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Poštne storitve - Kakovost storitve - Kakovost dostopa do poštnih storitev

Postal services - Quality of service - Distance to access points

Postalische Dienstleistungen - Dienstqualität - Entfernung zum Zugangspunkt

Services postaux - Qualité de service - Qualité de l'accès aux services postaux

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English Version

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Services postaux - Qualité de service - Qualité de l'accès aux services postaux

Postalische Dienstleistungen - Dienstqualität - Entfernung zum Zugangspunkt

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Foreword

This document (CEN/TR 15735:2008) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 331 “Postal services”, the secretariat of which is held by NEN.

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Introduction

Article 3 of the Postal Directive requires Member States to ensure that the density of access points (postal outlets and collection letterboxes) takes account of the needs of users – it contains relatively general requirements relating to access to Universal Services.

Consequently, Member States have taken very different approaches in defining minimum standards concerning the density of access points. The most important types of requirements that are imposed on Universal Service Providers are listed below:

— Minimum number: the Universal Service Provider must maintain at least x postal outlets (or collection letterboxes).

— Maximum distance: a postal outlet (or letterbox) must not be further away than x kilometres from any home or business location. Usually this requirement does not apply to isolated houses in rural areas but only within populated areas (or similarly defined geographic areas).

— Town size: a postal outlet (or letterbox) is mandatory in each municipality exceeding a population of x. In addition, some countries require the Universal Service Provider to maintain one postal outlet per x inhabitants in towns.

— One outlet per municipality: at least one postal outlet (or letterbox) must be operated in each municipality.

The situation with regard to access conditions and Quality of Service does differ from country to country.

Access conditions refer to the service points of the postal network, like street letter-boxes, post offices and other outlets that provide postal services. The regulatory requirements with regard to the density of these access points vary from ‘nonexistent’ to detailed guidelines on the location of access points with regard to density, distance, population or community related criteria.

Even in Member States where no specific requirements regarding the density of postal outlets exist, it appears that politics, often locally, strongly oppose Universal Service Providers that plan to close postal outlets, thus adding a soft component to the universal service obligation.

1 Scope

This Technical Report takes into account the existing systems for measuring access to postal services and the targets that are already in use in member states. To get an understanding of the existing systems regarding population coverage, a questionnaire entitled “Methodology for the Measurement of Distance to postal Access Points” was circulated to postal operators and postal regulators (see Annex A).

2 Main issues concerning the measurement of network density

2.1 General

This report is based on two data sources, the results of the questionnaire (Annex B) and the legislative framework for the density of access points to the postal network (Annex C).

An overview of the main issues raised in the legislation and in the questionnaire is given in the following table.

The table is structured in four main parts:

— Legislation on Access-Network Density;

— Measurement of Access-Network Density;

— Available Data necessary for Density Measurement;

— Reservations about Distance Measurement.

A tick mark is given for each European country in which the issue is relevant or dealt with.

Table 1 — Responses on questions about the distance to postal access points

		Austria	Belgium	Cyprus	Czech Republic	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Italy	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malta	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Slovak Republic	Slovenia	Spain	Switzerland	Sweden	The Netherlands	United Kingdom
LEGISLATION	**Geographical Unit I** *National*								X	X																	X	X
	Geographical Unit II *Regions*								X																			
	Geographical Unit III *Local Units*	X				X				X			X						X								X	X
	Postman "Service to Customer" *Equal to fixed Access Point*	X			X	X		X		X									X							X		
	Population Density I *Urban Areas*	X				X				X			X															X
	Population Density II *Rural Areas*									X			X						X								X	

	Indicators Used I *Absolute Number of Access Points*					X				X									X												
	Indicators Used II *% of Population based on Distance*	X				X			X	X			X																X	X	
MEASUREMENT	**Measurement System I** *System already in place*				X				X			X		X											X	X		X	X	
	Measurement System II *Incl. Postbox*				X							X								X	X	X				X	X			
	Measurement System III *Incl. Outlet with full Postal Service*								X			X				X				X			X			X				
	Measurement System IV In regular intervals											X														X	X				
	Distance I *Straight Line*								X			X				X					X	X	X			X	X				

	Distance II *Allowance for Natural Barriers*	X			X				X					X		X								X	X					
	Distance III *Other*	X			X				X					X		X								X	X			X			X
	Non Distance I *Population Density*				X															X				X	X	X					X
	Non Distance II *Geographical Information*							X						X		X										X	X				X
DATA	**Data available I** *Population Density (around AP)*				X			X	X							X								X	X	X	X		X	X	
	Data available II *Population Density (PCA)*				X						X			X		X			X						X	X	X		X	X	
	Data available III *Population Density (geographic)*				X	X		X	X					X		X									X	X	X			X	

RES.	**Detailed Reservations** *About distance-based measurement*	X			X		X								X			X	X

2.2 Legislation

Eight countries provided information on national legislation on access-network density.

The first three categories in the table indicate on which geographical unit(s) the national legislation is based: National, Regional or Local.

Local solutions for the access to the postal network often include ‘Mobile Postmen’ who provide access by ‘Service-to-Customer’ instead of the usual ‘Customer-to-Service’ approach connected with a visit to the post office. The questionnaire gives additional information on other countries where mobile postman are an issue (three countries).

Sometimes legislation differentiates areas with different population densities. Specialized legislation may be available for Urban and Rural Areas.

The indicators for access-network density that are used within the legislation fall into two main groups: absolute numbers for a ‘minimum of postal access points’ and minimum percentage of the ‘population within a given distance to the postal access point’.

2.3 Measurement

Information on measurement is based on the questionnaire responses. Fifteen countries reported if any system for distance measurement is already in place or not (see question 3.1, Annex A). Each of the measurement systems in place is based on the access point “Post Office”.

It is stated if the measurement system includes (or should include, if not installed) post-boxes and postal outlets with the full range of postal services (see question 4.2.1, Annex A).

Six countries gave additional information about the timing of the measurement, if it is done on a regular basis or by demand (question 4.4.5).

Thirteen countries indicated if the concept of ‘distance’ is part of access-network density measurement. It is denoted if distance is measured as a straight-line measurement or if any other distance measure is or would be applied, for example distance by road or distance in minutes by car (question 4.1.1).

All countries are listed, which reported that an allowance is or would be made for natural barriers like mountains or rivers (question 4.1.2).

In addition to distance related measures other indicators are used as well (question 4.1.1). These mainly fall into two categories: firstly, access is related to the population density in the area, in which the access point is located. The areas are mostly defined by postal or administrative criteria (certain postcode-areas or municipalities).

Secondly, access is related to geographical information (location of access point / customer, geographical areas, census based areas). Geographical information is increasingly drawn from electronic Geographic Information Systems (GIS) which allows for a very detailed geographical stratification of the country.

Both categories may overlap when the population density is available for geographically defined areas.

2.4 Available data

Even in cases where no measurement is installed yet, it is of interest, if any information is available that could be used for this purpose. Fourteen countries gave information on the data available in their country, which in most cases consists of population density data.

Population density figures may be available for any defined area around a fixed access point (question 4.2.3.c), for a set of defined postcode-areas (question 4.2.3.b) or for geographically defined areas.

2.5 Reservations

Not all countries felt comfortable with a standard, which is based mainly on the concept of distance as the indicator for access-network density as they view the requirements for the access network in a broader context, which can be seen in the answers to chapter 5 of the questionnaire.

All answers to the questionnaire or additional comments that go into further detail are incorporated at Annex C.

3 Conclusion

There are many different methods of distance measurement that are either in use or appropriate for use. This may include distance covered by foot or vehicle and can be done by straight line, distance by road or by the distance covered by the delivery officer. Likewise, information on how a countries population is measured also varies considerably.

When measuring distance to access points, individual countries physical barriers, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, etc. have to be taken into account. The legislation clearly indicates if it is necessary to consider those natural barriers. Although, some use similar measurement systems to others, there are also many differences. It would be extremely difficult to introduce a single measurement system to meet the needs of all.

As public need for access as well as the cost of providing access to Universal Services can most usefully be balanced at a local level, there appears to be no reasons for further harmonization in this area at the moment.

However, countries that currently do not have a measurement system in place but would like to introduce such a measurement system now or sometime in the future may use the information provided in Table 1 and get in contact with those countries that have a comparable legal situation and a measurement system in place.