



Postcodes to be Considered as an Integral Part of a Postal Address

Consultation Document

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1. PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) on behalf of the Government of Malta, by means of this consultation document is proposing to update Regulation 15 of the 'Postal Services (General) Regulations' (S.L. 254.01 of the Laws of Malta) to require that addressed postal articles should include a postcode.

Concurrently, in order to ensure a reasonable transition, the MCA is also proposing to establish the regulatory conditions which are to be met by the Universal Service Provider, currently MaltaPost plc ('MaltaPost'), before the amended regulations become applicable.

2. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSED APPROACH

Postcodes to be used in conjunction with addresses were first introduced in Malta by MaltaPost in 1991 so as to facilitate the sorting and distribution of postal articles. The original 5-character postcode format comprised of 3 letters and 2 digits. In 2007 a new alpha-numeric Postcode format was introduced to accommodate demands with a new 7-character format comprising of 3 letters and 4 digits (e.g. FRN1913), which is still currently applicable.

From a number of reports on mail studies it transpires that the majority of postal users¹ do not include postcodes in their mail items negatively impacting mail sorting and distribution processes.

One also needs to take into consideration that the use of postcodes is also being introduced in other developing technologies (e.g. e-commerce), at times requiring the inclusion of postcodes as a compulsory field.

The initiative to consider the postcode as an integral part of an address is being supported by the Data Governance Council, the national forum for all data related proposals and recommendations on the basis of which decisions will be taken before any drafting is made for legislation to provide for generic registers and standards applicable at the national level.

When a postcode is included in a postal address, postal sorting and delivery operations would be greatly facilitated, increasing efficiency of the postal operator and reducing the potential of mis-deliveries and other errors from taking place in the process.

The addition of postcodes as an integral part of a postal address is proposed to take place through the following measures:

- a) Regulations issued by Government introducing amendments to the Postal Services (General) Regulations, as proposed in Section 3 below, and
- b) a Decision Notice issued by the MCA, in order to ensure a reasonable transition, establishing the regulatory conditions which are to be met by the Universal Service Provider, currently MaltaPost, as proposed in Section 4 below.

¹ In accordance with the latest MaltaPost's Real Mail Study – 61% of Single Piece Mail users and 72% of Bulk Mail users did not use the postcode.

3. PROPOSED LEGAL AMENDMENTS

As mentioned in the previous section of this document the objective of this Consultation is to update the current regulations to include postcodes as an integral part of a postal address.

Regulation 15 of the 'Postal Services (General) Regulations' (SL 254.01) currently states:

- 1) *All locally addressed postal articles may include a postcode written immediately after the town or village of the address:*

Provided that locally addressed postal articles which do not include a postcode shall still be delivered.

- 2) *The universal service provider or providers as the case may be shall submit to the Authority updated lists of postcodes and shall publish them in a manner that ensures reasonable publicity including but not limited to affixation on the notice board of each of its post offices.*

In order to achieve the objective in ensuring a wider use of postcodes the Authority is proposing the following amendment:

Proposed Amendment

Regulation 15 of the 'Postal Services (General) Regulations' (SL 254.01) further to the proposed amendments is to read as follows:

- 1) All locally addressed postal articles shall include a postcode written immediately after the town or village of the address:

Provided that locally addressed postal articles which do not include a postcode shall still be delivered.

Provided further that a postal operator shall not incur any liability for compensation to any person whether by reason of delay, or mis-delivery, of any postal article in the course of transmission by post which is caused by a missing or erroneous postcode.

- 2) Sub-regulation (1) shall only be applicable once the Authority determines the conditions to be adhered to by the universal service provider in relation to the effective implementation of the subregulation, and the Authority subsequently is satisfied that the universal service provider is complying with all such conditions:

Provided that the Authority may from time to time vary such conditions.

4. PROPOSED CONDITIONS ON THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROVIDER

As specified in proposed amendments above, sub-regulations (1) and (2) of Regulation 15 of the 'Postal Services (General) Regulations' (SL 254.01) shall only be applicable once a number of conditions as set by the Authority are adhered to by the universal service provider to the same Authority's satisfaction. These conditions are being listed in the following Proposed Decision:

Proposed Decision

Sub-regulations (1) and (2) of Regulation 15 of the 'Postal Services (General) Regulations' (SL 254.01) shall only be applicable once the following conditions are met by the Universal Service Provider, currently MaltaPost, and the Authority subsequently is satisfied that the universal service provider is complying with all such conditions:

- A simple and easy to use postcode finder will be accessible from MaltaPost's website homepage including an interface that caters specifically for smartphone based users;
- Third parties (in particular bulk mail senders) requiring a full postcode database will be provided with one at no cost;
- The current postcode format shall be maintained and may only be changed/updated once/if approved a priori by the MCA and then only if justified by extraordinary circumstances;
- An extensive information programme to be undertaken by MaltaPost to inform the general public. This could include, and not limited to, various media (online, social media, Television, Radio, newspapers etc.), conspicuous printed matter in all the MaltaPost branches (including sub-post offices), flyers posted in all letterboxes, and also personalised post-code information to all residences and businesses;

The MCA will issue a Public Notice when it is satisfied that MaltaPost is complying with all such conditions, and intends to ensure that at least a six-month timeframe would be applicable from publication of this Decision to coming into force;

The MCA will continue monitoring implementation and may specify any other conditions set by the MCA in the future considered as reasonable.

5. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any comments with respect to amending the Postal Services (General) Regulations (SL 254.01) for postcodes to be considered as an integral part of a postal address?
2. Do you agree with the conditions which are proposed to be established for the Universal Service Provider, currently MaltaPost?

6. SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

The Authority welcomes written comments and representations from interested parties and stakeholders during the national consultation period, which shall run from the 21 October 2016 to 11 November 2016.

The Authority appreciates that respondents may provide confidential information in their feedback to this Consultation document. This information is to be included in a separate annex and should be clearly marked as confidential. Respondents are also requested to state the reasons why the information should be treated as confidential. The Authority will take the necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of all such material as soon as it is received, in accordance with the MCA's confidentiality guidelines and procedures². Respondents are however encouraged to avoid confidential markings wherever possible.

For the sake of openness and transparency, the MCA will publish a list of all respondents to this Consultation on its website.

The MCA will, after taking into consideration the responses received to this consultation, submit to the Minister responsible for communications the proposed changes to the Postal Services (General) Regulations. The MCA will subsequently also make its decision with respect to the conditions to be met by the Universal Service Provider, currently MaltaPost plc. The MCA will publish such decision which will include a summary of the respective responses received.

All responses should be submitted to the Authority, in writing by no later than noon CET on the 11 November 2016 and addressed to:

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² http://www.mca.org.mt/sites/default/files/articles/confidentialityguidelinesFINAL_0.pdf