

# European Postal Services and Social Responsibilities

How post offices enhance  
their economic, social and  
environmental role in society

With the support of the European Social Fund, PIC Adapt

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The  
Corporate  
Citizenship  
Company

in cooperation with

**LA POSTE** 



with the support of



■ This report was prepared by CSR Europe in cooperation with the Corporate Citizenship Company in the framework of a yearlong project initiated by La Poste and with the support of the EU ADAPT Programme



# European Postal Services

## and Social Responsibilities



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# FOREWORD

The social and political changes brought about by globalisation have raised new questions as well as expectations about governance and social responsibilities. More and more companies of all sizes and sectors are recognising the importance of their role in society and the real 'bottom line' benefits of adopting a proactive approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The European postal sector is evolving rapidly, and national postal services are facing new challenges. In the new context of greater liberalisation, and in some cases privatisation, post offices nowadays are adapting and deepening their strategies and practices both as socially responsible organisations and as key drivers of economic and social development.

Responding to the Special Appeal by Heads of State and Government on CSR (Lisbon Summit, March 2000) and in line with the European Commission Green Paper on CSR (July 2001), this report gathers the outcomes of a yearlong dialogue and sharing of practices between European post offices. The project was initiated by the French post office, La Poste, in co-operation with CSR Europe and with the support of The Corporate Citizenship Company.

We are convinced that the wealth of practices collected will greatly improve understanding across Europe of the wider influence that national post offices can have and help foster wider commitment among post offices on Corporate Social Responsibility. In addition to their essential role as postal service providers, they are in a unique position to contribute to the new European Strategic Goal for the next decade, to "become the most competitive and inclusive economy in the world".



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the conclusions from a yearlong study of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Europe's postal sector. **The aim of the project** was to improve understanding across Europe of the wider contribution that post offices can make, in addition to their essential role as providers of postal and related services. It is hoped that the success of this initiative will inspire further collaboration.

The **impetus for the initiative** came from the EU ADAPT programme, a project with transnational elements instigated by the French national post office, La Poste. It consisted of a survey of current practice among the 15 national postal services in the EU, desk research into trends in the sector, and two roundtable discussions with participants from the majority of European post offices.

The **survey of current CSR activities** found a wide diversity of practices and approaches that are having a positive impact at present. In summary, the following trends are apparent:

- the strong emphasis on **employment-related aspects** of Corporate Social Responsibility focuses on valuing diversity and ensuring equal opportunity, training staff for current skills and future employability, tackling health and safety, and involving employees through consultation
- several post offices have begun addressing specific actions to meet the **special needs of customers** who may face disadvantage or difficulty accessing services on account of disability, remote location or language barriers
- some post offices have developed **outreach activities** into their local neighbourhoods, either as part of economic regeneration and community development strategies, or as a corporate community contribution alongside employee volunteer activity – depending on the differing national and cultural traditions
- progress on minimising **environmental impacts** and reporting performance seems strongest in northern European countries.

Looking to **future progress**, the postal sector faces a period of continuing change at a time of growing demands in society for greater accountability and transparency. The study has found that the opportunity now exists to mainstream these practices more actively in post offices' overall business strategy, and then to communicate them more widely both inside and outside the organisation.

Given the success of the discussions and benchmarking so far undertaken, it is recommended that the post offices continue to exchange information and share best practice, and, by working together, to enhance still further their contribution to society.

## **Introduction:**

Background, methodology  
and aim of the report

# INTRODUCTION

## Background, methodology and aim of the report

This report presents the conclusions from a yearlong project of what Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) means for Europe's postal sector at a time of great change. It has encompassed a process of research covering developments in the postal sector as well as the changing public policy agenda at Commission and national government levels.

An initial data collection of CSR practices within the European posts drew on information in the companies' annual reports, their websites and the website of the Universal Postal Union. Every European post office was then contacted and invited to check, complete and update their draft country profile.

In parallel, two daylong roundtable discussions involving nine European post offices were organised, with the meetings held in Paris on March 2 and July 6, 2001.

The impetus for the initiative came from the EU ADAPT programme, a project with transnational elements instigated by the French national post office, La Poste. The initiative was co-ordinated by CSR Europe with support from The Corporate Citizenship Company.

The aim of this report is to improve understanding across Europe of the wider contribution that post offices can make, in addition to their essential role as providers of postal and related services. Other industry sectors have already learned from such an exchange of knowledge, sometimes through a formal benchmarking process. It is hoped that the success of this initiative will inspire further collaboration.

### ■ About the initiative co-ordinators

Founded in 1995 as a result of the European Declaration of Businesses against Social Exclusion, **CSR Europe** is a business driven network whose mission is to help companies achieve profitability, sustainable growth and human progress by placing Corporate Social Responsibility in the mainstream of business practice. Through its 47 company members<sup>1</sup>, 15 National Partner Organisations, nine benchmarking programmes and online Resource Centre, CSR Europe is a reference on CSR strategies and practices for companies throughout Europe. ([www.csreurope.org](http://www.csreurope.org))

**The Corporate Citizenship Company** is a specialist agency offering research, consultancy and publications to help corporations succeed as good citizens in a changing global society. Clients include many of Europe's 'blue chip' companies. Major projects include the London Benchmarking Group of 50 companies collaborating on the evaluation of their community involvement schemes, and three research projects involving more than 20 companies on the human resource management impact of CSR. ([www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk](http://www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk))

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<sup>1</sup>Members include: Levi Strauss, BT, Johnson & Johnson, Caisse des Dépôts, BP, IBM, Volkswagen, Société Générale de Belgique, Shell International, Accor, Portugal Telecom, L'Oréal, Suez, Banco Ambrosiano Veneto, Groupe Danone, Merita Nordbanken, Nike, Cariplo, France Telecom, Glaverbel, Telecom Italia, Groupe Casino, Rabobank, Diageo, Manpower, Friends Ivory & Sime, KPMG, PricewaterhouseCoopers, La Poste, Microsoft, Nyforetagar Centrum, Bracco, Randstad, Motorola, ABB, Gruppo Unipol, P&G, Group 4 Falck, Coca-Cola, Caisse National d'Epargne, EDF, Euronext, General Motors, IntesaBci, Intracom, LVMH, Mattel, Norsk Hydro ASA, Swedish Jobs & Society, Unicredito.

# Trends in Corporate Social Responsibility at European and international levels

# SECTION TWO

## 2.1 A new paradigm in Europe

European markets are undergoing continuous transformation due to economic globalisation, technological revolution, and demographic and political change. The socio-economic impact of these changes has not, however, been universally positive, giving rise to stark disparities both within European countries and between them.

In almost every European country, it is possible to find examples of world-class social services and competitive economic activity, alongside growing evidence of social exclusion and environmental deterioration. These disparities affect not only the political and social objectives of the European Union and its member states, but also impact on the economic competitiveness of the region as a whole. As such, the widening gap between the beneficiaries of changes and those excluded from recent developments is increasingly moving onto the business agenda.

With globalisation, the balance of power is shifting increasingly between the state, the market and civil society. Traditional power hierarchies are being replaced by a more complex, multi-relational balance of power. Citizens and corporations are playing an active role in shaping socio-economic change and addressing problems that were previously seen as the preserve of government.

Liberalisation -and in some cases privatisation- of services of general economic interest, such as transport networks, energy, communications and the postal services, have also brought the corporations providing these services new challenges. Challenges on how to address their social responsibilities – not least to ensure equal access for all to services which are essential to everyday life.

## 2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility – drivers of change

The changing socio-economic and political environment in which European businesses now operate is creating growing expectations that corporations behave responsibly. The driving forces behind this change are wide-ranging, from consumers, governments, and employees, to civil society organisations and investors.

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<sup>1</sup> For the definition of Human Rights adopted for the scope of this study see Annex II.

## ■ Some drivers for CSR practices

- Civil society expectations
- Internet revolution
- Regulatory pressure
- Social funds/social indexes
- Social practices seen as competitive advantages
- Peer pressure

## ■ Civil society and media driven changes

In recent years, the anti-globalisation movement has grown stronger and more effective. Demonstrations against the WTO Seattle Round began a civil society movement grouping different non-governmental organisations from all over the world. They are mobilised thanks to the Internet and ask corporations for more transparency and accountability.

Increasingly media organisations are taking an interest, often seeking to expose instances of perceived corporate malpractice.

## ■ Consumer driven changes

Increasingly national governments are taking an interest and encouraging corporations to embrace their wider responsibilities to society. In Denmark, for example, the Minister for Social Affairs launched a campaign in 1994 entitled Our Common Concern – the social responsibility of the corporate sector. In 1998, it was instrumental in setting up The Copenhagen Centre, which is promoting public and private partnerships and now engaging other governments. ([www.copenhagencentre.org](http://www.copenhagencentre.org)).

In the United Kingdom, a minister for Corporate Social Responsibility was appointed in March 2000 within the Department of Trade and Industry. An interdepartmental Group has been established to improve co-ordination of activity to promote Corporate Social Responsibility across the whole government. ([www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk](http://www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk))

In the Netherlands, social responsibility is high on the political agenda: the official governmental advisory body on social and economic policy recently released its advice to the Cabinet on CSR strategies.

The Belgian parliament is currently discussing a proposed law that would introduce a social label on all products produced within the country

## ■ Investor driven changes

Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) has recently experienced a strong surge in popularity among mainstream investors. At the European level the number of SRI funds are up to 175 ([www.sricompass.org](http://www.sricompass.org)), and one out of every eight dollars under management in the United States is now invested in ethically screened policies. In 2000, more than 2.3 million Euro worth of investments in Europe were made based on ethical criteria.

## ■ Business driven changes

In November 2000, in answer to the Special Appeal made by the European Heads of State and Government to business on Corporate Social Responsibility (Lisbon Summit, March 2000) business leaders launched the **European Business Campaign 2005 on Corporate Social Responsibility**. Mobilising 500,000 business people to take action on CSR over the next five years the campaign aims to:

- Popularise the business case for CSR
- Enhance capacity building
- Energise dialogue and partnerships with stakeholders. ([www.csrcampaign.org](http://www.csrcampaign.org))

## ■ Academic driven changes

A core group of deans from major European business schools together with a group of European CEOs are creating a European Business Academy on CSR in the framework of the Campaign. This will provide a platform for ongoing social dialogue between leaders in the business and the academic community, stimulate research on the business case for CSR, improve the teaching of CSR principles and business strategies. ([www.csracademy.org](http://www.csracademy.org)).

## 2.3 CSR – an evolving approach

Corporate Social Responsibility is still an evolving concept, with different approaches being adopted depending on local circumstances and needs. Increasingly, European corporations of all sizes are recognising the importance of their role in society and the real 'bottom line' benefits of adopting a proactive approach to CSR. They are seeing that by communicating effectively about their social and environmental as well as economic impacts they can strengthen their brand, enhance their corporate reputation with customers and suppliers, and attract and retain a committed and skilled workforce.

## ■ The business rationale for CSR

- Better risk management
- Enhance corporate reputation
- Increase worker recruitment and retention
- Attract capital
- Secure long-term license to operate
- Improve transparency and build trust with stakeholders

In general, CSR is taken to mean corporate activities, beyond profit making, which include protecting the environment, caring for employees, being ethical in trading and getting involved in the local community. Some of the main issues are: promoting human rights, community involvement, socially responsible investing, social reporting.

## 2.4 Developments at European and international levels

The growing interest in Corporate Social Responsibility comes at a time when the Commission of the European Union is working to establish an entrepreneurial, innovative and open Europe with a sustainable development strategy to reconcile economic, social and environmental interests.

At the **European Council in Lisbon** in March 2000, the Union set itself a New Strategic Goal for the coming decade “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”. To achieve this, the EU Heads of Government made a Special Appeal to companies’ sense of social responsibility regarding best practices on lifelong learning, work organisation, equal opportunities, social inclusion and sustainable development<sup>2</sup>.

In its **European Social Agenda**, approved at Nice in December 2000, the European Council placed Corporate Social Responsibility at the forefront, stressing its importance in addressing the employment and social consequences of economic and market integration and in adapting working conditions to the new economy. At the heart of EU social policy is the need to both strengthen the continent’s economy and modernise the European social model, so as to increase efficiency, raise the quality of life for all, and provide the foundations for successful enlargement. The Nice Summit invited the Commission to involve companies in a partnership with the social partners, NGOs, local authorities and bodies that manage social services, so as to strengthen their social responsibility.

At the **Stockholm Summit** in March 2001, the European Council recognised CSR as a means to modernise the European social model, welcoming the initiatives taken by business to promote Corporate Social Responsibility. The importance of the environmental dimension was recognised at the Gothenburg Summit in June 2001, which agreed a **sustainable development strategy**.

Then in July, the Commission published the first ever **Green Paper on CSR**, as a catalyst to further cross-sector discussion of the issue, followed by a consultation period until the end of 2001. The paper identified the main drivers behind CSR, such as the information society, globalisation, privatisation, ethical consumerism and socially responsible investment. It highlighted a broad range of issues, such as lifelong learning, work organisation, equal opportunities, social inclusion, sustainable development, human resources management, health and safety, and human rights.

At international level, several key organisations are active in developing CSR. To quote but a few:

- The **UN Global Compact** initiative, launched in 1999 by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan with a special appeal to business to ‘give the market a human face’ ([www.unglobalcompact.org](http://www.unglobalcompact.org))
- The OECD Guidelines for **Multinational Enterprises (MNEs)**, reviewed in June 2000 and providing MNEs with non-binding recommendations for responsible business conduct ([www.oecd.org/daf/investment/guidelines/mnetext.htm](http://www.oecd.org/daf/investment/guidelines/mnetext.htm))
- The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), a coalition of 150 international companies united by a shared commitment to sustainable development, through the pursuit of economic growth, environmental protection and social equity. ([www.wbcsd.org](http://www.wbcsd.org))

<sup>2</sup>Cfr. N. 39 Lisbon Conclusions



# **Debate over developments in the European postal sector**

### 3.1 Internal market for European postal services

Directive 97/67/CE of the European Parliament and Council (dated 15 December 1997 and in force in the Member States since February 1999) sets common rules governing the development of the internal postal services market. It guarantees to citizens and businesses, both at the national level and in cross-border relations, a high quality universal postal service at an affordable price, which is accessible to everybody, everywhere without discrimination.

The directive also establishes the conditions under which legal certainty and economic viability may be provided to postal businesses operating a universal service. Customer rights are also strengthened, especially by implementing controls on pricing as well as quality, all of which would not be present if postal services were left to market forces alone.

Development of the postal sector is understood to be crucial if Europe is to take full advantage of the economic opportunities offered by new technologies -especially the development of e-commerce and just-in-time delivery- while fulfilling the EU objectives such as economic and social cohesion.

In May 2000, the European Commission presented a proposal to open up a substantial share of the postal services market to competition by 2003 and so speed up completion of the internal market for these services. To serve as a basis for discussion, the Commission originally proposed to open the following to competition by 1 January, 2003:

- items of correspondence weighing more than 50 grams (the current weight limit is 350 grams)
- packages below 50 grams where the price is at least twice the price of a standard letter
- all outgoing mail to other Member States and all express mail
- full opening to competition of outward cross-border mail

On 15 October 2001, the Council of Telecommunications reached an agreement under which Member States would have to introduce a measured controlled opening for postal services. This starts in 2003 (for letters weighing more than 100g or costing three times the price of a standard letter and cross border mail according to national situations). In 2006, further changes will be introduced (to 50g and twice the standard price). Finally, a new step is proposed for 2009 when a proposal will be made by the Commission as to whether or not to complete the opening of the European postal market. This agreement among ministers must be submitted to the European Parliament for its second reading.

It is clear that the process of liberalisation is one of continuing controversy and discussion under co-decision procedure within the EU. Member States have differing priorities and the impact of the proposal on market opening varies from one Member State to another.

## 3.2 Universal service safeguards

The universal service is 'the cornerstone for the Community's policy for the postal sector'.<sup>3</sup>

Safeguards for the universal service are already defined in the existing postal Directive (97/67/EC). First of all, a set of services may be reserved by each Member State for the universal service provider in order to ensure the maintenance of universal service.

In addition, Member States will continue to have the option of either using licensing systems to impose universal service obligations on competitors, or establishing a compensation fund, financed by private operators to cover any losses by the provider of universal services due to its obligations.

## 3.3 Pan European co-ordination

The **European Social Dialogue Committee** was set up in 1999 on the initiative of the EU Commission. Bringing together representatives of postal organisations and union organisations in the sector, the ESDC aims to promote joint social reflection at a time of rapid change in the European postal sector. The committee is chaired by Edouard Dayan, Director of European and International Affairs at the French post office, La Poste.

The **Association of European Public Postal Operators**, PostEurop, is a non-profit organisation and a restricted union of the Universal Postal Union, set up in 1993 by the 26 Public Postal Operators. Its mission is to increase by co-operative efforts the opportunities for members to improve their performance. It hopes thereby to enable them to fulfil their obligations and meet fully the needs of their customers. PostEurop provides a network through which its members can share expertise and experience, and a forum where international pressure groups can address the whole European postal service network. Today, PostEurop has 42 members and continues to grow<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>European Commission 1992 Green Book, p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Federation of Russia, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom

## 3.4 Future trends

All the post offices in Europe are today facing competition. Some are wholly or partially in the private sector, with new or public owners. Others have greater commercial freedom while still remaining in the state sector. Many are forging international alliances at a time when the information and communications revolutions are posing threats (but also opportunities) for those whose primary purpose has been to physically transport messages and parcels around the country.

Post offices continue to serve a unique and essential public function. Without a reliable, cheap and universal distribution network for letters and parcels, the functioning of civil society as we know it in Europe would be more uncertain, and much more costly. The postal sector's future evolution will be influenced by increased competition for its traditional services and by product substitution between the post, telecommunications and electronic information exchange. The post offices are facing a great challenge: they are key players in a new economic and technical context, while still being required to maintain their public service functions. How post offices are balancing these roles is the subject of the next section.

# **Social responsibility in action**

### ■ Overview

The survey of current CSR activities across the European postal sector, conducted for this study, has found a wide diversity of practices and approaches that are having a positive impact at present. Looking to future progress, it can be said that these practices can be more actively 'mainstreamed' in the overall business strategy of the company, and then more widely communicated both inside and outside the company.

From the research, we have observed the following trends:

- there is a very strong focus on employment-related aspects of Corporate Social Responsibility, understandable in an industry employing such a large number of workers engaged in manual and practical tasks
- several post offices have begun addressing specific actions to meet the special needs of customers who may face disadvantages or difficulty accessing services
- few post offices are developing outreach activities into their local neighbourhoods, either as part of economic regeneration and community development strategies, or as a corporate community contribution alongside employee volunteer activity
- progress on minimising environmental impacts and reporting performance seems strongest in northern European countries
- some post offices have started to explore how to go beyond minimum statutory requirements, as part of a deliberate policy of Corporate Social Responsibility

## 4.1 Diversity and equal opportunity in the workforce

When companies practice non-discriminatory recruitment and employment policies and positively value diversity, they achieve two benefits. For themselves, they ensure employees are recruited or promoted from the widest possible talent pool, so yielding the greatest return to the business. In so doing, they help society at large as well. Across Europe, structural unemployment condemns significant sections of the population to low incomes and social disadvantage. People from minority ethnic communities, older workers, those with disabilities and women are particularly affected. Discrimination is not just socially irresponsible, it also has negative effects on business.

As the following examples show, many of Europe's post offices are taking active steps to counter discrimination, provide equal opportunities and value diversity.

## Austria

Österreichische Post has developed an extensive model for the **promotion of women**. More than a quarter (28%) of personnel in the Postal Services Division of the Austrian post office are women. They work primarily on the counter and in administration. Through a network of 'equal treatment' representatives and contact women in the various regions, discrimination against women is identified and eliminated. The assignment of women to higher qualified functions is being promoted.

## Belgium

The Belgium post office, La Poste, has **anti-discriminatory policies** on issues such as gender, language, religion or cultural origin. Jobs within the corporation, and the benefits linked to them, are open and apply to every potential candidate meeting the profile and the requirements of the function, without any restriction based on the sex, age, or the nationality of the applicant.

## Denmark

Post Denmark is developing its social commitment in close co-operation with staff organisations. The priorities are to

- **integrate people** who, owing to disability, lack of familiarity with working life, a different ethnic origin, etc., cannot gain employment on ordinary terms
- prevent employees from having to leave because their **working capacity is temporarily reduced** or they cannot work at all for a period of time, or because they have problems fitting their working life to their family life or personal situation

In order to increase the possibility of finding flexible solutions in individual cases, Post Denmark has entered into co-operation agreements with 91 local authorities since the end of 1999

## France

La Poste has a formal programme to support the employment of people with a **disability**, one of several agreements with a group of three trade unions. Currently more than 2,000 disabled people are employed in the workforce, overcoming the necessity of early retirement. The formal three-year programme started in 1999, when 576 people with a disability were recruited, ahead of the 450 planned target.

All La Poste staff have access to a host of social services. Around FF6,500 is spent per employee each year for social activities, from a total budget of FF2 billion.

## Germany

**Women** comprise nearly half (47.2%) of Deutsche Post's workforce. Equal opportunity policies focus on women's prospects and career plans, covering training and employment during family-related leave. In 1998, a flexible working-hours scheme was introduced under which employees have greater possibility to co-ordinate their working hours with their family obligations.

## Greece

All the switchboard operators at the Greek post office's head office have either severely **impaired or no vision**. ELTA takes advantage of the fact that the emphasis of this job is on hearing to give employment to people with severely impaired vision or no vision at all. To help these employees, certain documents are prepared in braille. When the documents are particularly important or urgent, colleagues read them out loud to them.

ELTA provides the parents of **disabled children** up to 12 years of age with six additional days of extra leave. The Greek post office also takes into account the fact that disabled children may require care even after the age of 12, and in some cases for life.

## Ireland

An Post conducts employee opinion surveys to obtain feedback on a range of issues which impact on the quality of the working environment. They have helped in the formulation of policy for assisting minority groups.

It has also recently drawn up outline principles on the implementation of the following:

- **parental leave** - an employee, who is the natural or adoptive parent of a child born or adopted on or after 3 June 1996 is entitled to fourteen weeks annual unpaid leave to enable him or her to take care of the child ;
- **force majeure leave** - leave may be availed of in circumstances where there is a sudden occurrence of injury or illness affecting a member of an employee's family and which is of such a nature as to constitute an emergency which makes the employee's presence with that family member indispensable. In such circumstances an employee is entitled to immediate paid leave within permitted limits.
- **Policy on harassment** - The company, in consultation with the trade unions, introduced in November 2000 a revised policy for dealing with bullying and harassment in the workplace. This has been developed to best practice standards

In 2000, a successful conclusion was brought to the "MIDAS" project which was a European Social Fund assisted project under the ADAPT Human Resource initiative and promoted by An Post. It identified strategies to achieve competitive advantage through best diversity management practices across a wide range of organisations.



## Sweden

Sweden Post has clarified its total commitment to equal opportunities in its 'Vision Statement'. This policy document is presently being reviewed and will be supplemented with additional comment on diversity issues relating to gender, religion, ethnicity and others.

## United Kingdom

The commitment to 'strive to create an environment in which there is respect for every individual and recognition of their aspirations' is expressed in Consignia's Equal Opportunities policy, and carried through into its Purpose, Direction and Value statement. These statements reflect the belief that equal opportunity is all about removing barriers and ensuring no one is excluded from making a positive contribution, as well as recognising the business case that exists in having a diverse workforce.

The commitment to equal opportunities and diversity is expressed through a range of policies and procedures. Examples include those related to the 'work-life balance' (which include parental leave, maternity leave, adoptive leave, special leave, part-time working, job-sharing and career breaks) and those concerned with the working environment (e.g. harassment policy). The Equal Opportunities policy is widely displayed and equal opportunities messages are frequently conveyed through media such as articles in news publications, leaflets and posters. Equal Opportunities principles are also integrated into the company's recruitment procedures and training material.

## 4.2 Training and career development

By investing in training and career development, companies achieve two main benefits. For themselves, they ensure employees are equipped to carry out their tasks efficiently and effectively, so satisfying customers and sustaining the long-term success of the business. For society at large, investment in skills is critically important. Europe's economy is changing rapidly in the face of global competition. Few jobs can be assured for life anymore. The more individuals are equipped with a broad range of modern skills, the easier it is to transfer to new and growing sections of the economy and the more prosperous society becomes.

At a time of great change, the postal sector in particular faces the challenge to promote both employability and adaptability among its workforce. As the following examples show, individual post offices are taking action, sometimes with the support of the European Union itself.

## Austria

In 1999, more than 12,000 training days were held within Österreichische Post, of which three-quarters consisted of development programmes for specific subjects of expertise. Systematic training and development programmes are offered at all levels. In total, about ATS 36 million were invested into job-related training of employees in 1999.

## Belgium

La Poste has created a department specialised in training called Post Academy to develop and organise **new training programmes**. For example, employees who will fulfil a specific position, such as a counter clerk, receive a classic basic training, completed by practical 'on-the-job' training. When a new product or service is introduced, Post Academy organises special training services. All training is undertaken during working hours. La Poste also offers financial support to employees wishing to undertake extra training opportunities in their leisure time, especially for language and computer learning.

## France

La Poste is currently conducting an active **youth employment drive**, particularly for unskilled recruits who join the organisation via a sandwich course. In 1999, some 900,000 days of training took place.

In 1999, La Poste took on 1,000 apprentices and planned to take on a similar number in 2000. Apprentices are employed as deliverers, sorting staff and revenue staff. All are offered a permanent job at the end of their apprenticeship. Some 4,000 young people have been taken on under the youth employment scheme as customer service assistants in post offices, and as delivery assistants in difficult areas. All will be offered a permanent job on completion of their five-year contract under the scheme. The policy is particularly directed at young people without educational qualifications, and a quarter of these come from sensitive areas.

A Profession and Career Monitoring Unit was established in 1999, to anticipate changes in the business, notably the impact of new technologies, changing customer requirements and the increase in competitive pressure. Its objectives are to identify **key skills for the future**, bring training programmes up to date and assess individual career development inside the group.

## Greece

ELTA launched an ambitious training programme targeted to all personnel in 1998. The programme focuses on the development of special skills and abilities, and the establishment of new principles, philosophy and mentality so that ELTA can meet the new market challenges and the expectations of its stakeholders. The programme is based on three cycles: the basic training cycle, the orientation cycle, and the specialisation cycle. The first two provide a theoretical background, while the third is training for specific working positions.

Course attendance is gradual throughout the working life of the personnel. The total training lasts more than 1,300 hours or about 10 months. A minimum of three years is necessary to complete the whole scheme. The programme is co-financed by the European Union Social Fund (75%) and the Greek government (25%). In 1999, the total number of trained personnel was 3,456, the training lasted 204,868 person hours and cost GRD 800,000 billion. In addition, nearly 5,000 employees participated in a nationwide series of forums, taking 36,825 person hours.

ELTA is now piloting new approaches, including distance learning, relating training to career advancement, certification of specialist skills and international co-operation to learn from employees of post offices in other countries.

## Ireland

An Post's training programme provides staff with the opportunity to improve their social skills with courses on subjects such as personal development, decision and negotiating techniques, and assertiveness skills workshops. It now includes two course modules on marketing which have been accredited by university institutions – one is a CD-ROM based approach and the other a two year course leading to a diploma.

An Post is the leader of a partnership training network within Ireland which is funded by the Ministry of Trade, Enterprise and Employment and the European Social Fund. The overall objective is to create a supply of internal facilitators within each participating company who will assist their individual organisations to adopt or further develop partnership based relationships.

## Netherlands

TPG is instituting a **competency-based framework** to support the development of managers and potential managers. It offers specialist training courses in key business areas. In January 2000, the TPG Masters Award programme was introduced, which is designed to foster a climate of continuous staff improvement. The Express division of TPG was also awarded Investment in People status in 2000, confirming that Express employees are adequately trained to achieve their business and personal goals. TPG's mail division is also committed to achieving the same status.

## Sweden

Posten has developed intranet tools to identify **key competences** needed in the future. In a competence database that is open to everybody, employees can describe their own area of competence, which in turn becomes an effective way both of sharing experiences within the group and staffing different business areas of projects.

The Postal College (Posthogskolan) offers courses for employees in subjects of critical importance for Posten's competitiveness, such as IT and logistics.

## United Kingdom

Consignia's commitment to the development of all its employees is illustrated in the increase in the number of training days per employee over recent years, with over GBP100 million being invested in this area. Consignia's business units organise a range of **structured induction and work skills programmes** and a major project is now underway in Royal Mail to provide a half hour learning opportunity every week for all postmen and women within their scheduled duty time. Consignia has recently adopted an approach to **e-learning** which is in the early stages of deployment and this will increase opportunities for learning still further.

## 4.3 Health and safety

Postal workers offer a vital service to society, often in day-to-day personal contact with the public, with all the risks involved of violence or abuse. Much of the work is also manual, and individuals can be at risk if precautions are not always followed. Socially responsible employers not only take essential safety measures, they go further and consider the wider health of their employees and families.

### Austria

Österreichische Post has recently implemented a series of successful health and safety preventative measures. The marked decline in accidents witnessed in recent years continued into 2000, in which the number of accidents dropped by a tenth. Examples of these preventative measures include:

- ergonomic workplace design at counters
- machine and appliance safety (new roll cages and automation at logistics centres)
- raising awareness of correct procedures for handling hazardous materials and cleaning products, and laying down material selection criteria on the basis of safety data sheets
- acceptance testing of protective clothing and development of strategies to increase staff willingness to wear it
- launch of an HSE information drive over the corporate intranet.

### Belgium

La Poste respects Belgian legislation on health and safety, applying the new 'code of wellbeing at work'. The approach is multidisciplinary and includes medical examination of people in at-risk jobs, along with consideration of ergonomics, industrial hygiene and psychological problems at work. A particular problem currently being addressed is the high incident-rate of criminal attacks on staff.

### Denmark

Post Denmark has a risk prevention policy that is based on a description of responsibilities, competencies, tools, tasks and education programmes. These are freely available to all and systematic tools such as workplace assessments are used actively throughout the company. Currently being addressed is the high incident-rate of criminal attacks on staff.

### Ireland

A partnership forum was established to plan for the successful implementation during 2001 of a new safety and occupational health management system in key premises.

In 2000, more than 3,500 staff attended safety courses and over 2,100 training days were provided. All Company premises were reviewed in relation to existing safety standards and follow-up work dealing with identified issues and hazards is ongoing.

## Portugal

Since 1997, the Portuguese post office, CTT Correios de Portugal, has operated a programme of support and help for employees to prevent and treat **alcoholism and other drug-related abuses**. This aims to protect the health and safety of workers, by detecting incidence of consumption, guaranteeing confidentiality and offering support with practical help. An internal implementation group works with external specialists on treatment and prevention. Families are intensively involved where appropriate.

So far around half of CTT's workforce has attended information and training sessions, with extensive distribution of literature and posters. By the summer of 2000, some 241 employees had received personal help through the programme which enjoys the support and co-operation of the trade unions.

## Sweden

Sick leave among workers is rising and the belief that working causes stress, physical discomfort or disorders is also increasing. In 1999, a project was initiated to clarify the health situation within Posten as well as finding measures to deal with it. As a result, some 1,000 action plans have been written to improve health at an individual and group level, managers have taken part in training on health and work enjoyment and the company health care agreements are under review. Sweden Post's commitment to health and safety includes the responsible rehabilitation of employees who fall ill.

## United Kingdom

Consignia has adopted a five point, integrated 'revitalising' health and safety strategy that sets out to

- establish inspirational and challenging policy targets
- emphasise personal responsibility and accountability
- instil a sense of pride in good practice and behaviour
- stress measurement as the means of managing performance
- establish partnership in a 'learning organisation'

To deliver this strategy, Consignia has established a six-point action plan that covers

- revision of its Health and Safety policy
- adoption of a Health and Safety management model
- creation of a Health and Safety Committee of the Executive Board
- development of improved health and safety performance Key Performance Indicators
- Serious Incident Investigation procedures
- a review of competence and supporting structures

## 4.4 Social dialogue and employee consultation

Experience shows that the more employees are consulted and involved, the more they work towards achieving corporate goals as part of the team. National and European legislation lay down certain minimum standards for trade union rights and employee consultation, but socially responsible companies will tend to go further. They recognise that conducting a social dialogue is often an effective way to overcome the rigidity of some employment practices and achieve flexible working for the benefit of individual employees and the whole organisation.

### Austria

In the course of the collective agreement negotiations, innovative basic principles for a new collective agreement were agreed within Österreichische Post in 1999. These are intended to make the existing, rigid seniority principle (pay increases according to age of service) more **flexible** and will introduce a performance-based compensation.

### Belgium

Within La Poste, a **joint commission** includes union representatives, to ensure they are closely associated in the majority of human resource issues. In December 2000, a framework agreement was concluded that declared the joint commission competent in the largest sense for what concerns La Poste activities.

### France

In France, La Poste signed six important **social agreements** in 1999, reflecting the determination of management to develop a policy of 'contractualisation' of social relations. One addressed **working time reduction**, in anticipation of the 35-hour week legislation that was agreed with four trade unions (FO, CGC, CFDT, CFTC). The agreement has been adapted to local situations: more than 900 agreements have been signed locally, including a dozen with trade unions that did not sign at national level. The 35-hour week law came into effect for over 310,000 postal workers in January 2000.

### Ireland

During 2000, a fundamental restructuring programme was established in An Post with unions representing 98% of the staff. A key element of this is the creation of a Government-approved Employee Share Ownership Plan (ESOT) which provides for the ultimate ownership of 14.9% of the shares in the Company by its employees. In return for the implementation of a business transformation plan and associated reduction in costs, 5% of the equity in the Company will be transferred to the ESOT. A further 9.9% will be made available for purchase by the ESOT through funding provided by An Post on the basis of a profit share scheme which is directly linked to the achievement of IRE 27m annual costs savings.

In Ireland, those who work in the public sector, and particularly people in key management positions, are required to avoid any situation which might give rise to a conflict of interest as defined in the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995.

## Luxembourg

Luxembourg P&T has developed a **social dialogue policy**: four out of the 12 members of the Board of Directors are elected union representatives.

## Netherlands

TPG negotiates directly with unions and other labour organisations concerning wages and general working conditions. **Collective labour agreements** relating to remuneration typically have a term of two years. In addition, PTT consults occasionally with various local, national and European work councils, which primarily serve an advisory role. Except for TPG's employees in Australia or those employed in the USA, TPG's employees outside Europe are generally neither represented by trade unions nor employed pursuant to collective labour agreements.

## Sweden

In 1996, Sweden Post signed a collective agreement with the labour organisations that secures the latter's position in the company's decision-making process. In the fall 1999 Posten and the trade unions agreed on the implementation of a new model, Posten Futurum, for the future staff rationalisation in Posten. Its aim is to strengthen the **employability** and market value of surplus employees. Employees participating in Futurum will be supported in their own efforts of finding a job outside Posten as well as through training, coaching and personal development.

## United Kingdom

Consignia's industrial relations climate is shaped by long-standing recognition of trade unions. The company seeks to work with the unions to implement necessary **change by agreement**. This involves operating on a constructive model that focuses on actual issues facing the various businesses, resulting in a number of important agreements with the unions in recent years. Customer satisfaction forms a key part of the strategy. With rapid changes taking place in the postal sector, both management and unions have a responsibility to make sure all employees are aware of the need to provide excellent services as business success is key to employment prospects.

### 4.5 Access to services for disadvantaged groups and local regeneration

As Europe's post offices move towards an era of greater competition, the pressure is mounting to reduce costs. In some geographic areas, the average cost per transaction is higher than in others – due to low volumes of business in sparsely populated rural regions, for example, or inner city neighbourhoods with low incomes.

Post offices across Europe are examining how to continue to meet their universal service obligations in a more cost effective way by working in partnership with other agencies and so addressing wider social issues such as economic regeneration.

At the same time, some groups of individuals need special help if they are to enjoy equal access to services. These include people with a disability who are physically able to enter their local post office, for example, or those such as refugees not fluent in the national language. Again, post offices can work in partnership with others to ensure a more equal access to service while achieving wider social goals.

In both cases, Corporate Social Responsibility means adopting an imaginative and creative approach to what might seem a problem at first sight. Experience shows the costs are not high and the benefits can be considerable.

## France

Since June 1998, when La Poste signed a new contract with the State, the company has focused on strengthening its presence and activities in **remote urban areas** and supporting local partnership initiatives in favour of social cohesion ('politique de la ville').

More specifically, La Poste has adopted a recruitment policy for young people (known as 'emploi-jeunes') under which a fifth of the new recruits must come from deprived areas. One tenth of new post offices to be opened in the next five years must be in deprived urban areas and the policy provides for a range of measures to support employees working in these areas. La Poste offers specific training, security measures and financial compensation if damage is suffered by agents or their personal possessions during working time.

La Poste is sometimes the last of public services to be represented in a disadvantaged area. The customers are often elderly, unable to manage their personal affairs and require services only to be found at the post office (tax declarations or paying bills, for example). Through partnerships with other local organisations and during the busier periods, La Poste has organised information sessions on taxes and other related issues to assist older customers.

## Ireland

An Post has drawn up outline principles on the implementation of a **disability code**, such as ensuring that all public post office premises are wheelchair accessible.

## United Kingdom

Consignia is improving its services to **customers with a disability**, ensuring compliance with the conditions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It is applying a staged approach to ensure compliance by 2004 as required by the government. The company is also using technology that will give disabled people much wider access to information and services. For instance, the Technology Engineered Speech to Sign Avatar (TESSA) is a project to develop technology that can translate spoken language into British Sign Language for hearing impaired customers.



Among other improvements to increase access to services for people with disabilities, Post Offices™ are installing handrails and access ramps. Care is also taken in the design of customer literature to make it easier for people with visual impairments to read. Literature in alternative formats is also available. In addition, Consignia has been running a Postbus service for elderly and disabled people and others in rural areas since 1967. Postbus combines local bus services with collection and delivery of mail for more than 220 routes.

## 4.6 Community involvement and charities

Around Europe, approaches to corporate community involvement vary according to cultural, social and religious traditions. Until recently, few employers saw a major role for the organisation in voluntary, charitable or local community activity, as distinct from what they might do in a purely personal capacity.

This is now changing and many employers understand that companies – as integrated members of society – can get involved in social issues of concern, beyond the immediate impacts of their day-to-day business. This is often focused on the local neighbourhoods and is especially so for those with large workforce. They can offer support for their employees' own voluntary activities, and so demonstrate a sense of shared values and common understanding. At the same time, civil society organisations are increasingly calling on major employers to make a contribution, if only because state funding is diminishing and social needs remain acute.

### Belgium

La Poste sponsors a number of sports teams, particularly in football and basketball. Among other community activities, La Poste runs a fund-to-finance programme tackling illiteracy in Belgium.

### Ireland

An Post has been involved in organising letter writing competitions for school children and is a frequent co-sponsor of important community initiatives.

It also engages the services of an independent market research consultant to monitor customer satisfaction on a regular basis.

### United Kingdom

Consignia's charity policy ensures that it helps as many groups as possible, fairly and consistently, without jeopardising its commercial relationships. In January 2001, Consignia launched its first annual community fund to assist people in progressing towards their chosen goals. With over 20 % of adults in the UK needing help with basic literacy skills, this was the chosen theme for year one of the fund. Locally based groups and organisations in rural and urban areas were eligible to apply and over 60 projects benefited from funding totalling GBP 350,000.

Continuing with the theme of literacy, Consignia devised a new education resource designed to fit into the national curriculum to encourage children to explore various forms of letter writing. Using trained employee volunteers to work alongside the teacher, the volunteers can enhance their own skills in team working, organising, planning and evaluation.

Consignia is also aiming to develop partnerships with a number of charities to assist in ongoing work to make its programmes more accessible to groups who need additional support.

## 4.7 Environment

Faced with such global threats as climate change and local hazards such as pollution, most organisations recognise they have a responsibility to society to minimise their environmental impact. Many have discovered that less waste and more efficient use of resources also save them money.

Postal services are not especially damaging to the environment, but the scale of physical effort required to move millions of items long distances does create an impact. So many post offices have started to find ways to minimise that impact. This will become increasingly important as the implications become apparent of the sustainable development strategies being adopted at national and EU levels.

### Belgium

La Poste renews its **vehicles** approximately every five years. This ensures that its vehicles are of the latest technology, and are therefore more ecological. The vehicles also undergo a pre-defined maintenance programme, to ensure they use less fuel. This programme is provided by the brand dealers, thus ensuring that the replaced products are properly recycled. At the moment, La Poste is testing 15 electric delivery vehicles.

The environmental department of La Poste started a campaign in January 2001 to raise awareness among employees about efficient energy use and saving techniques.

Since 1999, La Poste has applied a strict policy of **recycling** paper, cardboard and plastic wrappers, as well as other items of office and computer waste. In 2000, for example, the company recycled 351,000 kg of cardboard, 1,610,000 kg of paper and 70,400 kg of plastic wrappers.

### Denmark

Post Denmark has formulated an environmental policy aimed at reducing energy consumption and waste and continuously improving environmental practices everywhere in the company. For example, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were reduced by 9% over the three years preceding 1999, whilst SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions showed a small fall. These results have been achieved despite an increase in power and fuel consumption.

Post Denmark's total volume of waste rose by 3% to 9,015 tonnes during 1999. Nearly all waste is combustible. Only a small amount of waste was chemical waste, which was delivered to local authority treatment plants. The recyclable part, whose main constituents are paper, cardboard and soft plastics, rose by 284 tonnes and accounted for 47% of the total volume in 1999.

## Finland

Finland Post uses over 5,500 vehicles for **delivery and transport**, covering approximately 100 million kilometres every year. In an effort to minimise the damage to the environment, the mileage is reduced through efficient route planning and by combining the means of transport.

For example, transporting postal trucks on a train from Helsinki to Oulu decreases postal traffic on the roads. Every year about 500 postmen/women and mail transport drivers participate in a one-day **training** session on economical driving. Mail is delivered on foot to approximately 2,200 standard delivery routes out of 7,000 routes, covering one working day. A bike is used on 1,300 delivery routes. Finland Post also has 58 electric vehicles, which it has been using as a means of transport for the past 15 years.

As a part of the waste management policy, product-specific recycling instructions are posted on the intranet (i.e. machinery, spare parts, cartridges). Waste management plans, devised in co-operation with different personnel groups, have resulted in a decrease of 60% of the waste taken to the landfill site. The company requires good management of environmental issues from its suppliers. In its purchases (cars, office supplies and furniture, etc.), it favours environmentally friendly products.

## Luxembourg

Luxembourg P&T endeavours to choose environmentally compatible solutions, subject to consideration of the financial impact. **Energy** is saved by modernising technical installations and insulating buildings. An extensive **recycling** programme of paper and other materials is undertaken.

## Netherlands

TPG is committed to reducing the impact of its operations on the environment. In 2000, for example, it continued to replace Boeing 727s with modern Airbus freighters and to fly state-of-the-art aircraft, such as Bae146 Quiet Trader, which reduce the **noise impact** of its operations. TNT, part of TPG, is testing alternative fuels to reduce vehicle pollution at its operations in Germany, Turkey and the UK. TPG also reviews new buildings for energy use, insulation standards and other environmental factors, and it reviews new equipment against noise-level standards. TNT in Sweden and the UK has achieved **ISO 14001** environmental certification.

## Sweden

The first priority for the Swedish post office, Posten, is to fulfil all its environmental obligations under law. Environmental impact originates principally from transport, premises, purchasing, and waste handling, and from the employees' activities. So Posten strives to use energy and other environmental resources efficiently and to prevent discharges, waste and other negative environmental impacts.

Posten's **environmental policy** includes the following principles:

- work to improve environmental performance shall be integrated into the business activities and support the company's principal goals: satisfied customers, profitability, satisfied employees and renewal
- environmental care shall be considered in decisions at all levels in the organisation
- the aim of the environmental initiatives is continuous improvement based on the participation of customers, suppliers, employees and other stakeholders

## United Kingdom

Royal Mail and Parcelforce operate a distance/time criterion to establish the most efficient mode of transport for the movement of items: less than 100 miles and items are moved by road; up to 250 miles, by train; and thereafter by air for time critical mail. Parcelforce's 'piggyback' operation (moving parcel-laden lorry trailers by railway wagons for the journey between the South-East and Scotland) is playing a role in improving efficiency and enhancing environmental impact. The process successfully transfers around 700,000 heavy-duty miles a year from road to rail.

Consignia has recently tested new silent electric mail delivery carts in Oxford and has nine electric vans in Coventry and London. It is also trialling two new electric vehicles fitted with an opportunity recharging technology designed to extend operational range.

The use of vehicles powered by low-sulphur diesel is also increasing. Royal Mail has already achieved an estimated 12 % reduction in carbon dioxide emissions over a five-year period and has a rolling target to reduce these by a further 5 % over each subsequent three-year period.

In December 1999, Royal Mail introduced an environmentally and socially responsible way of disposing of older bicycles. Hundreds of out-of-service bicycles and spare parts have been donated to Re-Cycle, a charity that sends bikes to developing countries, providing a transport lifeline for isolated communities. The charity runs workshops to teach bike recipients (mainly in South Africa) about care and repair of their machines. If the project proves successful, up to 4,500 of Royal Mail's 33,000 fleet could be recycled to good causes every year.

# Going forward

## Conclusions and recommendations

# SECTION FIVE

This report has offered a snapshot of action being taken across Europe in the postal sector, as it increasingly embraces its corporate social responsibilities. The breadth and depth of activity vary, if only because historically post offices have been part of the state sector and not expected to adopt a wider social remit that was considered the role of government itself.

Looking ahead, both the extent of social engagement and the choice of priority issues and methods of involvement will continue to vary. Some post offices are already wholly in the private sector, while others will remain firmly in the state sector for many years.

But it is precisely at this point of change that the individual corporations have much to learn from the new and differing experiences of their counterparts. This report and the roundtable discussions already held are the first fruits of an initiative by La Poste in France, with EU funding, to start such a dialogue.

Looking ahead, there are three avenues to explore that can offer real benefits to those post offices able and willing to invest the effort:

- Improve understanding and effectiveness of CSR initiatives in relation to the company's core values, core business practices, and overall performance;
- Continue exchanging information and sharing best practices about current CSR activities between post offices and eventually move towards some more formal benchmarking techniques;
- Learn from other industries that have already faced demands for greater accountability and transparency.

# Appendix

## The research process and roundtable discussions

### ■ Background to the meetings

This dialogue initiative is linked to the Adapt programme, a European co-funded project started in 1998. The framework of the programme places an onus on Adapt's partners to seek opportunities to promote transnational co-operation between Europe's post offices on themes related to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

La Poste, the initiative's instigators, solicited assistance from the Brussels-based organisation, CSR Europe, and the London consultancy firm, The Corporate Citizenship Company, to facilitate the project.

### ■ Aims of the project

The aim of the process was essentially threefold:

- to scope out the developments in Corporate Social Responsibility in Europe and to identify any key themes which pertained to the European Post Offices in particular
- to share knowledge and practical experience of how the European Post Offices are tackling their social responsibilities, especially those responsibilities which are common to all the Post Offices
- to examine possible steps for co-operating in the future, through the sharing of best practice models, benchmarking performance, and other similar joint initiatives

### ■ Process of the project

La Poste France invited representatives from the major post offices in all 15 member states to attend a preliminary meeting in Paris in March 2001. Nine post offices came to the meeting, with the remainder six expressing interest. The meeting resulted in a fruitful discussion about the CSR agenda and how it affects the postal sector.

Following the first meeting, La Poste and The Corporate Citizenship Company drew up a draft report that examined the trends and drivers in Europe on CSR. It compared the activities of the post offices in key areas of social responsibility, such as human resources management and environmental performance. To gather the relevant information, questionnaires were sent out to all the European post offices, together with some summary data collected from a range of public sources. Bilateral conversations were then held by telephone to substantiate this data and verify the additional data that had already been collected.

A second meeting was held in Paris in July to map out the progress of the project and to examine the possibilities for future co-operation. The draft report was circulated and discussed, with findings from the meeting fed back into the report. Following the second meeting, a second and final consultation period was undertaken, during which all the European post offices were asked to comment on a second draft of the report prior to its publication in December.



## Exploratory Seminar European Postal Services and Corporate Social Responsibility Paris, March 2, 2001

La Poste invited representatives of each of the European post offices to an exploratory seminar in Paris, nine of which attended.

### ■ Aims of the meeting

The objectives of this preliminary meeting were:

- to learn more about what other posts offices are doing
- to think ahead about how the European economy and the postal sector are likely to develop
- to identify how post offices could work together on mutual areas of interest on social issues

### ■ What constitutes CSR?

Giusy Chiovato Rambaldo of CSR Europe identified the following issues as falling within the remit of CSR:

#### Workplace

Direction du Service Public et de l'aménagement du territoire, La Poste

#### Social Dialogue

Direction des Affaires Européennes et Internationales, La Poste

#### Local Economic Development

Programmes Co-ordinator, CSR Europe

#### Community Involvement

Managing Director, CSR Europe

#### Market place

Programmes Co-ordinator, CSR Europe

#### Environment

Managing Director, CSR Europe

The attendees discussed how differing cultural and commercial contexts across Europe impacted perceptions of what did and did not constitute CSR. It was agreed that CSR should go beyond issues that are required by law and should include voluntary initiatives, such as employee training, community involvement, charitable giving and diversity policies.

## ■ Examples of CSR activities in the postal sector

Two presentations were given by the UK post office (Consignia) and by the French post office (La Poste) as examples of how the European postal sector is presently engaging in CSR.

### ■ i) Presentation by Gary Irvin of Consignia

When identifying potential social ventures to support, Mr Irvin stressed the importance of choosing projects that interlinked with the goals, expertise and resources of the company. He also pointed out that good management of such projects relies on the ability to measure and evaluate the project's outcomes.

Among Consignia's flagship programmes is a bicycle project in South Africa. In partnership with the South African charity, Re-Cycle, Royal Mail donated a large number of postal workers' bikes to rural communities in the country to improve problems of transportation. The project, launched in 1999, also makes provision for the training of bicycle repairers to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Another successful programme is the UK post office's school partnership scheme, which involves the production of curriculum materials and staff volunteering.

### ■ ii) Presentation by Chantale Leguézic and Dominique Auffret of La Poste

La Poste described an agreement brokered by the company that aims to improve the employability of disabled persons (and also those who became disabled after a work accident). In addition to meeting the legal obligation of having a 6% quota of disabled people as a total of your workforce, the programme focuses on a more qualitative approach that seeks to build up individuals' skills.

The second example referred to La Poste's 'Involvement in the Community' programme, which focuses on at-risk urban areas ('Politique de la Ville') and the problem of quality of service and community development.

#### Roundtable discussion

During a fruitful period of discussion and exchange of ideas, it became apparent that all the post offices were involved, to some degree or other, in CSR activities. Generally speaking, however, these were not co-ordinated by any central management function but were spread between business functions. Thus, despite the prevalence of these CSR activities, no holistic perception or stated strategy on CSR existed within the majority of the post offices.

It became apparent during the discussion that the priority for many of the post offices was the employee stakeholder group. Employee engagement and development was deemed to be particularly important due to problems of staff recruitment and retention in the postal sector. The consensus was that a renewed emphasis on employee training would be an essential starting point of any strategic CSR policy. PTT Post (Netherlands) gave the example of its 'Investors in People' training programme, which aims to combine both business goals and individual training needs.

## The second meeting of European Postal Services and Social Responsibilities

Paris, 6 July, 2001

At the invitation of La Poste, representatives from the European Post Offices met for a second time in Paris to continue the process of discussion and information sharing on the subject of social responsibility.

### ■ Objectives

This second meeting had four objectives:

- to discuss wider trends in Corporate Social Responsibility at a European level, focusing on a presentation of the EU Green Paper on CSR
- to present and discuss the draft report on European Postal Services and Social Responsibilities
- to present two practical techniques on how other sectors have sought to measure and report on social responsibility issues
- to determine a process for taking the project on the European post offices and social responsibility forward

### ■ Recent developments on CSR at European level

Dominique Bé, the European Commission representative, presented the EU's Green Paper to the group. Although still in draft form at the time of the meeting, no substantive changes were made to the document when it was published on July 18.

Mr Bé began by describing the position of CSR on the EU agenda, with particular reference to the European Social Agenda and the appeal to companies' sense of social responsibility made at the EU Council's Lisbon summit in Spring 2000. Detailing the various drivers behind CSR (such as the information society, globalisation, privatisation, ethical consumerism and investment), he explained how companies had built on the bases of European legislation and social dialogue to voluntarily develop the concept of CSR. Mr Bé defined the social responsibility agenda as embracing such activities as: lifelong learning, work organisation, equal opportunities, social inclusion, sustainable development, human resources management, health and safety, and human rights.

The EU supports CSR both as a model for better governance and as a mandate for sustainable development. Its Green Paper concentrates on initiatives at the national and international level. The EU's approach is essentially:

- promote the business case for CSR among the European business community
- provide a more standardised framework for CSR practices that is both effective and reliable
- develop structured dialogue between stakeholders

For further information, please visit: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/socdial/csr/greenpaper.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/socdial/csr/greenpaper.htm)

In the discussion period following the presentation, Mr Bé confirmed that, although the Green Paper mainly concerned itself with private companies, it applies equally to public sector corporations, such as post offices. The group also discussed the role that the EU could have in promoting greater transparency, rigour and uniformity in public data pertaining to CSR. In this way, companies would be able to benchmark their performance more accurately within their sectors as well as across different industries. Moreover, consumers and investors would also benefit from more authoritative data, such as certified labelling systems or comparative disclosure requirements, when determining whether a product or company was genuinely socially responsible or not.

## ■ Measuring the business benefits in human resources management (HRM)

Mike Tuffrey, director of The Corporate Citizenship Company, gave a presentation on the findings of three research projects, based on the participation of over two dozen large corporations, on the impact that HRM has on a company's bottom line.

According to Mr Tuffrey, today's three main HRM priorities all impinge on the CSR agenda:

- staff development
- staff motivation
- the recruitment, diversification, retention and releasing of staff.

The business benefits in HRM can be seen most starkly in the case of staff volunteering. Four-fifths of employee volunteers surveyed during the course of the research reported that they gained business-related skills from their experience. These included an increase in communication skills, a development in team working capabilities, enhanced confidence, and a greater ability to think creatively and influence others.

Building staff motivation is another key HR benefit derived from volunteering. The findings of The Corporate Citizenship Company's research show that employees being involved in a community programme are twice as likely to speak highly of their company without being asked after than those that have not.

Mr Tuffrey then took the group through practical tools to measure and improve HR performance through employee involvement. The session focused on who should measure, when to measure, what to measure and how to measure. Examples of a cost benefit analysis applied to measuring the impact on staff morale and motivation were cited, in addition to case studies on measuring the benefits of responsibly recruiting and releasing staff.

For further information, please visit: [www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk/community/humanresources.asp](http://www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk/community/humanresources.asp)

## ■ Communicating CSR: transparency, reporting and accountability

Giusy Chiovato Rambaldo, project co-ordinator at CSR Europe, gave an insight into companies' communication and reporting practices.

The presentation was based on findings from the 45 companies involved in a CSR Europe initiative, entitled the CSR Matrix. In answer to the question, 'what do companies report on?', Ms Rambaldo showed that nine out of ten companies communicate on

- mission, vision and values
- workplace environment
- community involvement
- economic development and
- environmental activities

However fewer than half offer public information on human rights. The most popular forms of communication are thematic reports, the Internet, standards and labels, stakeholder consultation and award schemes. Only two fifths of the 45 participating companies currently issue specific social reports.

CSR Europe's experience has highlighted several themes when communicating on these issues:

- companies communicate on more than just their commercial and bottom-line performance
- companies adopt a diversified communication strategy
- 'social reports' tend to cover the whole CSR agenda
- CSR is increasingly communicated through the web
- a common set of performance indicators are emerging out of companies' measurement practices

Ms Rambaldo went on to present the CSR Matrix, an interactive tool developed by CSR Europe that offers direct access into a company's reporting activities, enables a company to benchmark its performance against others, and allows the user to do a targeted search on specific CSR topics and communication channels. Further information can be found at: [www.csreurope.org/matrix](http://www.csreurope.org/matrix)

## ■ Next steps

The participants agreed that it had been very helpful to meet twice and expressed interest in finding a mechanism to continue dialogue.

It was agreed, once the draft report was finalised, to hold an additional informal meeting with the European post offices with the intention of discussing the future development of the project. The meeting scheduled to take place during the EU Belgian Presidency Conference on CSR on 27 November 2001.



## CSR Europe

CSR Europe is a business driven Network whose mission is to help companies achieve profitability, sustainable growth and human progress by placing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the mainstream of business practice. Through its 47 company members, 15 National Partner Organisations, 9 benchmarking programmes and online Resource Centre, CSR Europe is a reference on CSR strategies and practices for companies throughout Europe. In addition, the Network acts as sounding board on CSR for the European institutions and governments.

For further information: [www.csreurope.org](http://www.csreurope.org)



## The Corporate Citizenship Company

The Corporate Citizenship Company offers research, consultancy and publications to help businesses succeed as good citizens of our changing global society. Founded over five years ago in London, it has developed special strengths in benchmarking, social and economic impact assessment, international issues management, community programme evaluation and corporate reporting.

For further information: [www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk](http://www.corporate-citizenship.co.uk)