

# **Standardization as a strategic direction and the application of standards in the Post of Serbia**

**Summary:** The European Union's standardization and regulation play a key role in the improvement of postal services by ensuring reliable parcel transportation and the integration of postal networks at an international level. The harmonization of postal systems, operational procedures, and processes between EU member states enables a seamless operation of cross-border services and contributes to the overall service quality improvement.

The European regulation continuously adapts to technological development and market requirements, especially in the context of intense e-commerce growth and the demand for faster, more flexible, and more economical delivery models. In accordance with that, the compatibility with international standards provides a push towards the application of contemporary practices and the improvement of business processes.

Digital transformation, standardization, and consolidation with European regulations are key determinants of the modernization of the Post of Serbia. Their interconnectedness directly impacts the improvements in efficiency, sustainability, and competitiveness of the national postal operator on the regional and global markets.

The paper especially focuses on the activities of the Standards Committee and the related documents – KS A331 Postal Services, which, in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, play an important role in the consolidation of national regulations with the standards set by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and other relevant organizations.

The paper emphasizes the importance of this factor for the strategic development of the Post of Serbia and the optimization of its operations.

## **Introduction**

The role of standards in the technological development and regulation of the market has a special significance in the context of founding and consolidating the European single market. Standardization contributes to user/customer experience by reducing costs, fostering innovation, and expanding available choices. At the same time, the standardization process prompts higher market competitiveness and ensures the right conditions for a dynamic and efficient business environment.

A standard is defined as a document adopted through a consensus and approved by an appropriate organization which outlines the conditions, specifications, directives, or characteristics to be used to ensure that materials, products, processes, or services meet their purpose. [1] Standardization is a collection of coordinated activities directed at creating standards and related documents. [2]

At the international level, the most important organizations in charge of developing and publishing standards are the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). ISO standards encompass instructions and specifications related to a wide array of activities, including quality management, information security, and environmental protection. IEC standards are focused on technical specifications in electric and electronic technologies, such as security, electromagnetic compatibility, and energy efficiency. Joint ISO and IEC activities are realized

through technical committees, such as the ISO/IEC JTC 1 (Joint Technical Committee 1) - an international body for the standardization of information and communication technologies.

The European framework for postal service standardization includes three organizations recognized by the European Union and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA):

- European Committee for Standardization (CEN),
- European Electrotechnical Committee for Standardization (CENELEC), and
- European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI).

CEN develops standards in a wide array of areas, including transportation, packaging, ICT, healthcare, and energy. CENELEC prepares voluntary standards within the scope of electrical engineering that simplify trade, open new markets, and support the development of the European single market [5]. ETSI ensures an open and inclusive environment for the development of globally applicable standards in the area of information and communication technologies [6].

Members of European standardization bodies actively coordinate their positions and improve cooperation within ISO and IEC. Their joint goal is to improve and solidify the role of standardization as a strategic tool in the realization of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development until 2030.

National standardization bodies from 34 European countries are members of CEN and CENELEC, so European standards and the accompanying documents are applied in all member countries.

In the Republic of Serbia, the official standardization organization is the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) [7]. Within ISS, expert boards and standardization committees are formed as the bodies in charge of preparing and adopting Serbian standards. They are obligated to consider all international and European standards in their area of activity (ISO, IEC, ISO/IEC JTC 1, CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI).

For postal services in Serbia, the authoritative body is the **Committee for Standards and Related Documents KS A331 – Postal services (Committee KS A331)**.

### **Application of National and International Standards in the Post of Serbia**

The basic activity of the public postal operator Post of Serbia is the provision of postal services, which encompasses all activities that the service provider undertakes when working with parcels, from reception to delivery, both nationally and internationally [3]. Strategic areas of development of the Post of Serbia are directed at increasing competitiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Accordingly, key priority areas have been identified to enable the modernization of services, improvement of customer experience, and maintenance of high standards of operations. These areas include the application of the latest technologies, environmental protection, quality and accessibility improvements, as well as workforce potential and infrastructure development. The strategy is directed towards integrated and sustainable growth, with the ultimate goal of making the Post of Serbia a reliable and innovative partner in national and international postal systems.

The key priority areas in strategic development are:

- digitalization and technological innovation;

- sustainability and ecological responsibility through the application of environmental standards in all areas of operation;
- quality and accessibility improvements, along with the consolidation with leading European operations through the application of national and international standards, thus increasing efficiency, reliability, and transparency;
- strengthening organizational and workforce capacities;
- infrastructure and logistics network development.

One of the main notions in the Law on Postal Services of the Republic of Serbia is the obligation to consolidate operations with Serbian and international standards [4]. This ensures the reliability, interoperability, and quality of postal services. By combining European regulatory frameworks, international directives, and national initiatives by Committee KS A331, the Post of Serbia has been laying the groundwork for a modern, inclusive, and resistant postal system that can meet the demands of today and tomorrow.

According to the Rulebook on Postal Service Quality Parameters [8], the Standards SRPS EN 13850:2014, SRPS EN 14508:2014, and SRPS EN 14012:2014 are used to estimate the fulfillment of said parameters in the Post of Serbia.

A project for the quality management system implementation in accordance with the Standard ISO 9001:2008 was launched in March 2014, with the goal of improving the efficiency and efficacy of operations through process approach and customer demand fulfillment, i.e. increase in customer satisfaction.

In 2018, Post of Serbia realized a project for the expansion of application of quality management systems in accordance with Standard ISO 9001:2015, and in 2024, the organization was successfully certified for the new three-year certification cycle 2024-2027.

### **Committee for Standards and Related Documents KS A331 – Postal Services**

In accordance with strategic priorities, CEN and CENELEC have developed a wide net of partnerships with national and regional standardization bodies. Such international cooperation enables the exchange of expert knowledge, consolidation of technical solutions, and coordination of work on standards beyond geographical and regulatory borders. What especially stands out is the collaboration within the postal service sector, which has been realized through the consolidation with the standards of the Universal Postal Union, the specialized United Nations organization in charge of defining the basic rules of international postal services and the global postal network.

Within the international system, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) plays a vital role as the national body in charge of development, adoption, and application of standards in the Republic of Serbia. In 2012, the Committee for Standards and Related Documents KS A331 – Postal Services was founded as a part of ISS with the main task of developing and publishing Serbian standards in terminology, technical specifications, and processes in the provision of postal services. Additionally, the Committee is tasked with translating, consolidating, and implementing European standards in this area.

The work of KS A331 is divided into two working groups – the technical-technological and the scientific-technical group – which coordinate their activities, follow the development and revision of standards, and keep other Committee members in the loop. The work of the Committee also encompasses representatives

from the ISS, the relevant government department, the public postal operator, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Postal Services (RATEL), and higher educational institutions.

So far, the Committee has developed and published a total of 82 standards, seven of which are in Serbian, two of which are national standards, and 15 of which have been withdrawn since [9].

### **The Task of Committee KS A331**

Committee KS A331 also functions as the key connection between international and national practices, following the latest solutions coming out of UPU, as well as ISO, IEC, CEN, and CENELEC. Its tasks include technical cooperation with relevant institutions, consideration of standard proposals, and following the application and consolidation of existing regulations with the European and international ones.

The Committee has a significant impact on the operations and development of postal operators in the Republic of Serbia, especially the PE Post of Serbia, through defining terminology, technical and qualitative conditions for service provision, as well as parcel processing, delivery, and returns procedures. The standards adopted by the Committee improve the quality of postal services, boost the efficiency and transparency of operations, and spark the development of a competitive postal service market. The postal network, as a key infrastructure, enables further development of information society and follows contemporary trends in digitalization, door-to-door services, real-time tracking, and customer support improvements.

The work of the Committee is based on the following strategic priorities:

- adoption and revision of priority standards in accordance with standardization rules;
- consolidation of Serbian standards with European and international ones, including the withdrawal of outdated standards;
- active participation in the work of European technical committees (CEN/TC 331 and CEN/SSA 03);
- representing the interests of the Republic of Serbia in international forums and organizations.

A special emphasis falls on the ecological aspects of the postal sector, in accordance with the National program for the development of postal services for the 2026-2030 period, which prescribes:

- raising awareness and improving responsible business operations;
- realizing educational activities and public campaigns;
- quantifying the impact of the postal sector on the environment.

### **The Role of Committee KS A331 in the Green Transition and the Development of Standardized Terminology in the Postal Sector**

The Committee KS A331 – Postal Services has adopted the translation of the standard *Requirements for electronic advanced data (EDA) in postal operations, in particular compliant to security and customs requirements*, which lays the groundwork for the improvement of interoperability and consolidation of

postal systems with the increasingly strict international regulations in the scope of security and customs supervision.

The first version of the national standard SRPS A.L3.002 Postal Services – Terminology, published in 2020, is a supporting document to the translations of technical standards and international postal regulations into Serbian. A revised and improved version of this standard was adopted in 2025 [10].

The translation and adaptation of European standards in accordance with the green transition, sustainable development, and new regulatory frameworks have been defined as priority for the upcoming period.

Especially important is the new European standard developed in response to the challenges in environmental protection and climate politics titled EN 17837:2024 Postal Services – Parcel Delivery Environmental Footprint – Methodology for Calculation and Reporting of Greenhouse gas (GHG) Emissions and Air Pollutants in Parcel Delivery Logistics. To ensure that this standard enables a new step towards the decarbonization of logistics and improvement of environmental performance of the postal sector, the Committee has carried out its translation and consolidation. More precise information enables a better identification of “emission hotspots” in the delivery chain, along with support in enforcing efficient measures for emission reduction. Additionally, the standard enables postal service providers to improve reporting to customers by offering specific data on each parcel, rather than averages. Such data directly supports customers in realizing their environmental goals and obligations within the ESG politics. EN 17837:2023 was developed by CEN/TC 331 Postal Services, [11] whose secretariat is headed by Association Française de Normalisation – AFNOR [11].

The major contributions of the standard EN 17837:2023 include:

- Defining the methodology for the precise calculation of GHG and other pollutant emissions in each phase of the parcel delivery chain;
- Enabling reporting at an individual parcel level, which is a significant innovation over the previous practice of aggregated data (e.g. ton-kilometer);
- Incites transparency in communication with clients and contributes to better consolidation with ESG principles (environmental, social, and governance).

### **The Committee KS A331 Plan of Action in the Context of Mandate M/590 by the European Committee and Postal Service Development 2026-2030**

In accordance with the activities of the working group for the development of the Proposal for the Program of the Development of Postal Services in the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2026-2030 and the accompanying Action Plan, the relevant government department received The Committee KS A331 Action Plan, which has been defined in accordance with:

- standardization mandate M/590 by the European Committee and
- priorities and activities of CEN/TC 331.

In order to improve the internal market and standardization, the European Committee releases formal requests for standardization (a.k.a. mandates) to European standardization bodies.

The decision of the Committee on the application of M/590, dated January 18, 2023, officially mandates CEN/TC 331 – Postal Services to develop and revise standards related to the following:

- postal service standardization and
- service quality improvements according to:
- Directive 97/67/EC and
- Regulation (EU) 2018/644.

Mandate M/590, within the Committee KS A331 Action Plan for 2026-2027, prescribes the following activities:

- 2026: translation and adoption of standard SRPS CEN/TR 18085:2024 – Postal services – Safe, secured and contactless delivery of postal items;
- 2027: translation and adoption of standard SRPS CEN/TS 18055-1:2024 – Postal services – Harmonized track and trace events – Part 1: Forward flows.

Activities of the Committee KS A331 are directed toward the improvement and modernization of the postal sector in accordance with contemporary European and global standards. Of priority is the consolidation of national standards with the European regulatory framework, which enables better integration of domestic operators into a unified market.

The planned measures aim to develop reliable, safe, and efficient postal services in response to the ever growing demand and dynamic technological development.

## **Conclusion**

The Post of Serbia has been facing significant challenges and possibilities in the context of global changes in the postal sector.

Postal service standards are a key prerequisite for the modernization and sustainable development of the sector. Committee KS A331 actively works on the consolidation of national laws with European and international standards.

The application of standards contributes to transparency, efficiency, and environmental sustainability, as prescribed by global green policies and digital transformation.

Standardization also enables improvements to the addressing system, terminology, and real-time tracking, which directly improves customer experience and strengthens trust. Collaboration with bodies such as CEN and UPU positions Serbia as a responsible and innovative member of the global postal community.

Through the adoption of strategic directives from UPU and application of relevant international standards, the Post of Serbia can achieve successful digital transformation, boost efficiency and competitiveness, and position itself as a regional leader.

This process isn't just technological, it is also socially significant – it embodies responsibility to the society, commerce, and government. It is only through the integration of vision, innovations, and standards that the Post of Serbia can remain a stable, sustainable, and significant actor in the postpandemic, digital, and globally connected world of postal services.

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