UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

Measuring e-commerce through postal trade

WORKING GROUP ON MEASURING
E-COMMERCE AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

3 May 2021

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"[…] to stimulate the lasting development of efficient and accessible universal postal services of quality in order to facilitate communication between the inhabitants of the world".

Preamble of the UPU Constitution

Through the International Bureau the UPU fulfils three functions

- **It is a unique forum** that builds consensus and convergence, bringing together governments, regulators, and other stakeholders from 192 countries with a view to sharing experiences and identifying multilateral solutions to global and regional challenges.

- **It is a provider of affordable technical solutions** that can support postal operators and other market players in their efforts to increase operational efficiency.

- **It is a knowledge center** capable of fostering capacity development and knowledge and information sharing, and of providing high-value added research and analytics to all stakeholders interested in using big data on 192 countries to seize the opportunities offered by global trends, such as the growth of e-commerce.

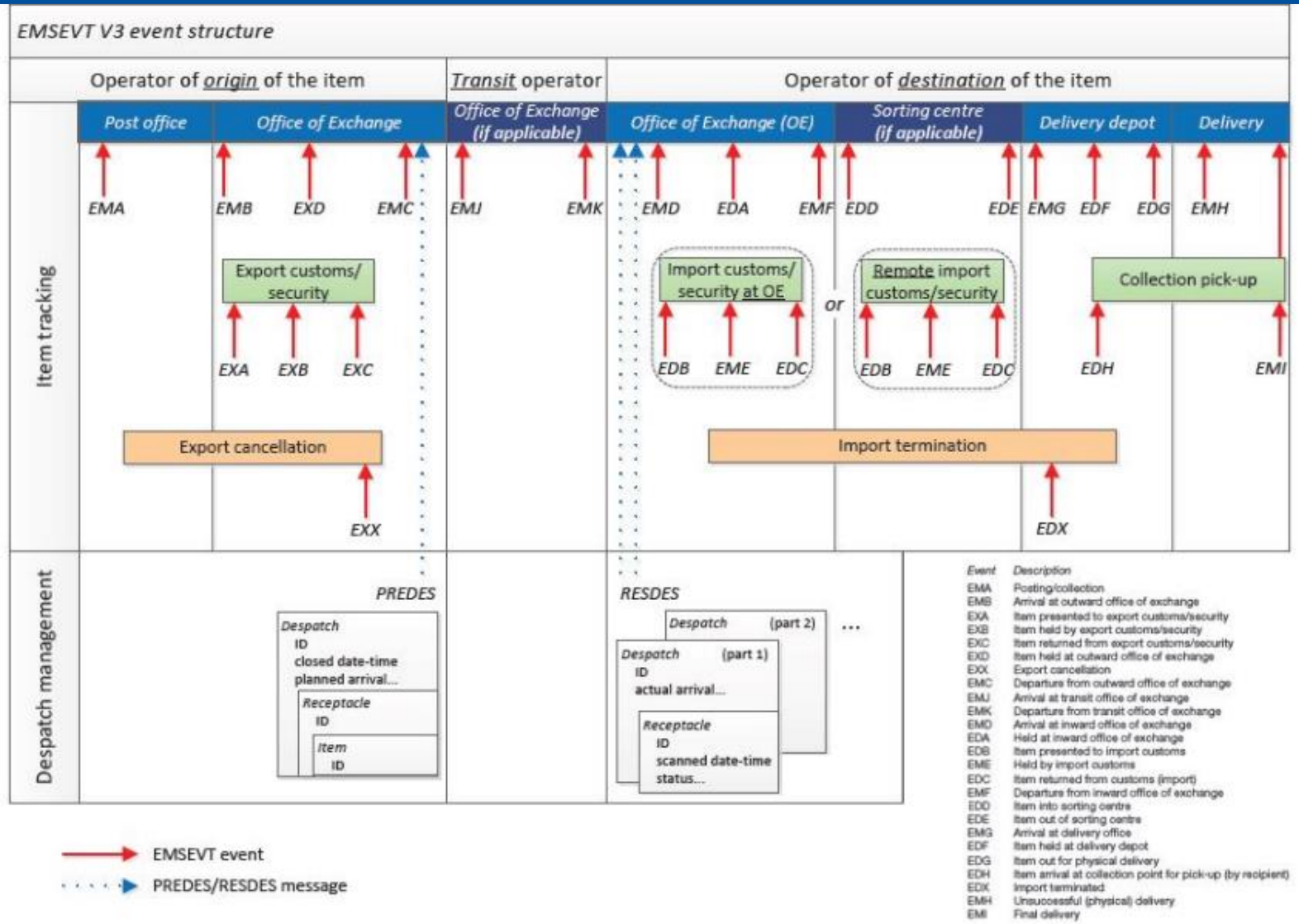
The efforts in measuring e-commerce (domestic and international) are concentrated around:

- **Postal statistics** contain data from over 200 countries or territories and include approximately 100 indicators of postal development. The data is collected annually from all UPU member countries.

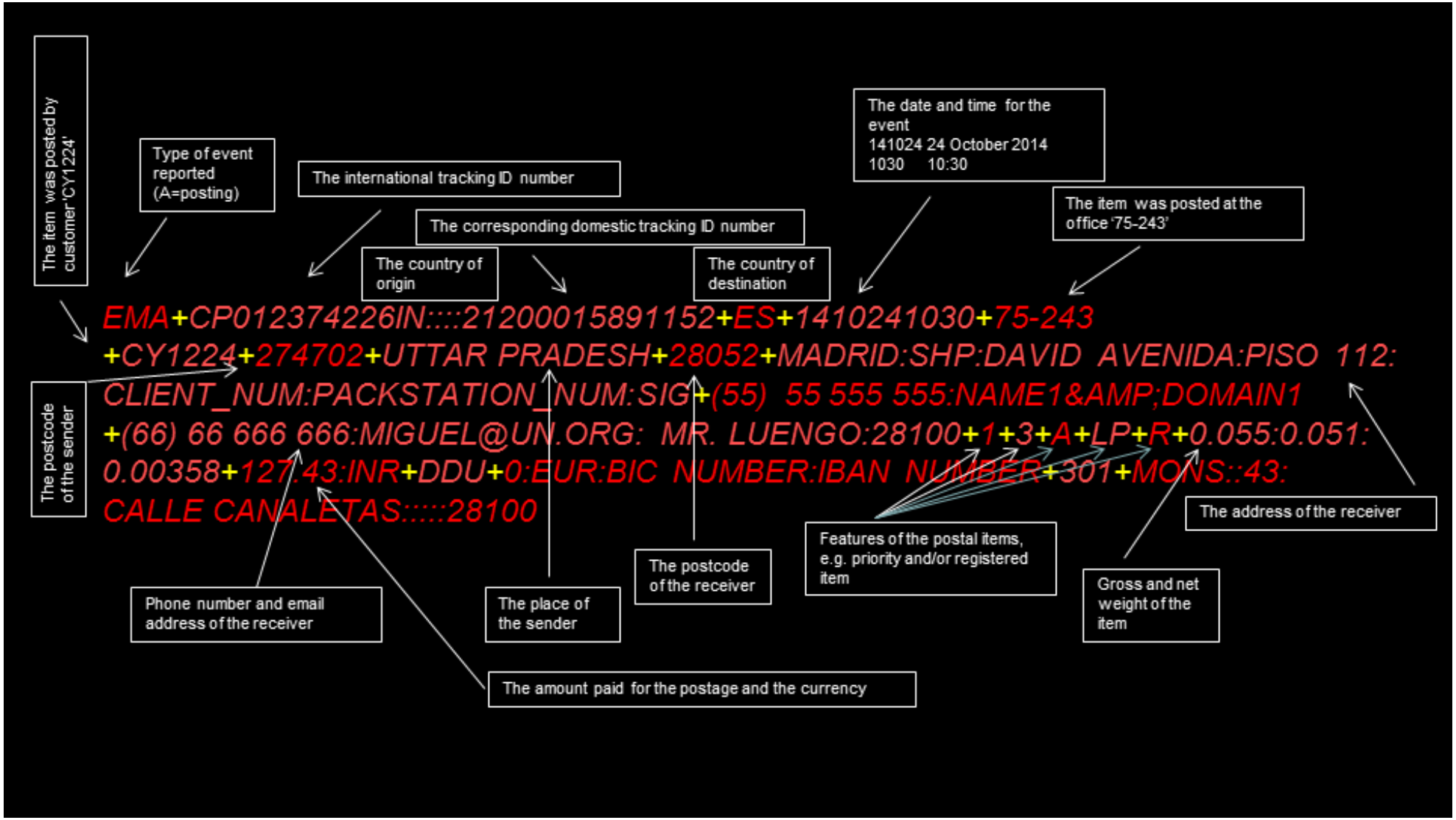
- **High-frequency data** extracted from EDI messages are sent between postal operators with operation information about mail items. They contain data on mail type, tonnage, nature of transaction, value of shipment, postage and delivery times.

These are proxies of physically delivered e-commerce purchases.

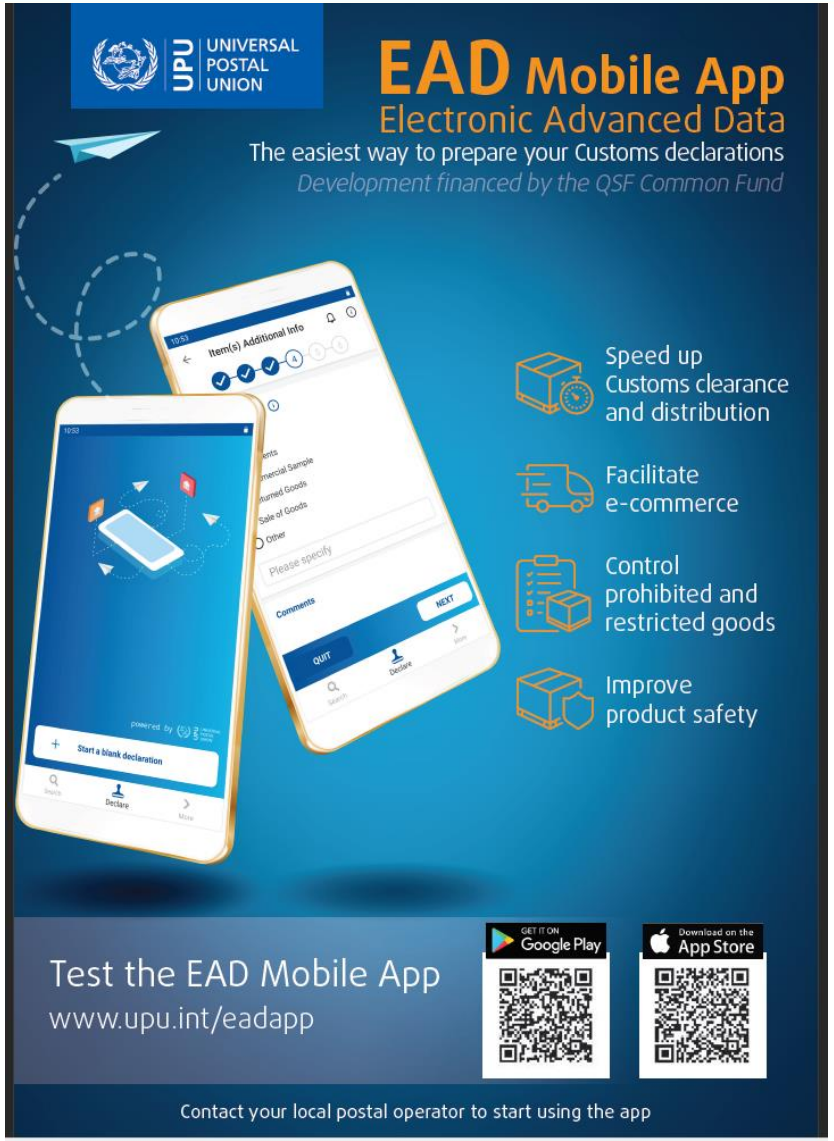
Example 1, the postal supply chain



Example 2, an EDI



Example 3, customs declarations



CUSTOMS DECLARATION **CN23**

(Designated Operator)

From

Name
Business
Address
Postcode Tel. No.
Country

Sender's customs reference (if any)

No. of item (barcode, if any)

May be opened officially

Important! See instructions on the back.

To

Name
Business
Address
Postcode Tel. No.
Country

Importer/addressee reference (if any) (tax code/VAT No./importer code) (optional)

Importer/addressee fax/e-mail (if known)

Detailed description of contents (1)	Quantity (2)	Net weight (in kg) (3)	Value (5)	For commercial items only: HS tariff number (7)	For commercial items only: Country of origin of goods (8)
		Total gross weight (4)	Total value (6)	Postal charges/Fees (9)	

Category of item (10)
☐ Gift
☐ Documents
☐ Commercial sample
☐ Returned goods
☐ Sale of goods
☐ Other (please specify) :
Explanation :

Office of origin/Date of posting

Comments (11): (e. g.:goods subject to quarantine, sanitary/phytosanitary inspection or other restrictions)

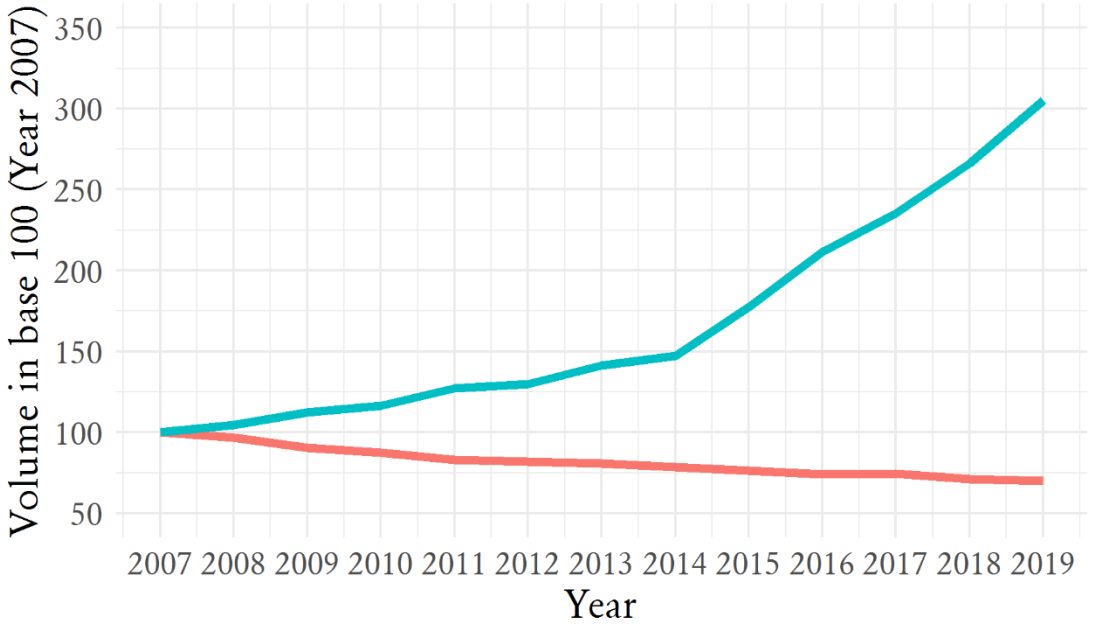
I certify that the particulars given in this customs declaration are correct and that this item does not contain any dangerous article or articles prohibited by legislation or by postal or customs regulations.

☐ Licence (12)	☐ Certificate (13)	☐ Invoice (14)	Date and sender's signature (15)
No(s). of licence(s)	No(s). of certificate(s)	No. of invoice	

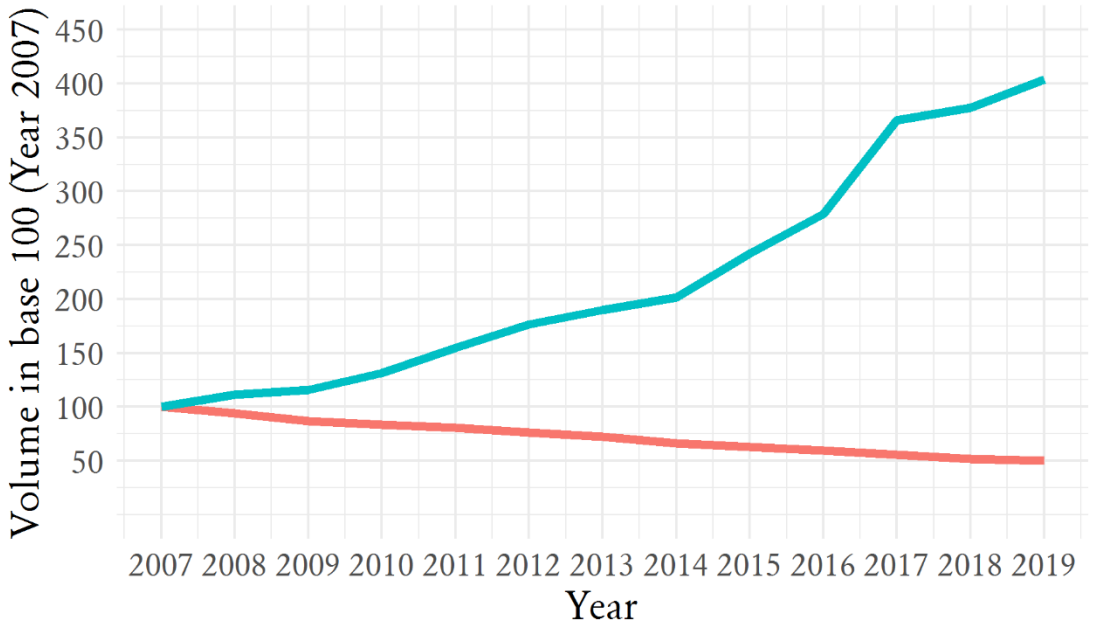
Challenges remain in achieving full coverage, which differs across EDIs

- **Bilateral delivery times**, a proxy for trade costs, are accurately estimated (170 operators with an average of 69 partners).
- **Cross-border postal tonnage** and volumes are well known (170 operators with an average of 48 partners).
- **The value of cross-border items** is known only for some countries and territories (170 operators with an average of 25 partners). However, identifying HS-codes remains challenging.
- For now, the network covers **only designated postal operators**.

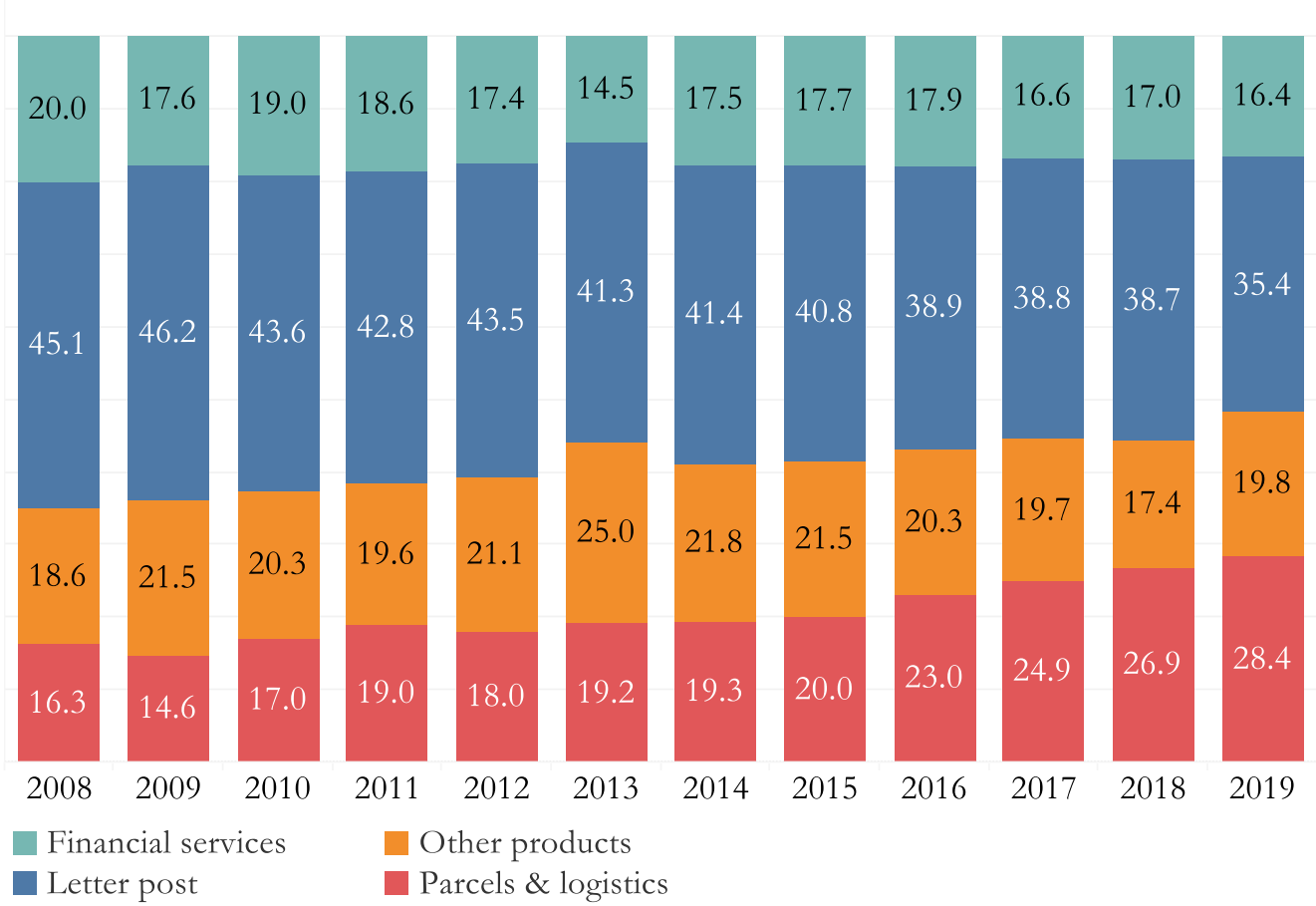
- Latest publications: https://www.upu.int/en/Universal-Postal-Union/Activities/Research-Publications
- UPU standards: https://www.upu.int/en/Postal-Solutions/Programmes-Services/Standards
- UPU postal statistics: https://www.upu.int/en/Universal-Postal-Union/Activities/Research-Publications/Postal-Statistics
- UPU Monthly Postal Trade dashboard: https://marketplace.officialstatistics.org/upu-monthly-postal-trade



Source: Global estimates based on UPU official statistics.
Notes: Items normalized to 100 in 2007 to allow for trend comparison.

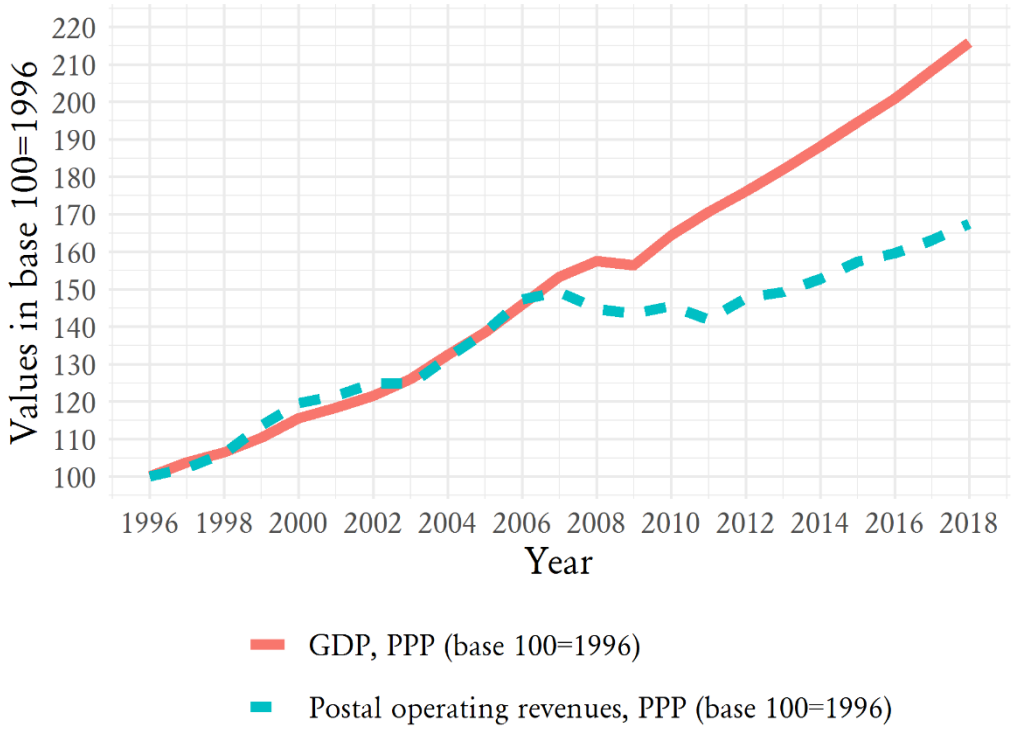


Source: Global estimates based on UPU official statistics.
Notes: Items normalized to 100 in 2007 to allow for trend comparison.



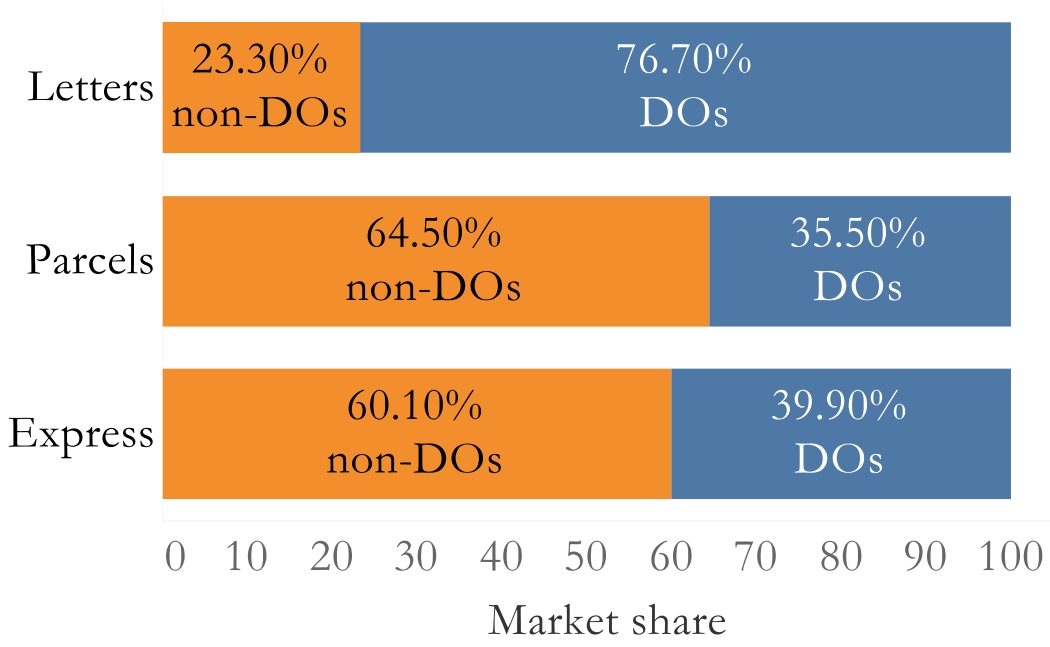
Source: UPU official statistics (2020).

"Postal decoupling"

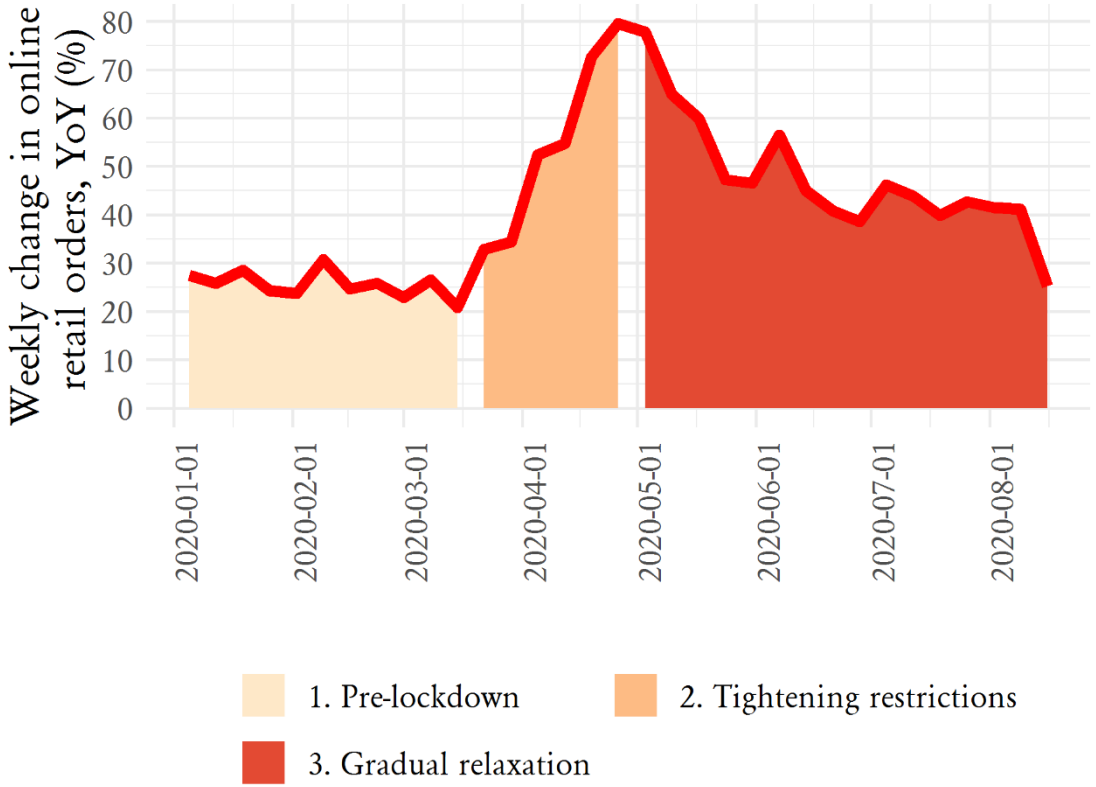


Source: World Bank WDI and estimates based on UPU official statistics.
Notes: Values normalized to 100 in 1996 to allow for trend comparison.

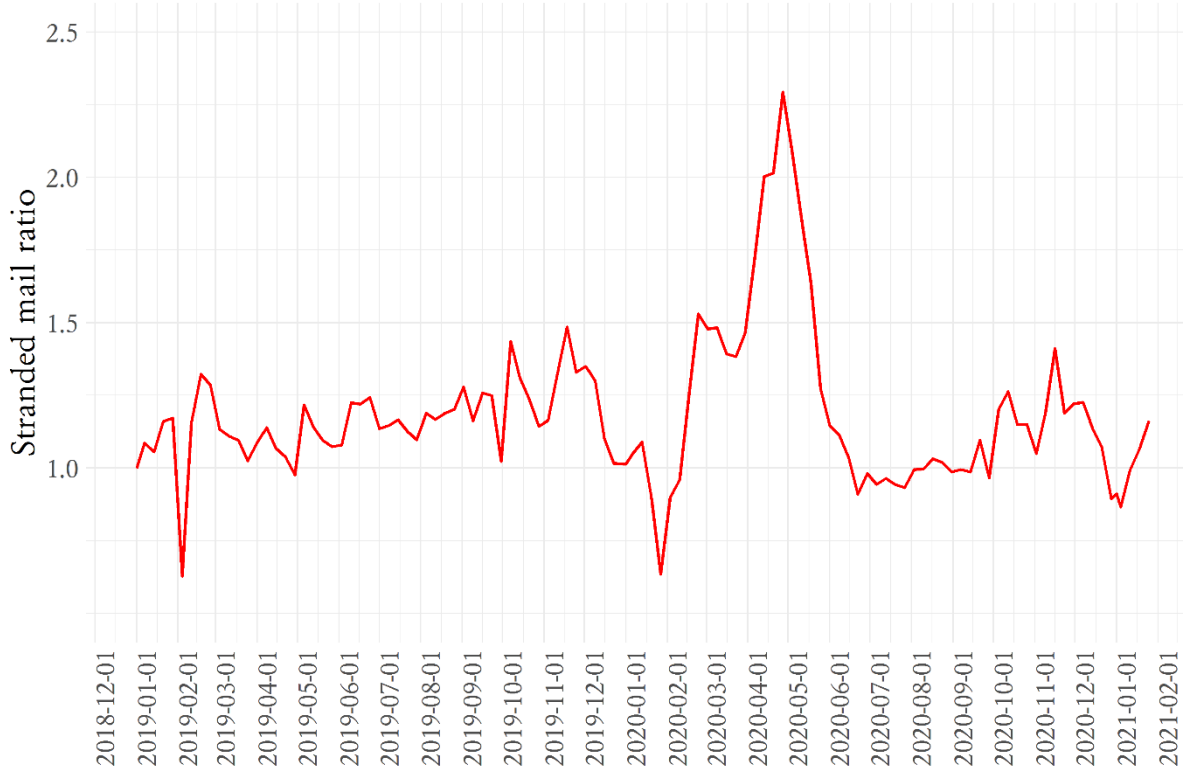
Evolving competitive arena



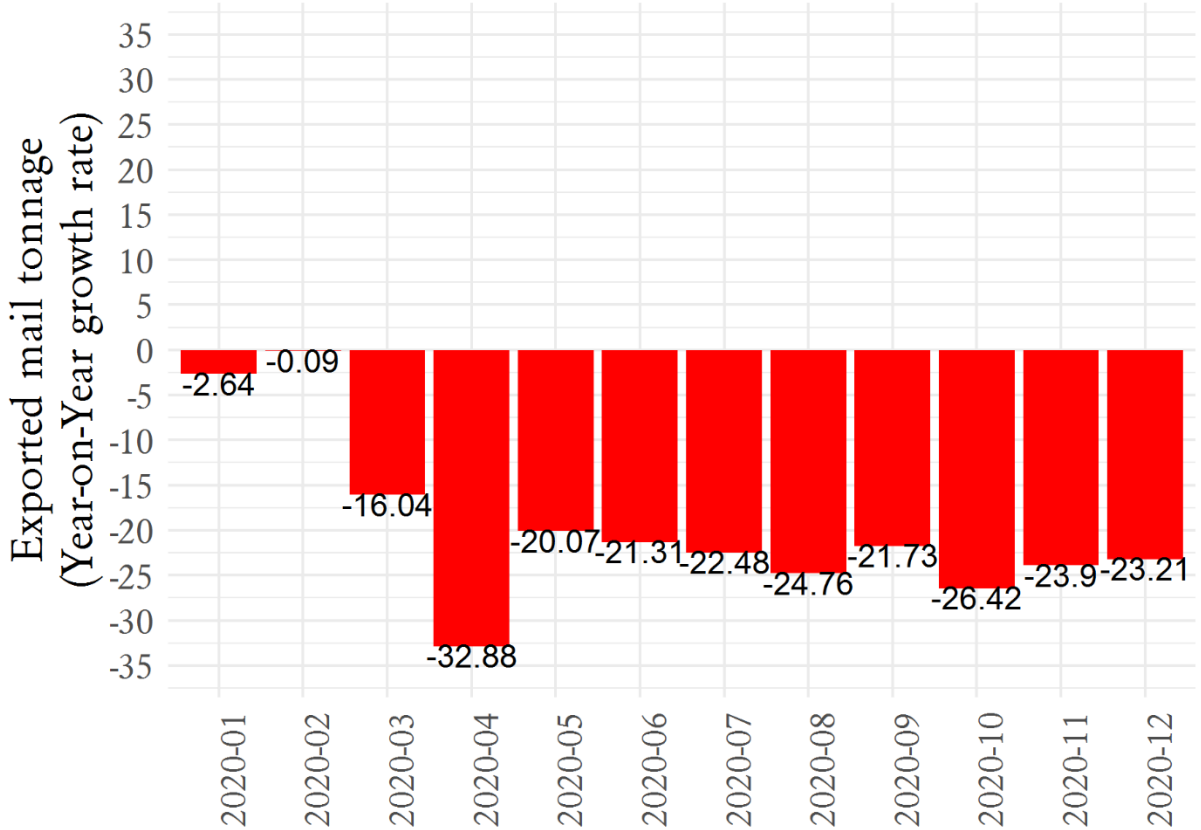
Source: global estimates based on UPU official statistics (2016-2018).



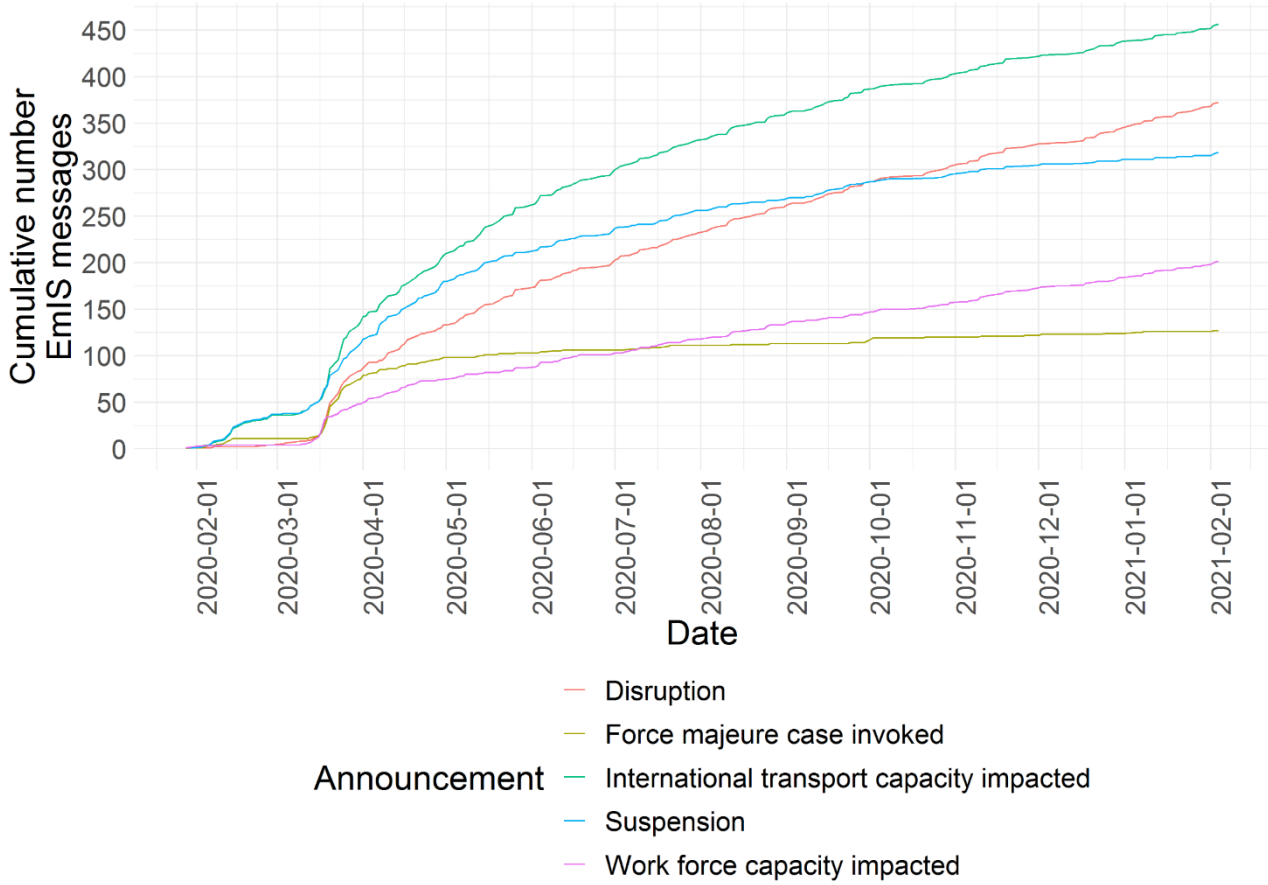
Source: Emarsys, COVID-19 Commerce Insight.
Note: Simple average at the global level.



Source: UPU big-data platform, EMSEVT3 messages.
Notes: Weekly ratio between announced despatch and reception of mail.
Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages at the office of exchange level.



Source: UPU big-data platform.
Notes: Global monthly tonnage of letters, parcels and express mail.



Source: UPU Emergency Information System (EmIS) messages.
Notes: Daily cumulative sum of announcements at the global level.

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THANK YOU!

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