

Notification: Study into future scenario developments in the Dutch postal market
Organisation: the Ministry of Economic Affairs

Purpose of the notification

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency is publishing this notification on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The purpose of this notification is to determine whether there are parties interested to perform this study.

Extent and duration

The final report is due to be delivered towards the end of September 2016.

Background information

In the interests of public policymaking, the Ministry of Economic Affairs would like to gain greater insight into future scenario developments in the domestic postal market in the Netherlands. For this reason, the Ministry would like to commission an external party to research this issue.

New technologies and e-substitution have a significant impact on the demand for postal services today. Postal volumes are decreasing substantially. The EU Postal Directive requires affordable national 24 hr delivery during at least 5 weekdays. The decline in volumes in all market segments therefore has a considerable negative effect on the financial viability of postal services, considering the majority of costs associated with a postal service network are fixed.

Network effects and economies of scale mean that the provision of the regulated Universal Service Obligation (USO) by the USO concession holder is interlinked with non-USO postal services.

Currently, we have two nationwide postal networks in the Netherlands. The current universal service provider (PostNL) has a postal network that services 24, 48 hr and 72hr delivery. Sandd has a national network through which it services 72 hr delivery. Furthermore, there are several smaller regional players in the market for various postal services.

For this study, two elements in the regulatory framework are especially relevant: 1) policy objectives of the USO: affordability, availability and quality; and 2) network regulation. Network regulation means that the incumbent operator has to allow access to its network on non-discriminatory terms and conditions.

Aim of the study

From a policy perspective we need to take into account all possible developments that are likely to take place in this market in order to determine the options as well as the implications of (changes in) policy in the context of the USO. Therefore, the aim of this research is to find out what future scenarios regarding the development of the Dutch postal market can be expected in about 10 years from now. In particular, attention should be paid to how the policy objectives of affordability, availability and quality of the postal service can be safeguarded in each of those scenarios. Scenarios should take into account all segments of the domestic postal market. Possible convergence between postal and other distribution networks could be an example of a relevant development which might influence the viability of postal networks.

This research should provide solid input for policy options needed to facilitate the long term sustainability of the postal networks, especially keeping in mind the policy objectives that have been articulated above.

Central research questions

- What are the expected trends and developments in the Dutch domestic postal market in the 10 coming years (2025) and what effect will these developments have on the sustainable exploitation of the postal networks in the Netherlands, especially on the sustainability of a postal network (or a combination of postal networks) that has (have) to fulfil USO obligations?

- Given possible future market developments and business models, how could the postal legislation and regulation adequately enable a sustainable postal service and which components of that policy framework might require adjustment to ensure financially sustainable provision thereof?
- What are the main prerequisites for a viable USP provision in the middle- and long term and how should the designation of the USP be organised?

Definitions and scope

- The study is to focus exclusively on the Dutch domestic postal market, taking the current liberalised market as a starting point, with an incumbent, regulation of the USO, SMP regulation of the non-USO market and regulation involving employment terms and conditions.
- The current European legislation should be considered as a given fact.
- The domestic Dutch postal market is, in accordance with the Dutch postal legislation, defined as the market for letters and USO parcels, and does not include courier and express services, internal business mail, and unaddressed mail.
- In parallel, we are commissioning a separate study regarding an evaluation of the current USO framework (part of this separate study will be research of consumer experience and possible future consumer needs).
- The final report has to contain descriptions and scenarios of future market developments.

Final product

The study must lead to a clear final report that includes a management summary, in English.

Required skills / experience

The company or companies (in case of a consortium) should indicate that they:

- Have a firm knowledge of the EU Postal Directive and a substantial knowledge of the Dutch postal market;
- Have experience in research into national postal markets or European postal markets;
- Have economic knowledge;
- Have experience with the development of scenarios and skills to implement scenarios into policy measures or policy options.

Application

Interested companies / consultants, fitting the abovementioned requirements, are invited to respond to the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (in Dutch: Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland), to the attention of Ms. Marjolein Switzar by email IUCEZteam5@rvo.nl.

You do not have to send documents, only a response if you are interested.

Interested parties will receive the request for the tender by email, as soon as possible after the deadline for responding to this Notification.

The deadline for responding to this Notification is set at 27 May 2016, 12.00 CET.