healthcare and other sectors such as fire and rescue – have shown an exceptional level of sacrifice and solidarity.

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"In the midst of this pandemic," Adande said, "when all else came to a halt, postal workers – alongside people working in healthcare and other sectors such as fire and rescue – have shown an exceptional level of sacrifice and solidarity as they help governments and their authorities deploy vital measures to combat this pandemic." **TG**



# In the line of duty

Postal workers from around the world share their memories and experiences of working on the frontline during the global pandemic

**TEXT:** Helen Norman



## Nikos Manikis, urban postman, Hellenic Post, Greece

For Nikos Manikis one of his fondest memories from working during the pandemic was when he delivered a Christmas present to an eight-year-old boy after issues with global transportation caused long delays. "He was jumping for joy when I arrived with the gift," he says.

It is small moments like this, according to Manikis, that kept him motivated on the frontline during Covid-19. "I feel very proud that I am able to serve people during this time."

Manikis's role has changed considerably over the past year. It is now mandatory to wear a mask, use sanitizing gel regularly, and to physically distance where appropriate. "These changes have not been pleasant," he comments. "However, I have learned to take nothing for granted. I fully understand that our health and safety is paramount, and this is the message I also try to convey to customers."



## Grainne O'Connell, postal manager, Chadstone Post Office, Australia Post

In November 2021 Grainne O'Connell will celebrate 10 years working with Australia Post and the past year has made her truly reflect on her role. "Australia Post is an organization based around connecting people, and to be able to continue to help our customers connect with their families and friends during the toughest time many of us have ever experienced, has definitely made me very proud."

According to O'Connell, the pandemic has cemented the post's role in the local community. "We've continued to operate throughout all of the various lockdowns," she says. "For some of our older residents, we might have been the only contact they had with others in their day, week or month. I got to know customers more and could tell when they needed a bit of extra help or just needed a quick chat to feel connected."

For O'Connell, one of the greatest challenges faced over the past year was the increase in parcels. "We had to call for extra parcel pickups because we did not have the floor space to store them all – it was crazy!" she says. "Our busiest time was the Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales, by which point we had almost got into a rhythm with it all and felt we knew how to manage it better."

Reflecting on the past year O'Connell concludes, "The pandemic has given us an opportunity to fine tune our skills and better understand how technology can be used to help improve the way we work."



### Abdulaziz Rashed Kanfash, customer happiness employee, Al-Nakheel Customer Happiness Centre, Emirates Post

Abdulaziz Rashed Kanfash's role at Emirates Post is to provide customer support at the Customer Happiness Centre. "This includes providing them with assistance when sending shipments," he notes.

The centre remained operational throughout the lockdowns. According to Kanfash, the post ensured that all measures were in place to keep both staff and customers safe, including daily temperature screenings for staff, social distancing and contactless transactions and deliveries.

Kanfash notes that coping with the ongoing changes brought on by the pandemic was a challenge, but it was important to engage positively with the situation. "Working together toward common goals has never seemed so important," he says. "I am proud to be someone working on the frontline to support the business and the community."

Emirates Post supported the local community in a number of ways: "The post arranged home courier delivery of mail for senior citizens and people with PO Boxes during the lockdowns," he says. "Emirates Post also issued a commemorative stamp as a tribute to front-line employees as part of the country's #ThankYouHeroes campaign. Part of the proceeds of the sale of these stamps will go to the Emirates Red Crescent for its Covid-19 relief efforts."



### Anthony Fockenoy, expert service postman, La Poste

Customer engagement is very important in Anthony Fockenoy's role as an expert service postman for La Poste in France. For this reason, social distancing has been a challenge. "My role involves delivering parcels, mail and medicine to customers, and I also help set-up touchscreen tablets for the elderly and visit people who are isolated from their family," he explains.

"A lot of my customers are elderly and isolated and not being able to spend time with them, even for five minutes, has been difficult," Fockenoy continues. "We found alternative ways to provide services. During the crisis, I visited care facilities for the elderly to help with the installation of Ardoiz tablets – our electronic tablets dedicated to senior citizens. We didn't have contact with the elderly, but we trained the health care staff to use the tablets so they could teach them."

Fockenoy believes that the way the public perceives the role of the postal worker has changed as a result of Covid-19. "Local communities have really shown their appreciation for us during the pandemic," he adds.



### Jeppe Grøndahl, parcel distributor, PostNord

Jeppe Grøndahl has seen parcel volumes soar during the pandemic, which has resulted in longer working hours. "Working days of 9-10 hours is now not uncommon and we are also called in at the weekend," he says.

Despite the long hours, Grøndahl is committed to delivering during the pandemic and the key to success, he notes, is teamwork. "As a team we have become better at solving the tasks we face and making sure everyone gets back to the hub in good time," he explains.

"We have also helped companies that started online sales when the lockdown occurred deliver their goods on time. I feel like I have made people happy and perhaps even helped get some important products delivered on time by doing a few hours of overtime," he adds.

Most of Grøndahl's parcel deliveries are now made to homes rather than stores, and contactless deliveries have been implemented. "I do miss delivering to the high street and the associated chatting with people in stores and on the streets. The city is empty at the moment, which is strange," he concludes.



### Wilma van Wensveen, mail deliverer, PostNL

For Wilma van Wensveen the greatest challenge faced during the pandemic, has been adhering to physical distancing. "I miss the contact," she says. "Particularly when I can't put an arm around someone who's feeling sad. But I understand the importance of social distancing."



**#FIGHT** *racism*



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Within the depot, maintaining the required 1.5m distance from other employees is also challenging. "Everybody wants to get started, but the new rules allow only one person at a time in the facility. In the rush of the mornings sometimes people forget this rule," she explains. "We often use jokes as a light-hearted way to remind each other to keep their distance."

Wensveen concludes, "Looking back over the past year, I have learnt to be tolerant, patient and careful as a result of the pandemic. Overall I am very proud and also very grateful to PostNL that I can continue to keep working safely during these times."



### Nguyen Thi Chuyen, postal worker, Thuy An Cultural Commune Post Office, Vietnam Post

Creativity and flexibility have been essential during Covid-19, according to Nguyen Thi Chuyen. The post office Chuyen works at has kept these two things in mind while tackling the pandemic. "Recently we had an outbreak of Covid-19 in our village, and therefore since January 28 the town authority has blockaded the village to prevent the spread," explains Chuyen.

"Before the outbreak, customers came to our office to use services. However, I now have to go to customers' houses to collect their postal items. All transactions with customers have turned into online or indirect communication. My working hours have also become more flexible, and I arrange with customers the best time to serve them. Currently, my customers are even better served than they were before the pandemic began!"

According to Chuyen, Vietnam Post has gone above and beyond to support its workforce during the pandemic. "The post has guaranteed our jobs during this challenging time, and also provided us with protective equipment and guidance to keep us safe," she concludes.



### Mohammad Syahiran Zulhilmi, postman, Singapore Post

For SingPost's Mohammad Syahiran Zulhilmi, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic forced him to make a difficult decision. "Border closures meant that those of us who hailed from neighbouring countries had to choose whether to remain in Singapore and not see our families, or return home not knowing when we would be able to return to work."

Zulhilmi chose to remain in Singapore – a decision that was made easier thanks to the ongoing support of SingPost. "SingPost took great care of us by putting us up in hotels and providing meal allowances, for example," he says. "Supervisors were also available 24/7 to provide support and encouragement."

Looking back over the past year, Zulhilmi continues, "As a frontline worker, the sight of formerly bustling community areas suddenly devoid of people sent chills down my spine. However, what stuck in my mind was the camaraderie on display every day at our regional base. All of us knew the risks when we reported for work, but we were motivated by the fact that all of us were performing a vital duty."

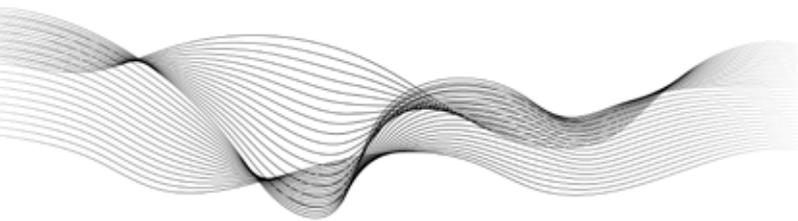
Covid-19 also highlighted the need for contactless deliveries, especially for e-commerce packages. "In December 2020, SingPost launched a public trial for PostPal, the world's first smart letterbox, in two blocks within my beat. I was therefore trained to use PostPal, and now deliver to the two kiosks every day," Zulhilmi says. "PostPal is able to automatically sort letters and postal packages directly to households, which saves me a substantial amount of time while improving mail accuracy." **HN**



# Ramazan Ali Sobhanifar, CEO, Iran National Post

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed employees of the National Post Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran to grave dangers.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud



At the same time, the pandemic revealed difficult infrastructure challenges that the post needed to overcome as customers' demand for parcel services skyrocketed and mail backlogs ensued.

And still the company was able to fulfill its mission.

"During the Corona Pandemic, Iranian postmen, despite having more than 2,000 infected and seven dead, similar to the medical staff, whose lives were in danger, continued to do their job. This was done in difficult conditions even during the official quarantine by the government, even on holidays and did not stop providing services to the people and did their best to help them

in these difficult conditions," said CEO, Ramazan Ali Sobhanifar.

Iran National Post took measures to meet the needs of its customers through the online sales portal, as well as performing proxy services of governmental and non-governmental organizations to protect the health of the staff and customers and prevent disease transmission, Sobhanifar said.

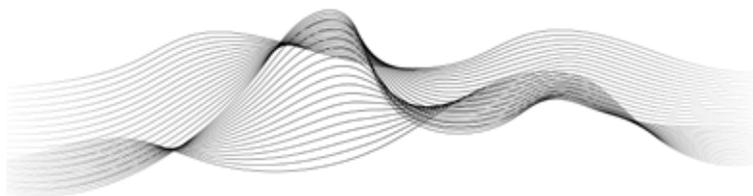
During two periods of quarantine mandated by the state, Iran National Post was deemed an essential service provider. The postal operator went on with business with no closures or reduced hours.

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## And still the company was able to fulfill its mission.

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During this period, demand for package deliveries increased dramatically. Online shoppers were offered many discounts to help them manage the restrictions that had been imposed upon them, limiting their movement and ability to acquire items they needed. This situation led to a steep increase in sales.



This occurred at a time when domestic and international flights were reduced or canceled; it was simultaneously impossible to make use of railway capacity for deliveries, he said. End-to-end delivery times of domestic and international postal items increased while the postal traffic caused by the surge in e-commerce, increased by 30 per cent.

This all combined to create a temporary backlog of mail and reduction in the quality of service. The system was hindered by insufficient infrastructure and expertise to manage these conditions, Sobhanifar explained.

Additionally, he said, cumbersome rules and regulations made navigating the situation challenging.

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## Iran National Post built up its infrastructure in areas that had fewer facilities. It added six postal processing hubs in the center of big provinces.

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"The biggest challenge of Iran National Post Company when dealing with the Corona pandemic in some areas was encountering a huge volume of mails due to online purchases, weak infrastructure commensurate with the volume of mails, lack of required equipment and trained and experienced manpower in proportion to the volume of mails," Sobhanifar said.

The post moved quickly to address this issue, however. Initially, Iran National Post determined that the company needed only to increase manpower at its sorting and exchange centers to address the lack of capacity.

"After a short period of time," he said, "we get to know that this is not the solution and decided to establish sorting and exchange centers and regional hubs throughout the country in order to facilitate and smooth the work."

Iran National Post built up its infrastructure in areas that had fewer facilities. It added six postal processing hubs in the center of big provinces. This addressed part of the infrastructural needs and further additions to its postal resources will be completed in the coming months, Sobhanifar said.

The post is also implementing new technologies, such as software and hardware infrastructures, along with the installation of mechanized sorting. It is strengthening the urban transportation fleet by up to 100 per cent, he said. And the postal operator is now utilizing trains to transport postal cargo.

"If the volume of mails increases by 40 per cent, there is a full readiness to handle it," Sobhanifar said.

With all of its efforts, the value that Iran National Post played for the community was evident throughout the pandemic, according to Sobhanifar.

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## Citizens need postal services much more than had been realized.

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The observance of health protocols by the postal staff and the speed of action in meeting the needs of the people was very important to customers. Also, the good behavior of the postal workers had a very positive effect on the people who were in difficult conditions brought on by the pandemic, he said. Lastly, capacity building, even in the critical time of the pandemic, which was very significant compared to normal times, enabled the post to better serve its customers.

If anything could be learned from the challenges faced by postal operators in the COVID-19 pandemic it is that now the evidence clearly shows that citizens need postal services much more than had been realized, Sobhanifar notes.

"If we try to offer better services with more quality and speed," he said, "we can use this hidden need for the benefit of the organization." **TG**

# A letter to the new normal: Experts discuss the postal future



When three thought leaders in the postal industry met online recently to discuss the future of the postal sector, there were more questions than answers. These questions around technology, diversification and sustainability are fundamental, the experts said, and posts must consider them carefully to develop appropriate strategies for the future.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud

The three experts were Derek Osborn, Ian Kerr, and Paul Needham.

Derek Osborn is a business and career coach mainly for the postal sector. He edited the 2014 book *Reinventing the Post*.

Ian Kerr is the founder of Postal Hub Podcast, which has aired more than 230 episodes in which he discusses trends in conversation with other postal industry leaders.

Paul Needham is the chief editor of CEP-Research, which has been providing news and research for the postal industry since 2005.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have slowed much of the postal sector's ability to plan for or enact strategies for the future. But with vaccines making their way into the world's populations, postal operators may look with hope toward a time when they may shift out of crisis response and into strategic planning.

Needham acknowledged that this planning will be different for all posts, dependent on its ownership structure. Much depends on whether the operator is a public entity, a department within the government, a private company or any combination.

"Which plays a role in how much freedom the postal operators have to make their own decisions," Needham said. "There's no one size fits all" future of the post.

What had been a question mark for years – was there a future for the postal sector at all – may have been answered this past year as the post stepped in as an essential service in the pandemic.

"Yes, they are needed," Needham, said. "Yes, they are essential, both for countries' economies, for governments as public services, but also as commercial operators for businesses and clients."

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**"There's no one size fits all" future of the post.**

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Osborn agreed, adding that the pandemic underlined several key points to remember when posts consider their futures.

"I think (the pandemic) demonstrated the resilience of the sector, their ability to adapt and change," Osborn said, adding later in the conversation that no parcel or postal company has gone under yet.



But what does that future look like for postal operators that have been conducting traditional organizations for, in many cases, more than a century?

### Technology, Diversification and Partnerships

Much of the discussion among the three thought leaders centered on technology and diversification. With letters on a continued decline and technology's reach continuing to expand, there exists both opportunities and risks for posts to reimagine their roles in the communities they serve.

"In the future, the postal digital platform could be where everybody comes to do their government services," Osborn said. He envisions a hub for such things as e-government services, delivery consolidation, financial services, communication services and grocery deliveries. "A digital platform which could be the go-to place, the trusted place," Osborn said.

Currently, however, operators face restrictions from operating in these spaces, Osborn said, but boundaries are breaking down.

"In which case," he said, "that's an opportunity for the post, but it's also a threat, of course, because everybody else is doing deliveries."

This threat comes from posts entering the realm of technology, a fast moving, nimble space, which Kerr described like this: posts are massive ships at sea with agile speed boats doing circles around them.

When posts make use of technology, there is a big risk that technology can overtake postal operators, Needham said. "Especially with the big e-retail players. If we just look at Amazon, there's a massive threat from Amazon, obviously, now by-passing posts, taking over its own deliveries."

Osborn agreed. Posts are excited by technology solutions, he said, but there are a number of problems.

### Operators face restrictions from operating in these spaces, Osborn said, but boundaries are breaking down.

### Posts are massive ships at sea with agile speed boats doing circles around them.

"One is investment," Osborn said. "Another is capability, another is, of course, as Paul (Needham) was saying, as soon as they go into areas like digital sphere and digital landscape and already in parcel landscape, they're in intense competition, which they're not used to compared to the old letter monopolies that they had."

That intense competition doesn't always appear in obvious places. In the past, Kerr said, competition for a retailer who sold shoes were other retailers who sold shoes.

"In the Postal sector, that is not the case," Kerr said. "It's not that if you are a postal operator, your threat is UPS or your threat is FedEx. Your threats at everywhere."

Threats may come from small or large organizations, they may operate across different sectors, for instance as a startup focused on local delivery or a mobile messaging platform that takes away volume, Kerr said.

“So, when posts think about strategy, they really do need to think hard about that commercial aspect,” Kerr said.

The question then becomes, where might postal operators do more and be more, Needham said.

“Do they actually have to do everything themselves, or can they link up with, let’s say, small, neat, agile, innovative, creative players?” Needham asked.

Such private-public partnerships could be attractive due to characteristics inherent in the traditional postal sector.

“What about logistics, e-fulfillment?” Needham said. “There must surely be massive potential there to diversify that way as well. It needs big investments.”

“The main assets are [postal operators’] brand, their ubiquity, their reach, their trust in most cases, not all,” Osborn said. “A lot of

In France, La Poste’s DPDgroup is a European cross-border parcel network and in Germany, Deutsche Post’s DHL is an international carrier.

private companies who want to expand their reach ... might want to partner with the posts in one way or another.”

What could that look like? Needham said that while everyone has their eye on parcels, specifically e-commerce, as the future of posts, there are other areas of the business into which posts may expand or look to for technology solutions.

“What about logistics, e-fulfillment?” Needham said. “There must surely be massive potential there to diversify that way as well. It needs big investments.”

Kerr added that there has been talk about expansion throughout the entire e-commerce value chain, from the website through to delivery.

“Paul (Needham) just mentioned fulfillment and logistics. There’s payment, there’s a whole chain there, which posts could, especially in developing markets, become the critical infrastructure,” Kerr said.

There is a need for postal operators to diversify their markets, their businesses and their sources of revenues



The community role of the post office is often talked about but rarely defined, he said.

## Post beyond borders

To more fully understand a way toward the future, posts must also consider the scope of their potential market.

Will posts eventually see a greater trend in consolidation, which had been a major theme some 20 years ago, Osborn said, and will global trade expand?

“Surprisingly enough perhaps, we’ve hardly seen any consolidation talk,” Osborn said.

There are a few examples. Denmark and Sweden combined to create PostNord. And Singapore and Australia, among others, will operate a bit more widely than their own national boundaries. “But by and large (posts) are still national operators that stay in their national territory, at least work from their national territory.”

Needham had a different take on this. He agreed with Osborn’s assessment for mail. However, for parcels he saw a different story.

For example, in France, La Poste’s DPDgroup is a European cross-border parcel network and in Germany, Deutsche Post DHL is an international carrier.

“Within different business segments, they may have a more a national focus, especially mail,” Needham said. “But on the parcel side, there’s nothing to stop them being an international parcels operator.”

As for the direction of global trade, changes in the landscape have altered an outlook that was seen only a few years ago as what Osborn described as “all systems go.”

“People were going to buy everything from everywhere,” Osborn said. “We know for various different reasons, trade barriers have gone up, protectionism’s there, tariffs, VAT and all sorts of things are making it much more difficult to do that now.”



That is why there is a need for postal operators to diversify their markets, their businesses and their sources of revenues, Needham said.

“If you’re staying focused on mail, that obviously has a very limited future,” he said. “But if you look at it in terms of parcels, you have your cross-border parcels, but the big parcel markets are all domestic.”

E-retailers are growing, Needham said, but the classic B2B parcel deliveries to retailers still remains a big part of the market, if not about 50 per cent.

Kerr cautioned, though, that operators should not diversify for diversification’s sake.

“Whatever else the post gets into, it has to be with a clear vision for what it wants to achieve,” Kerr said.

## Post Offices

One aspect of postal operators’ strategy and diversification planning should be post offices themselves, Kerr said. Posts face obligations to fulfill the needs of their communities, including location and operating hours. Still, there must be a vision for what these post offices could be in the future.

“It might be that the postal operator is a bank and the post offices are branches,” he said. “Every postal operator needs to have a clear vision for what it will be doing with its

post office network, and how diversification fits into that, how partnerships fits into that.”

This can be a difficult task. The community role of the post office is often talked about but rarely defined, he said. This makes it difficult if not impossible to give the post office a mandate, which makes it difficult to give it a price tag.

By their very nature, posts play more of a role in social inclusion than their commercial competitors, Osborn said, they are required to serve all communities. They may provide medical supplies to rural areas, or financial services in impoverished regions.

“This comes back to what Paul (Needham) and Derek (Osborn) have been saying about things like investment,” Kerr said. “How can you force a value on the role that post offices played during the pandemic in checking up on people? ... There are people who say: ‘if you can’t put a price tag on it then it has no value.’”

## Growth and Sustainability

Posts look to the future, they must also weigh the value of growth and its impact on the planet.

“We are always talking about growing, expanding, doing more, more volumes, more deliveries,” Needham said. “But there are limits to growth.”



He suggested posts look less at growth and focus more on being sustainable, particularly with last-mile deliveries.

For example, he said, there could be consolidated weekly deliveries instead of multiple separate deliveries of one parcel each. And rather than allowing numerous vans to make multiple passes through town centres, consolidate them with joint deliveries between different carriers or via lockers or post offices.

Additionally, posts need to look more closely at their last-mile delivery CO2 footprint because that's where the big footprint is, Needham said. Carbon pricing is coming in and it will get more expensive.

Given this enormous footprint, postal operators could leader the way in sustainable operations by taking their carbon footprint more seriously, making changes in last-mile delivery and demanding this of their customers, Osborn said.

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## Enormous footprint, postal operators could leader the way in sustainable operations by taking their carbon footprint more seriously

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"I think that would have a bigger impact even perhaps than the politicians on the whole climate change thing," he said. Posts have focused mostly on emissions reduction, electric vehicles. While there's nothing wrong with that, Osborn said, that will only take the issue so far.

"The whole business is posited, as Paul (Needham) said, on growth, on more stuff to more people, and that's lots of packaging and lots of fresh air being moved around," Osborn said. "Reusable packaging, circular economy – there's an enormous amount more (posts) could do."

Posts should act now on sustainability issues lest they find themselves in a position to play catch-up.

"During the pandemic, the delivery world, including the postal sector, was given a free pass on emissions," Kerr said. "We were told to just deliver it, just get it through. That has changed and now the regulators will be taking a much closer look, and legislation will start to apply. All those things that Paul (Needham) mentioned, consolidation of deliveries, etc. will happen and the technology currently exists to make it happen."

Delivery companies, including postal operators, should get on board, he said, "otherwise they will be forced to cooperate," Kerr said. "It's as simple as that." **TG**

# Turkka Kuus, CEO, Posti

At Posti, Finland's main postal services provider, facing the pandemic meant planning and forecasting in the midst of uncertainty. It also meant trusting what the postal operator calls its "exceptional situation" management team and procedures.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud



"At Posti, we are familiar in dealing with different kind of disruptions," said Posti's CEO, Turkka Kuusisto, who was named to the position in February 2020. "The biggest challenge at the beginning was the lack of predictability."

The first wave of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 caused a significant decline in postal services. This was linked to a decline in small business invoicing, he explained. At the same time, demand for parcel services increased to peak-season levels.

Despite this, Kuusisto said, there have been no operational disruptions. This was critical given Posti's role of maintaining Finland's security of supply. Posti's logistics network is a key service for delivering necessary items, such as protective medical equipment kept in security storage, according to a press release issued by Posti in March 2020.

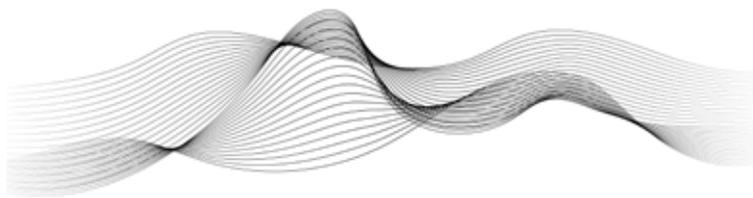
"I'm very proud of the resilience of our employees who responded to a very demanding situation quickly and in an organized manner," he said, including the efforts required to manage a record-breaking Christmas season of parcel deliveries.

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**"I'm very proud of the resilience of our employees who responded to a very demanding situation quickly and in an organized manner"**

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With so much uncertainty, it was a challenge to know how to apply different measures accordingly, he said. Posti made changes to services and processes to promote safety of its employees and customers.



“When we talk about the pandemic, it is safety that comes first to my mind,” he said. “Did we do the right things at the right time? We did, and our employees also agree on this. We made an internal survey and 81 per cent of our employees considered our communications related to the COVID-19 situation has been timely and accurate.”

Another key factor in navigating the uncertain times successfully was the company’s data analytics team, he said. The team created a model to predict how the virus would spread in regional hospital districts throughout Finland and how this spread would affect Posti.

“Relying on these predictions, and with excellent cross-organizational cooperation, we’ve managed to proceed in a clear and logical manner in a very challenging and

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## The team created a model to predict how the virus would spread in regional hospital districts throughout Finland.

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exceptional situation,” Kuusisto said. He said the organization is now more united than ever, and its ability to respond to new and different situations has developed further.

Despite the uncertainty, the postal operator faced relatively few direct challenges related to the pandemic, Kuusisto said. Most operational impacts were caused by indirect effects, he explained, such as the inability to deliver to certain destinations during regional lockdowns.

Posti monitored the situation closely and updated its pandemic plan and introduced the company’s exceptional situation procedures in March.

“At Posti, exceptional situation management is a cross-organizational function,” Kuusisto said. The team, which is led by an emergency director, reports to the Posti leadership team. It was organized this way to help ensure timely communications and to create guidelines for rapidly changing situations.

The efforts showed that even a big organization like Posti can move quickly and smoothly when the situation requires. Kuusisto emphasized that posts need to be aware that exceptional situations, such as the pandemic, can change demand quickly. Postal operators need to be prepared to change direction fast and be willing to leave behind plans that are no longer called for.

For Posti that meant implementing changes to how it communicated with the company’s employees.

“The biggest change has taken place in our internal communications,” Kuusisto said, “letting go of the traditional mindset in communications and increasing the amount of virtual from-one-to-many communications.”

As for Posti’s plans for the future, the company will continue to follow the situation in a systematical way, he said.

“And if any needs occur, we will change our way of working accordingly,” Kuusisto said. “We will keep on working in exceptional situation mode as long as needed.”

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**The efforts showed that even a big organization like Posti can move quickly and smoothly when the situation requires.**

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There is one challenge with the pandemic that still remains, Kuusisto said, which is to stay vigilant and keep prevention measures to as high a level as possible.

“The situation has lasted so long that maintaining resilience is one of the biggest challenges,” Kuusisto said. “The most important thing for us has been seamless cross-functional collaboration and continuous encouragement. So far, our response to COVID-19 has been a great team effort, and we aim at maintaining the momentum until the situation is behind us.” **TG**



# Bear Necessities: How stamps connected people during the pandemic

It was March 2020 and New Zealand Post was preparing to issue stamps commemorating the country's participation in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Within one week, the games were postponed and New Zealand entered a national lockdown to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TEXT:** Tara Giroud

This left a void in the stamp programme. It came at a time of great uncertainty and limited resources around producing a stamp issue at such short notice, and under COVID-19 restrictions, said Antony Harris, head of stamps and collectables for New Zealand Post.

Stamps are typically programmed at least 12 months in advance, but New Zealand Post had mere weeks to develop a concept that would feel appropriate to New Zealanders. Around this time, a phenomenon had taken hold in New Zealand, a "bear hunt," in which residents placed stuffed bears, or drawings of bears, in their homes' street-facing windows. Residents were permitted to exercise in their neighbourhoods, and the bear hunt became a means of connecting with one another in a time of isolation, Harris said.

"The message was simple – we're all in this together," he said. "For children and adults alike, spotting bears became a magical and rewarding experience on their daily walks. The team agreed that commemorating the Bear Hunt would be the perfect way to acknowledge the moment that New Zealanders were all going through."

The post solicited images from the public and received some 500 submissions. Bears were being staged having picnics or reading books. Some were made from craft materials and some were old and well-loved.

"The final images that were chosen showcased the contrasting ways in which New Zealanders were participating in the Bear Hunt, and the personal stories that came with them," Harris said.

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## For children and adults alike, spotting bears became a magical and rewarding experience on their daily walks.

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The feedback seen in online comments confirmed the special place these stamps had in people's hearts. "A very special memento of an unprecedented moment in NZ history," wrote one person. "None of us are going to forget this time in history!!! I will buy some and hand them to my great grandson," wrote another.

Approximately 6,000 commemorative sheets were issued on May 20, which sold out within two months. The stamps did more than just commemorate this time in history, they also provided aid to those serving the community. For every sheet sold, NZD3 was donated to New Zealand Red Cross.



“At a time when communication and connection felt more important than ever, the stamps represented our desire as an organisation to help New Zealanders to feel connected - not only through the practical means of sending letters, but by acknowledging the importance of human connection,” Harris said.

## By issuing this stamp on COVID-19, member countries have also demonstrated their solidarity with all those fighting against the pandemic

New Zealand Post was one of more than 40 UPU member organizations that generated COVID-19 stamps to commemorate the efforts of both front-line workers and citizens’ in combatting the pandemic.

“It is absolutely a pleasure and a source of pride,” said Olfa Mokaddem, the UPU’s Philately and International Reply Coupons Programme Manager, of the efforts made by post operators to distribute COVID-19 stamps.

“By issuing this stamp on COVID-19, member countries have also demonstrated their solidarity with all those fighting against the pandemic and the role that the posts of the world can play in social inclusion,” she said.

In Viet Nam, stamps have always carried a cultural and historical message, said Ngo Hoai Thanh, director of the postage stamp division. So, after the World Health Organization declared a worldwide pandemic, Vietnam Post proposed a stamp set called “Join Hands in COVID-19 Prevention and Control.”

The two-stamp set with the face values of VND4,000 and VND15,000 was issued on March 31, 2020, in a record-setting seven days, Ngo said. In total, the post issued about 400,000 stamps, which sold out quickly.

The stamps, which feature front-line workers and infection-fighting tools, such as masks, received enthusiastic attention from domestic and foreign customers, Ngo said, even those who don’t usually collect stamps.

The stamp set was symbolic in many ways, Ngo explained. It illustrated the significance, responsibility and determination of Viet Nam, together with countries around the world, to fight the pandemic and affirm itself as a member of the WHO, she said.

“On a worldwide scale, the COVID-19 pandemic has not been fully controlled yet,” Ngo said. “The fear of the disease still exists everywhere. The loss caused by the pandemic will not faded in a short time. Hopefully, the stamp set will help to spread the belief in a brighter future when the pandemic will be under control and the life will return back to normal.”

For Correos de Mexico, creating a stamp commemorating COVID-19 was a way to honor those whose work required them to put themselves at risk, said Karina López Preciado, the deputy director of philately.

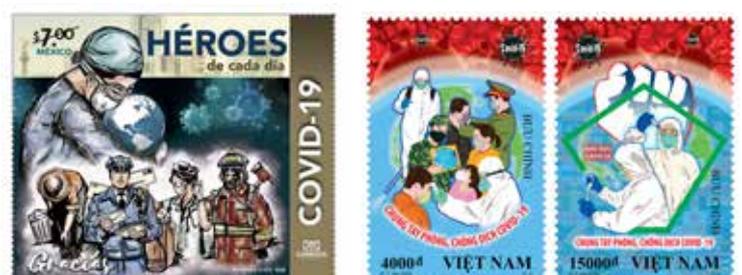
“The pandemic is an event that will be written into the world history of the 21st century. As a result, the General Directorate and the Philatelic area of the Mexican Postal Service, considered it necessary to recognize and pay tribute to those people with professions and trades. People classified as essential, who could not stay at home and protect themselves from the virus like the vast majority.,” López Preciado said.

The stamp, titled “Everyday Heroes Covid-19”, featured a doctor embracing the world. Along the bottom edge of the stamp was pictured men and women in uniforms of essential workers: nurses, cleaning personnel, firefighters and mail carriers.

## Hopefully, the stamp set will help to spread the belief in a brighter future when the pandemic will be under control and the life will return back to normal.

The illustration technique itself also carried meaning. The images were drawn in the style of comic book heroes and heroines, López Preciado said. Of the 100,000 stamps issued, collectors purchased about 2 per cent to 5 per cent and the rest were sold to the general public.

“It is a tribute to all those faces that nobody knows but we know are there to take care of us,” López Preciado said. “It is an image for the world, considering that in every country there are the same type of heroes.” **TG**



## Note of correction from the Editor

I write regarding the article titled, *"Diversification fundamental to global postal sector's growth"* appearing in the Winter 2020 edition of *Union Postale*. After reviewing the contents, I would like to point out that some of the elements outlined in the article might be misleading.

In particular, I refer you to the lead sentence: *"According to official Universal Postal Union (UPU) statistics from the Directorate of the Cabinet (DIRCAB), the global postal sector grew by 11 per cent over a five year period between 2014 and 2018. This growth trend is expected to continue in 2019 and 2020, mainly due to growth in parcel volumes and diversification."*

While it is certainly accurate that operating revenues in nominal terms have grown in recent years, and that the activities of postal operators do not revolve exclusively around the delivery of mail; when compared in "real" terms<sup>1</sup>, however, the postal sector has underperformed the real economy in the last decade.

This trend, which we refer to as "postal decoupling", is a 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon, essentially taking place in the last decade. It coincides with many structural changes that economies around the world have been commonly facing, and it leads to two important observations concerning postal services.

First, growth factors in the real economy appear to be less complementary to postal services, reversing a historical trend that had been at work since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the past decade, the advent of digitalization and a challenging regulatory framework have pushed many postal operators to restructure their activities. While many have been successful in making the transition, on average, the dividends of the transformation have yet to materialize for the sector as a whole.

Second, the gap is, on average, widening. In the period from 2007 to 2017, the real economy grew an average of 3.3% per year, while real operating revenues grew at the much slower annual pace of 1.2%. These numbers are at odds with the expansion observed in the 1996–2006 period, during which the real economy grew at 3.9%, the same growth rate of real postal operating revenues. As a result, the gap between the two indexes has widened from less than 1% in 2006 to 21.5% in 2017.

Postal operators are already feeling the effects of the worsening economic landscape. In 2021, it is likely that they will be forced to operate within a context of low investment and increased operating costs. It remains to be seen whether the increase in demand for parcels and logistics will compensate, at least partially, for the slowdown of the economy.

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 will have made a dent in postal operators' revenue by the end of 2020. Taking as a baseline the -5.2% prediction for global GDP from the World Bank, the total loss of revenue for the postal sector in 2020 has currently been (conservatively) estimated and could therefore be between 4.5 and 6.5 billion SDR.

For the moment, the observed growth path of revenues in parcels and logistics has not yet been strong enough for postal operators to ensure a smooth transformation of their services in the long run. The situation remains, therefore, delicate.

<sup>1</sup> The term real refers to adjusting revenues in Purchasing Power Parity terms and accounting for inflation.

## Zoran Stevanović, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SPECIALIST, EMS UNIT

“The transition to teleworking was challenging, as it required a complete change in the way I have worked so far. Luckily, my colleagues from other countries managed to adapt to our extraordinary communication needs quickly and successfully. The work we had planned resulted in the implementation of an EMS SMART tool, which showed the strength of the EMS Unit in enabling a smooth continuation of the EMS service. Still, I miss our meetings in person as a unique opportunity to be creative and to leave a lasting impression. I hope that soon we will return to our normal office work.”

## Youriy Spiriev EUROPE AND CIS REGIONAL EXPERT AND REGIONAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR

“My work process has changed substantially. Before the pandemic, I used to travel a lot visiting many regions. The preparation of the meetings in the field (e.g. workshops, regional conferences, etc.), included much coordination and physical contact with my counterparts. Now, due to the travel ban since March last year, I had to transform almost everything about my work and start doing it all online. Using communication platforms like Webex, MSO Teams, Voice Boxer, and Zoom can sometimes put pressure on me. Working from home will never replace in-person events and the real networking.”

## Sékou Ouattara GOVERNANCE AND INTERNAL CONTROL EXPERT

“The global COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, especially in professional environments. Our work routine has experienced a tremendous disturbance and the outbreak led us to profoundly modify our work conditions. The Governance and Internal Control Programme, just like other UPU programmes, had to adapt to the new circumstances. Face-to-face interaction with colleagues and external partners has now given way to virtual interaction that may not yield the same benefits. Regardless of this exceptional situation, we are committed to fulfilling our mission and have been doing so over the past months.”

## Dawn Wilkes POSTAL SECURITY PROGRAMME MANAGER

“The pandemic continues to force each of us to pivot and adapt to evolving circumstances and postal security professionals have been at the forefront of these challenges. Social distancing has required the physical layout and security aspects of facilities to be altered. Training to ensure compliance with the myriad of new protocols continues. The combination of remote and onsite work creates added challenges for cyber-security. Adapting and innovating, both now and after the pandemic, will be imperative. Security professionals have never been needed more than now to help create a new and safer world.”

## Marinela Lita ACCOUNTING EXPERT, DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE

“The impact of the pandemic on financial accounting work has been significant in terms of work procedures because many of the internal processes used to be paper-based. The outbreak required the immediate adjustment of workflows to ensure the efficiency of working from home. The submission of documents for visas, control, and payment approvals are now carried out electronically. Teleworking has accelerated the implementation of the paperless accounting project, and we will soon have a stable long-term solution for the electronic management and storage of financial documents.”

### Sandrine Diffo

QUALITY ASSURANCE LEAD SOFTWARE DEVELOPER, POSTAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

"I work in IT, and I am used to connecting to a machine to solve an issue or perform monitoring tasks. However, never could I have imagined that we would spend a year working remotely: but this is exactly what COVID-19 has achieved. Given that teamwork is essential in my area, the main challenge has been keeping the same level of efficiency. We can no longer discuss issues in person. However, working from home has made us more results-oriented because we need to get straight to the point. On the other hand, I miss the social contact that I enjoyed in the office."

### Choy Han Chum

HEAD OF QUALITY OF SERVICE FUND (QSF) UNIT

"In the most challenging situations, people stretch their creativity to the limit. This is true for the QSF team. 'Divergence' has become our catchword. COVID-19 has propelled us to diverge our thinking over ways to support designated operators (DOs) in providing postal services and to ensure their business continuity. We have assisted Posts with installing smart lockers for contactless mail collection and delivery, set up mobile post offices, and provided PPE to postal staff. The QSF Common Fund's electronic advanced data project for 143 DOs was launched at the peak of the pandemic, and the worldwide deployment of the Customs Declaration System was done remotely from Berne."

### Olfa Mokkadem

PHILATELY AND IRC PROGRAMME MANAGER

"Due to the pandemic, the philately and International Reply Coupon (IRC) team has faced some changes, particularly the remote management of its physical activities: stamp distribution, IRC and universal stamp collection. We have held numerous online events, examples being the General Assembly of the World Association for the Development of Philately, the first international philatelic webinar for 52 participants, and the selection of the new IRC Abidjan design. Our team has participated in several remote forums and has continued supporting Posts and other stakeholders over emails, video conferences, and newsletters."

### Aude Marmier

TRANSPORT PROGRAMME ASSISTANT

"The general statement that the pandemic has accelerated digitization is also true for us. Since working from home started we communicate mainly through emails and online meetings, and I would say that it has had a positive impact on our communications efficiency. I appreciate working from home in a very quiet environment that I am lucky to have. However, nothing can replace interacting with colleagues and supervisors at work. Everything is going well because there is a strong team spirit in both teams I work with: Quality of Service and Supply Chain."

### Rasyidah L. Abdoerrachman

SENIOR HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) OFFICER

"The global COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the HR service. Due to effective communication and close collaboration with colleagues at all levels, our agile team was able to manage staff-related matters successfully. We have been taking an active role in transmitting the COVID-19 information from the UN and the Swiss Federal Office to staff and retirees. Our team has digitized its activities by creating electronic files, automating payslips, organizing online trainings and recruitment processes. For the staff's health and safety, the UPU Director General imposed a travel ban that has minimized carbon emissions and has had a positive impact on our planet."

All items by Olena Muravyova

# UNION POSTALE

## Advertising rate card 2021

Union Postale is the Universal Postal Union's flagship magazine, founded in 1875. Each issue is published quarterly in several languages, giving advertisers a regular opportunity to reach out to their audience.

Some 12,000 copies of Union Postale are sent to named distribution lists annually. The bulk of these readers are the top decision-makers from national Posts and ministries from the UPU's 192 member countries. They include chief executives, operations managers, technical experts, industry regulators and government ministers.

Around 1,000 further copies of the magazine are also distributed each year during meetings of the UPU's decision-making bodies, the Postal Operations Council and Council of Administration, attended by thousands of delegates from member countries and special industry events, such as Post-Expo.

An advertisement in Union Postale reaches a truly international audience.

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Inside magazine	3,000 EUR	11,400 EUR	21,600 EUR

**"I like Union Postale because it offers me information on select postal developments."\***

**"I like Union Postale because it keeps me informed."\***

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\*From the 2019 readership survey

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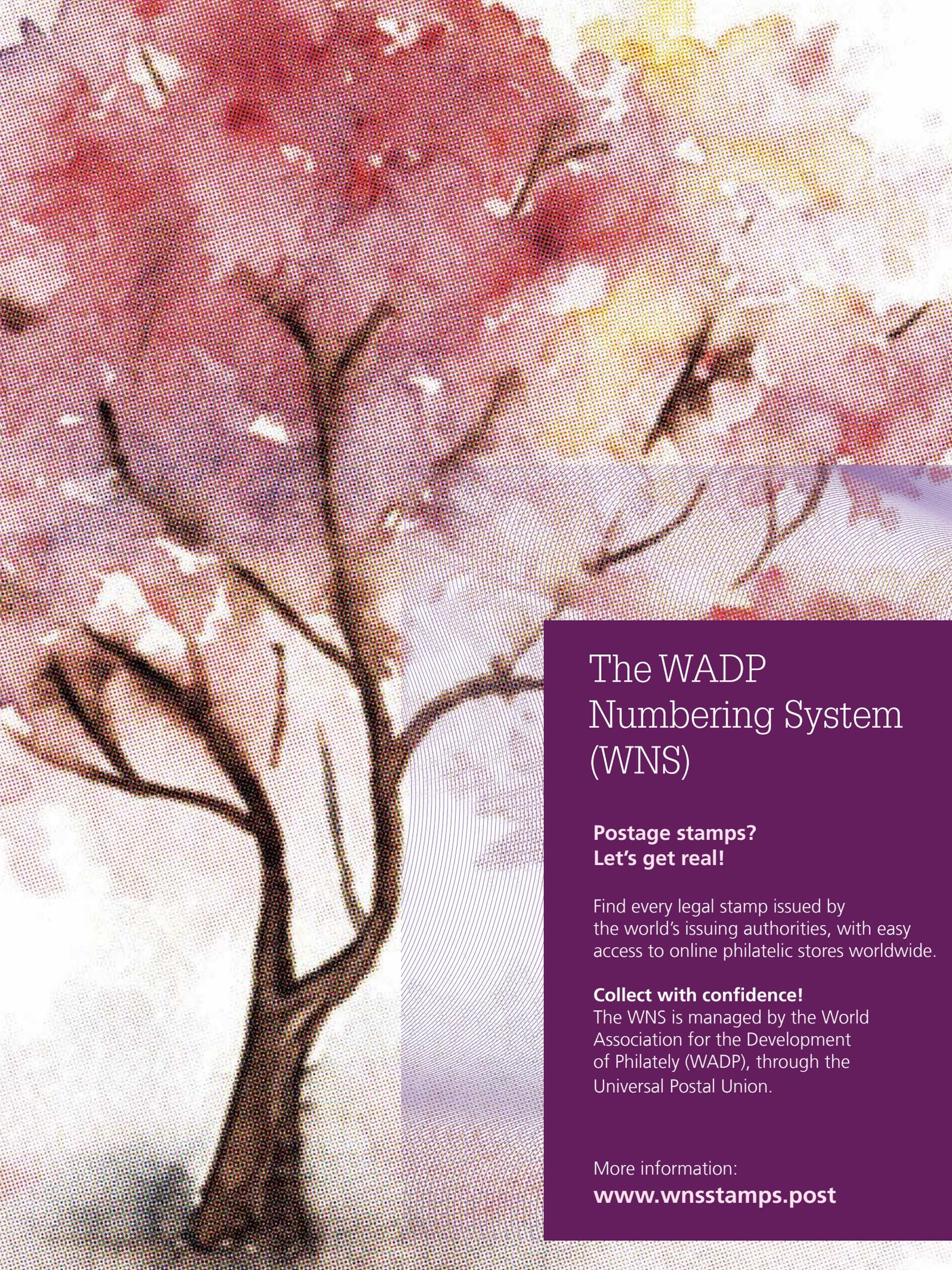
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