



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 10 January 2014
(OR. en)**

5174/14

**COMPET 15
MI 19
POSTES 1
TELECOM 5**

COVER NOTE

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission,
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

date of receipt: 16 December 2013

To: Mr Uwe CORSEPIUS, Secretary-General of the Council of the European
Union

No. Cion doc.: COM(2013) 886 final

Subject: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
A roadmap for completing the single market for parcel delivery
Build trust in delivery services and encourage online sales

Delegations will find attached document COM(2013) 886 final.

Encl.: COM(2013) 886 final



Brussels, 16.12.2013
COM(2013) 886 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

**A roadmap for completing the single market for parcel delivery
Build trust in delivery services and encourage online sales**

1) Developing e-commerce through improved delivery services

E-commerce is one of the main drivers of a more prosperous and competitive Europe, with a significant potential for contributing to economic growth and employment. Between 2013 and 2016, e-commerce is expected to reach an annual growth rate of more than 10 per cent across the EU.

Levels of e-commerce vary greatly across EU Member States. Whereas 82% of internet users in the UK bought something online in 2012, only 11% of internet users in Romania did so. EU cross-border e-commerce is growing more slowly than domestic e-commerce: while 54% of EU internet users had bought online from an e-retailer from their own country in 2012, only 14% had bought online from a cross-border e-retailer¹. A similar situation pertains to enterprises, with 14% of all enterprises having made electronic sales to their own country and only 6% to other EU countries².

The European Commission's Communication on e-commerce together with other EU initiatives³ identified the physical delivery⁴ of goods ordered online as one of the key elements for e-commerce growth. Delivery services offered by e-retailers are one of the fundamental factors influencing a consumer's decision to shop with them. Currently, delivery and product returns are amongst the top concerns of both e-shoppers and e-retailers in the EU⁵. The Commission's Green Paper of November 2012 on 'an integrated parcel delivery market for the growth of e-commerce in the EU' set out the main issues to be tackled. It placed particular emphasis on the cross-border delivery of parcels⁶, on the needs of SMEs, as well as on less advanced and accessible regions, arguing that e-commerce must be accessible to all citizens and businesses, regardless of their size and location.

Following the adoption of the Green Paper, a broad consensus has emerged among all parties concerned, both on the issues identified and on the urgent need to address them. Delivery operators, e-retailers and consumer organisations have engaged in constructive discussions at various dedicated conferences and other fora. Many operators have started to develop solutions that might better correspond to the expectations of their customers.

Through this Roadmap, the Commission aims to ensure that tangible improvements are made as quickly as possible. Action is required to provide e-retailers and consumers with high-quality,

¹ Eurostat [isoc_ec_ibuy]- 2012.

² Eurostat [isoc_ec_eseln2] -2011, updated in December 2013.

³ E-commerce communication, COM (2011) 942 final; Resolution (P7_TA(2010)0320) of 21/9/ 2010 on completing the internal market for e-commerce; Council of the EU, Conclusions on the Digital Single Market and Governance of the Single Market, 31/5/2012; ESC opinion INT 674 of 3/2013 on the Green Paper; Resolution (P7_TA-PROV(2012)0468) of 11/12/2012 on completing the Digital Single Market (2012/2030(INI)).

⁴ This initiative therefore does not cover the electronic "delivery" (e.g. electronic tickets, e-books).

⁵ Consumer market study on the functioning of e-commerce and Internet marketing and selling techniques in the retail of goods, Study on behalf of the European Commission (EC), DG SANCO, 2011; European Cross-border E-commerce, Accenture for the European Retail Round Table, 1/2012.

⁶ This Roadmap refers to parcels as any items (other than groceries) ordered on line and delivered to the consumer. A parcel is defined in the widest sense and includes all items weighing between 100g and 30 kg.

accessible and affordable parcel delivery services in cross-border delivery, taking due account of the needs of SMEs and of less advanced or accessible regions (including outermost regions⁷). Building on the progress already made since the adoption of the Green Paper, the Roadmap aims to guide and organise the way forward within **three main objectives**:

- Increased transparency and information for all actors along the e-commerce value chain
- Improved availability, quality and affordability of delivery solutions
- Enhanced complaint handling and redress mechanisms for consumers

The Roadmap attributes specific tasks and roles to the various stakeholders. The Commission will facilitate this collaborative process through dedicated fora and workshops, and will closely monitor progress. It will take stock after 18 months in order to assess whether additional measures are needed.

2) An incomplete market for cross-border parcel delivery

Main challenges experienced by consumers and e-retailers

The responses to the Green Paper consultation⁸ as well as specific surveys, studies and workshops confirm that delivery is a key factor in the overall development of e-commerce. Yet the expectations and needs of consumers and e-retailers are not always met in terms of speed, quality, reliability or cost of delivery.⁹ Problems with delivery represent the bulk of consumer complaints regarding online cross-border transactions received by the European Consumer Centres Network. A recent study by Copenhagen Economics confirmed that delivery-related problems heavily influence whether e-shoppers finalise their purchases or abandon attempts to buy on-line¹⁰

The main problems identified can be summarised as follows:

- Consumers often do not know what delivery options may be available to them, when and how a parcel may be delivered to them, and how they can return it should they so wish. They complain about long delivery times and the lack of information about the delivery process. They frequently consider prices for cross-border delivery, and delivery to rural or remote areas, as excessive. They complain about products being damaged or not delivered at all, and about the delivery of

⁷ The importance of the issue for outermost regions has been underlined in the Solbes Report and the June 2012 Commission Communication on outermost regions recalled the need to take into account the outermost regions dimension in all proposals linked to the Digital Single Market where relevant.

⁸ [Link to Summary report Green Paper consultation].

⁹ See, for example, the 2011 "Consumer market study on the functioning of e-commerce and internet marketing and selling techniques in the retail of goods" (on behalf of the EC, DG SANCO).

¹⁰ Copenhagen Economics (CE), A study on the state of play of EU parcel markets with particular emphasis on e-commerce, 2013, study on behalf of the EC, p.19.

wrong products. They are also often unaware of available complaints and redress mechanisms if things go wrong.

- E-retailers¹¹, in particular smaller ones, do not have sufficient information on the delivery services potentially available to them and have a limited choice and availability of delivery solutions of the quality (e.g. track-and-trace functionalities, flexible last-mile delivery options) and affordability required.

E-retailers are under time pressure. The viability of their business depends on the ability of the delivery sector to deliver at low cost, and in a convenient manner. This applies in particular to smaller players on the e-commerce market. Due to lower volumes, they have insufficient bargaining power to obtain substantial discounts from delivery operators and are thus confronted with less favourable delivery options. At the same time, they lack capacity to invest in a delivery network of their own. In an environment characterised by economies of scale, they are not able to be competitive vis-à-vis larger e-retailers.

Delivery operators have to find appropriate responses to the changing delivery expectations of their customers, while taking into account challenges such as the high costs of the 'first' and the 'last' mile, or the VAT exemption for public postal services. Cross-border delivery operations are affected by a high number of additional regulatory and administrative requirements, including customs¹², and the lack of interoperability between delivery companies (e.g. in terms of track and trace, or common labelling systems).

The changing regulatory environment

The regulatory framework for postal services as set out in the **Postal Services Directive**¹³ (hereafter: PSD) focuses primarily on letter mail and on safeguarding the universal postal service in Member States. A number of provisions, in particular within the scope of universal service requirements, are nevertheless relevant to parcel delivery. In practice, (only) 5-10% of cross-border parcel delivery flows fall under the universal service provisions because the minimum requirements of the PSD cover only the basic or so-called “over the counter” (thus mainly C2C) parcel services. Minimum universal service obligations are spelled out in Art. 3 of the Directive but Member States can go beyond these requirements. In addition, general provisions on consumer protection or the collection of statistical data also apply to parcel delivery services which all delivery operators – including postal operators – provide outside the scope of the universal service. In early 2014, the European Commission will publish an implementation report which will assess the effectiveness and relevance of the PSD in the context of a rapidly changing market environment.

¹¹ In this Roadmap, the term "e-retailer" refers to any retailer who sells at least part of his offer online and hence requires delivery services for the fulfilment of such transactions.

¹² Customs are addressed in the context of the preparation of the implementing rules on the Modernized Customs Code, VAT in current revision of the VAT. None of these aspects are specifically addressed in this Roadmap as they fall outside its scope.

¹³ Directive 97/67/EC, as amended by Directives 2002/39/EC and 2008/6/EC, OJ L 52, 27.2.2008, p.3

European consumers will further benefit, as from 13 June 2014, from the implementation of the **Consumer Rights Directive** (hereafter: CRD), which will significantly enhance information and transparency in the area of online shopping. This concerns notably the elimination of hidden charges and price transparency for distance and off-premises contracts; better refund rights (e.g. reimbursement of delivery costs where applicable) and clear information requirements concerning the costs of returning purchased items in case of a withdrawal. The recently adopted instruments on **Alternative and Online Dispute Resolution** (ADR and ODR) will further improve dispute resolution mechanisms.¹⁴

Environmental and transport aspects are important for the sustainable development of delivery services and for the reduction of the high costs of the 'first' and 'last' mile services.¹⁵ Any action proposed under this Roadmap should be fully coherent with related initiatives, notably in the context of the 2011 Transport White Paper¹⁶, and any follow-up initiatives (such as the e-freight initiative), or actions on city logistics, sustainable urban mobility planning (SUMP), air (noise/quality) regulation, as well as initiatives concerning customs procedures.

As regards **social aspects**, the demands of e-commerce in terms of flexibility, capacity and complexity have significant implications for employment conditions. Innovation in delivery companies and new business models could require changes in terms of jobs and working skills. Social partners play an important role in safeguarding responsible employment conditions and, at EU level, different projects and programmes are being developed¹⁷ which will also be continued as part of a regular dialogue within the framework of the European social dialogue committee for postal services, together with the reporting and promotion of best practices.

The need for action beyond the regulatory framework

The existing EU regulatory framework does not, however, address the full set of problems set out above. The **lack of inter-operability** between delivery operators is in fact much less a consequence of regulatory fragmentation than of traditional operational structures. Traditional (letter) postal markets have always been dominated by domestic traffic, and operational processes, including IT systems, have been optimised in the light of domestic circumstances. In the past cross-border flows concerned mainly letter mail, and the PSD has helped ensure that the quality of those flows has

¹⁴ Directive 2013/11/EU, Directive on consumer ADR, OJ L 165, 18.6.2013, p. 63; Regulation (EU) No 524/2013, Regulation on consumer ODR, OJ L 165, 18.6.2013, p. 51.

¹⁵ See in this context also the joint Conclusions on Environment of the European Social Dialogue committee for postal services, 4/4 2013.

¹⁶ White paper "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system".

¹⁷ See the joint declarations of the European sectoral social partners (PostEurope and UNI Europa Post & Logistics) concerning the evolution of the postal sector in Europe and their on-going work on matching skills and jobs in the European postal sector, supported by the Commission; Communications "An Agenda for new skills and jobs. A European contribution towards full employment" (COM(2010)682 final) and "Towards a Job-Rich Recovery" (COM(2012)173 final).

increased significantly over time. By contrast, cross-border parcel flows – especially B2C – have not played any significant role prior to the emergence of e-commerce.

The growing demand to provide high quality and affordable cross-border B2C parcel services therefore represents both a new challenge for **traditional postal operators** – and at the same time one of the most promising growth markets at times of steadily declining letter volumes. These operators are currently in the process of reorienting their processes towards efficient, traceable and yet affordable (cross-border) parcel delivery services.

Private parcel and express operators also need to adapt to the rapid growth of e-commerce driven B2C shipments, both nationally and across borders. These operators –who still dominate the cross-border parcel markets – need in particular to adapt their B2B oriented operations to the needs of individual customers, investing in sorting capacities, retail networks and parcel return systems.

In this context, this Roadmap aims to foster (on-going) improvements in both business models, and therefore also competition between the various players on the delivery market, for the benefit of e-retailers, final customers, and the economy at large.

3) The way forward: A Roadmap with actions for the next 18 months

An industry led process

The e-commerce driven cross-border parcel delivery market is characterised by rapid growth and innovation, but also by signs of some market failures, for instance in terms of information asymmetries. This Roadmap aims to reconcile the potential of market forces to bring about efficient solutions with the need to preserve crucial public policy interests – e.g. access to the benefits of e-commerce for less powerful players such as SMEs and inhabitants of remote/rural areas.

Following the identification of clear public policy objectives in the 2012 Green Paper, a group of postal operators and the International Post Corporation (IPC) recently made a series of commitments in some of the areas covered by the Green Paper (i.e., better information to e-retailers; efficient return solutions; track-and-trace functionalities for lighter parcels; improved labelling systems and better linked-up consumer complaint handling).

The Commission welcomes these commitments, as they appear to pave the way towards tackling a number of the issues addressed both in the Green Paper and in this Roadmap. It will closely monitor and assess the implementation of these commitments, and the extent to which they effectively address the needs and expectations of e-retailers and their customers. It should be noted that, as relevant as these commitments are, they do not address all the challenges identified in this Roadmap, nor do they bind or include all operators in the parcel delivery industry. In its final assessment, the Commission will also examine to what extent the solutions implemented by any part of the delivery industry will ensure a sufficient degree of inter-connectivity of other operators on the market (e.g. through open standards and/or non-discriminatory access) in order to provide e-retailers with effective cross-border delivery services.

It is also evident that some of the above-mentioned objectives cannot be achieved by delivery operators alone. Complementary (self-regulatory) action will be required from e-retailers, as well as from Member States and their regulatory bodies.

Implementation, monitoring, follow-up

The Commission will work closely with all of these stakeholders to make sure that the various work streams outlined below are implemented as quickly and effectively as possible.

During the implementation period and process, the Commission will take a number of facilitating measures. Given that the needs and expectations of e-retailers and consumers are central to this Roadmap, the Commission will liaise closely with them to ensure that any solutions developed in the context of this Roadmap are as relevant for them as possible. The **Postal User Forum**, organised by the Commission on an annual basis, will play a particularly important role in this context.

With regard to the industry-driven actions, the Commission will facilitate and monitor progress by organising **dedicated workshops**. These will involve all potentially concerned and interested delivery operators, experts in delivery operations and representatives of e-retailers and consumers. Through these workshops, the Commission will (i) ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the process, (ii) seek consensus on the precise nature of the tasks to be accomplished, and (iii) take stock of progress achieved.

Concerning those actions that involve Member States, regulators and competition authorities, the Commission will organise regular discussions at the meetings of the **European Regulators Group for Postal Services**, the **Member States Committee** set up under the PSD, and the **Expert Group** set up under the E-commerce Directive. Regular meetings and information exchanges on the social and environmental dimensions as well as on transport-related issues in the broader context will continue with the social partners and in particular with the **European social dialogue committee for postal services**.

The Commission will monitor developments during an **18 months period** from the publication of this Roadmap. If certain actions have not been fully accomplished by then, or if they have not proven to be sufficiently effective in the light of the objectives identified, the Commission will consider appropriate corrective or additional actions to remedy market failures.

All the actions proposed to be taken up by the Commission in this document are consistent and compatible with the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (2007-2013) and the new MFF 2014-2020. All actions are without prejudice to the application of the EU competition rules. While most of the actions are focused on the B2C aspects, some may also be applicable in the B2B context.

Objective I: Increase transparency, information and information exchange for all actors along the e-commerce value chain

The consumer is the 'initiator' of any online purchase but is not necessarily in a position to control the delivery of goods ordered. This is because delivery is based on a contract between the e-retailer and the delivery operator(s). Providing sufficient, clear and comprehensive information on the range and characteristics of the services provided will help consumers to overcome their concerns about delivery. The full implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive will ensure that consumers are much better informed about prices in particular (e.g. for returns). Yet e-retailers are well advised to go beyond legal information requirements where customers so desire.

E-retailers need to respond to the expectations of consumers not only with regard to information, but also by offering simple, affordable and reliable shipping services. A number of appropriate delivery solutions are already available on the market, but they are often unknown to e-retailers, especially SMEs.¹⁸ E-retailers need better information about available delivery services, alternative delivery operators, consolidation options and intermediaries, and key performance indicators (on speed, return features, tariff levels, etc.).

At the same time, the overall information on (cross-border) parcel markets and services need to be enhanced. The parcel delivery market is currently non-transparent. Data on parcels, notably on volumes, tariffs and terminal payments¹⁹, is not available for regulators or other competent bodies, because postal operators do not publish or provide data that is outside the scope of the USO (parcel) regime. However, the rapid development of e-commerce calls for more transparency of (cross-border) parcel flows so as to make the supervisory framework fit for purpose, to allow for clear market definitions and to monitor whether fair competition is being ensured.

Established delivery companies as well as new market entrants need a predictable regulatory environment. Recent studies and reports²⁰ and contributions to the Green Paper have confirmed that entry barriers still exist for certain postal delivery markets. Alternative postal operators as well as e-retailers argue that there is room for improvement with regard to the application of the PSD. The application of the national provisions implementing the Postal Services Directive is very much focused on the provision of letter mail services and safeguarding the provision of universal service. National regulators, national competition authorities and the Commission will need to be in a position to identify regulatory concerns and distortions of competition in parcel delivery markets and to apply corrective measures where necessary. Competition concerns could for example arise with regard to abuses of market power, such as illegal cross-subsidies, unjustifiably high prices (i.e. in violation of the principles of Article 14(3)(b)(iv) of the PSD), predatory tariffs for (cross-border) parcel delivery or unjustified refusal of access to delivery networks or their key elements (e.g. address database).

¹⁸ See FTI, Study on cross-border parcel delivery, 2011.

¹⁹ Delivery operators that send parcels to another country remunerate the destination delivery operator for processing and delivering that item in cases where they do not run an integrated delivery network. This system of remuneration will be called terminal payments for the purpose of this document (e.g. terminal dues represent similar remuneration in case of letter mail; under the UPU system terminal payments for parcels are called inward land rates).

²⁰ WIK, The role of Regulators, 2011; Study on the main developments in the postal sector, 2013.

Art. 22a of the PSD obliges Member States to ensure that postal service providers provide "all the information, *in particular* to the national regulatory authorities, *including* financial information and information concerning the provision of the universal service to ensure conformity with the Directive and for (...) clearly defined statistical purposes". Its application is not limited to the USO but it can also be used to include information on other postal (parcel) items; neither is it strictly limited to designated universal service providers. With regard to paragraph 3, Member States shall ensure that national regulatory authorities provide the Commission, upon request, with the appropriate and relevant information necessary for it to carry out its tasks under this Directive. On this basis, Member States should tap the full potential to ensure transparency on the overall parcel delivery markets. The Commission will support Member States in establishing a statistical framework which covers all relevant parcel data. This work stream will be carried out in close co-operation with the European Regulators Group for Postal Services (ERGP) which has already started to reflect on a common statistical data collection methodology, which would be applied by all national regulators.

Action 1: Improve information for consumers on the characteristics and costs of different delivery and return solutions offered on the web-sites of e-retailers

E-retailers should:

- provide easily understandable information on delivery and return options. Information shall cover all relevant features of the different delivery options (notably concerning the delivery period, any tracking possibilities, different options for last-mile delivery, delivery service and return solution tariffs), and their associated tariffs. This objective could be achieved inter alia by:
 - adopting, during the next 18 months, a (voluntary) code of conduct or code of good practice designed and followed by e-retailers. The code should address the comprehensiveness and presentation of information on delivery and return services, while ensuring that the specific needs and constraints of smaller e-retailers are taken into account: Although smaller e-retailers might find it challenging to provide such information, the provision of key minimum information appears to be in their own interest if they wish to gain the trust of their (potential) customers;
 - including relevant delivery requirements in the design and operation of e-commerce trust marks;
 - including options for consumers to provide feedback to e-retailers about their delivery experience.

The Commission will:

- Organise dedicated meetings with e-retailers and consumer representatives in order to support these work stream(s) and measure progress.

Action 2: Improve information for e-retailers on the delivery services available to them

While taking into account potential synergies with existing structures and related initiatives such as e.g. the eFreight initiative of the Commission²¹,

Delivery operators and e-retailers should (jointly):

- develop a shared definition of basic concepts and features of delivery services that are based on consumer needs rather than on logistical processes. This could cover areas such as parcel dimensions (size, weight), period of delivery (speed), or additional services offered (e.g. in terms of tracking, insurance cover, etc.), and would help both e-retailers and consumers to compare offers and make informed choices.
- ensure better access to information for e-retailers at national and cross-border level. Information shall include: delivery solutions available in EU Member States in terms of delivery periods (speed), tariffs, return features, general conditions of access to these services, etc.). It should include the services provided by all relevant operators, including alternative delivery operators, consolidators, parcel brokers and other intermediaries, etc. This objective could be achieved inter alia by:
 - web comparison tools (on prices and/or service features);
 - platforms (web portals), providing e-retailers with access to publicly available information, featuring a minimum set of data and information as identified above.

Presentation tools should be open and available to all e-retailers, and any delivery operator or intermediary should be allowed to present its services through this tool based on non-discriminatory access conditions. These tools should take the consumer dimension into account.

Industry is encouraged to take account of standards as developed in the e-Freight initiative context, as these standards provide the basis for developing similar web tools such as multimodal freight journey planners.

The Commission will:

- Organise dedicated meetings and workshops in order to bring together all relevant stakeholders, including notably private delivery operators; clarify the precise deliverables expected (including their timing), and take stock of progress achieved;
- Focus the agenda of the annual Postal User Forum on the assessment of progress made.

²¹ eFreight initiative of the Commission; <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/media/consultations/doc/2013-01-17-efreight/background.pdf>, see also the recent initiative of IPC as mentioned above (section D).

Action 3: Increased transparency on (cross border) delivery markets, delivery services and quality standards on the basis of the Postal Services Directive

Member States should:

- based on preparatory methodological work already being carried out by the ERGP, define a clear statistical framework, on the basis of Art. 22a of the PSD, enabling national regulatory authorities to collect relevant market data on domestic and cross-border parcel flows from all postal service providers active on the B2C and B2B parcel markets, including intermediaries, consolidators and alternative operators. Data to be collected should include at least volumes, tariffs, terminal payments, services offered, general conditions of access to the services and quality standard levels;
- take steps to ensure that users and postal service providers are regularly and transparently given sufficiently detailed information on the particular features of the universal service offered by the universal service provider(s), especially concerning basic parcel delivery services. Designated universal service providers should more clearly present different parcel delivery solutions that are part of the USO, as well as their service characteristics, including tariffs.

National regulatory authorities should:

- annually publish the relevant market data on domestic and cross-border parcel flows from all postal service providers active on the B2C and B2B parcel markets, including intermediaries, consolidators and alternative operators.

In parallel, the Commission will:

- launch a study which will address requirements for and tools to foster transparency, e.g. through the establishment of a scoreboard on delivery performance;
- address (cross-border) parcel delivery developments and challenges, in the context of the PSD implementation report, to be published in the first quarter of 2014. The Report seeks to place recent developments in the larger context of EU postal policy and the changing nature of the postal sector. While this Roadmap will provide the necessary action on parcel delivery from the e-commerce angle, the implementation report will take this dimension into account when assessing the overall situation and future challenges for the postal sector.
- ensure that the European Group of Regulators for Postal Services focuses on cross-border parcels, in particular by:
 - reporting on quality of service performance and statistical data;
 - conducting a review to determine if there is a market failure in cross-border parcel

delivery markets that may require further action.

Objective II: Improving the availability, quality and affordability of delivery solutions

E-retailers, notably SMEs and micro-companies located in remoter areas or peripheral regions, can only be successful if affordable and efficient delivery solutions are available to them.

Delivery operators, chambers of commerce and e-retailer associations are already establishing good practices to support SMEs going online and to enhance convenience for the final consumer.

However, in view of the constantly evolving needs and expectations of both e-retailers and their customers, sustained innovation in delivery processes, products and services is indispensable. Enhanced interoperability between delivery operators is essential to further develop delivery solutions that respond to the needs of e-retailers and consumers in terms of quality (greater speed, efficiency, reliability), affordability and accessibility²², and thus ensure consumer convenience, a high quality final delivery (“last mile”) and fully functioning return procedures.

Currently, a number of EU-level initiatives to increase interoperability and innovative data flow solutions are being rolled out.²³ Best practices and technological research programmes where logistics operators and e-retailers can jointly develop projects have been adopted. Organisations such as the IPC have recently launched further projects in this area. Cross-border trade flows would greatly benefit from open interfaces for information flows, inter-carrier track and trace solutions, labelling systems, better pre-advice systems for handling incoming cross-border volumes and better/simpler return operations. In addition, a more systematic aggregation of volumes of small retailers would allow them to access volume discounts.

Consequently, fair competition within the EU, and the establishment of standards enhancing inter-connected intra-EU trade flows, are bound to have a positive impact on the EU’s international competitiveness in both the e-commerce and delivery markets.

Enhanced co-operation at ERGP level between national regulatory authorities will ensure that the existing regulatory instruments are better enforced in the cross-border context.

Action 4: Promote enhanced interoperability of parcel delivery operations to support efficient cross-border trade

Delivery operators and e-retailers should:

- develop solutions to interconnect information systems and open interfaces to allow data

²² Interoperability problems, such as the existing multitude of addressing and labelling standards and the insufficient interoperability of information systems, increase delivery costs and thereby delivery prices paid by e-retailer.

²³ See notably the eFreight initiatives; <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/media/consultations/doc/2013-01-17-efreight/background.pdf> ; CE E-Commerce Study 2013.

exchange between information systems in a multiple operator environment; in particular, they should develop cross-border solutions for tracking and tracing, labelling and related processes calling for enhanced harmonization;

- develop solutions for more effective returns, which may also include co-operation and consolidation options with a view to reducing the costs of last-mile delivery.

All solutions envisaged should be based on open standards and infrastructures and non-discriminatory access to these. In particular, industry is encouraged to take due account of developments under the e-Freight initiative. Affordable track-and-trace solutions should be made available in particular for parcels below 2kg, which represent a significant proportion of e-commerce driven delivery.

The Commission will:

- monitor and supervise progress on a regular basis;
- give a mandate to the European Committee for Standardization in accordance with Art. 20 of the PSD to develop, where feasible, voluntary standards concerning the specific features of parcel delivery services, namely a common address system in the EU.

Objective III: Improving complaint handling and redress mechanisms for consumers

Nearly 40% of consumers indicate that problems with delivery prevent them from shopping online²⁴. Consumers are worried in particular that they will not have sufficient protection "when delivery goes wrong", e.g. in case of non-delivery, delivery delays or inappropriate return options.

Building on the new consumer protection legislation referred to above, the involved parties should work together to provide consumer friendly solutions for handling complaints and potential disputes., In this area, the IPC is currently working on improved consumer complaint handling by linking up the call centres of participating operators and common customer service systems for (tracked) products, but other on-going projects should be identified and options to build on existing solutions need to be further explored.

Action 5: Enhance consumer protection²⁵

Delivery operators, e-retailers and consumer associations should (jointly):

- ensure better co-operation with regard to complaint handling and consumer

²⁴ Special Eurobarometer 398, 2013 for 2012; 47% in 2010 (Cons Focus, 11/ 2010).

²⁵ This Roadmap does not include any specific actions concerning the product safety, which were already identified in the Communication from the Commission on 20 actions for safer and compliant products for Europe, 13.2.2013, COM(2013) 76 final.

protection systems.

Member States should:

- encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for parcel delivery services as they are being developed in the context of the implementation of the Directive on consumer ADR.

The Commission will:

- highlight delivery-related issues (e.g. transparency requirements concerning information on costs of delivery or return arrangements, liability of delivery operators) in the context of the forthcoming (2014) guidance on the implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive addressed to Member States' enforcement authorities;
- request the European Regulators' Group for Postal Services (ERGP) to analyse consumer complaints connected to (cross-border) parcel delivery;
- give a mandate to the European Committee for Standardization in accordance with Art. 20 of the PSD to develop (voluntary) standardisation tools for measuring complaints concerning damaged, delayed or lost parcels.

ANNEX: Table of actions

Actors:	Objective I: Increase transparency, information	Objective II: Improve availability, quality, affordability of delivery solutions	Objective III: Improving complaint handling and redress mechanisms for consumers
Delivery operators, jointly with e-retailers	Ensure better access to information on delivery solutions for e-retailers at national and cross-border level (new/enhanced information tools; common standards)	Develop solutions for better interoperability (interconnected information systems; cross-border solutions for tracking and tracing, labelling and related processes calling for enhanced standardization; more effective return solutions; "last mile" delivery)	Enhance dispute resolution mechanisms and consumer protection systems
E-retailers	Ensure appropriate information to consumers on e-retailers' Web-sites		
Member States, regulatory authorities	<p>Enhanced provision of information on parcel delivery services and parcel markets at national level</p> <p><i>MS:</i> - build on ongoing ERGP work to define statistical framework for collection of relevant market data on domestic and cross-border parcel delivery from all postal service providers</p> <p>- set clear national quality of service standards for (cross-border) USO parcel delivery and ensure independent monitoring;</p> <p><i>NRAs:</i> annually publish the results of the statistical data and of the measurement of the quality of service standards</p>		<p><i>MS:</i> - implement and encourage the application of the information requirements for distance and off-premises contracts arising from the Consumer Rights Directive even before the actual date of the entry into force of these provisions;</p> <p>- develop, in line with Art. 19 of the PSD and the ADR, (Alternative Dispute Resolution) mechanisms for all parcel delivery services</p>
European Commission	<p>- launch study addressing transparency on parcel markets and services;</p> <p>- publish 5th application report on the implementation of the PSD, addressing the parcel segment comprehensively;</p> <p>- ask the European Group of</p>	<p>give a mandate to European standardization bodies to develop voluntary standards for common address systems</p>	<p>- highlight delivery-related aspects in the context of guidance on the implementation of the CRD, published in 2014;</p> <p>-request the ERGP to analyse consumer complaints involved in cross border delivery;</p>

	<p>Regulators for Postal services (ERGP) to report on quality of service performance and statistical data for parcels and to conduct a review of cross border parcel delivery markets</p>		<p>- give a mandate to European standardization bodies to develop voluntary standards for complaints measuring</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor and supervise progress on a regular basis; - Organise dedicated meetings and workshops in order to bring together all relevant stakeholders, clarify the precise deliverables expected (including their timing), and take stock of progress achieved; - Focus the agenda of the annual Postal User Forum on the assessment of progress made; - Discuss issues relevant to Member States within the Committees set up under the Postal Services and E-commerce Directives; - Ensure that the 2014/2015 work programmes of the ERGP take due account of the tasks identified in this Roadmap; - Report on progress made within 18 months from the adoption of this Roadmap; - Identify additional measures (legislative or non-legislative) should the implementation and impact of this Roadmap stay below expectations. 		