

A Conversation with Mr. Chokri ELLILI on Quality Management Certification Program and Operational Efficiency Initiatives

- *Interviewee: Mr. Chokri ELLILI, the Quality Improvement Programme Manager of IB, UPU*
- *Interviewer: APPU Bureau*

Q1: What are the main aims of the UPU Quality Management Certification (QMC) program and its role in improving the postal services?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: The QMC program focuses on evaluating international quality of service management, aiming to provide a level playing field for assessing Designated Operators (DOs), regardless of their country's development status. It aims to assess not only the application of quality management tools and procedures but also the organization and management of postal operations. This UPU certification is a means of continuous quality of service improvement and allows DOs to evaluate the effectiveness of their end-to-end quality system and operational processes, as well as the management of their electronic data interchange (EDI) messages, and the reliability of their transportation and distribution network.

Q2: What obligations do DOs need to fulfil to obtain and maintain the QMC?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: DOs with an internal quality of service assurance system for cross-border mail products and services can engage in the UPU certification process. The assessment involves questionnaire responses (including prerequisites), performance results and an on-site audit. Before certification, DOs ensure they meet all the prerequisites, request certification, and submit the completed questionnaire and the required supporting documents. The levels of certification attributable to the certification process include Gold (level A), Silver (level B) and Bronze (level C), valid for three years with annual validation to ensure standards are upheld.

Q3: Are there benefits for DOs obtaining the QMC? How does it impact their reputation and competitiveness?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: Indeed, QMC fosters continuous quality enhancement. Certification can be communicated to customers, showcasing DOs' commitment to quality management. It reflects their capacity for short and long-term service improvement and can be communicated through various media channels to customers and the public, so as to raise awareness of DOs' efforts. Audits evaluate international sorting centre(s), office(s) of exchange and more, leading to better operational processes and customer satisfaction and revenues.

Q4: What challenges do DOs face during the certification process and how does the UPU support them?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: Meeting prerequisites and providing evidence documents pose primary challenges. The UPU International Bureau collaborates on action plans based on questionnaire responses and documentation. The UPU's key regional projects for the period 2022-2025 relating to Operational Efficiency and Readiness for E-commerce include QMC as one of its seven key pillars. This is reflected in the country roadmap and action plan through comprehensive actions that cover the following:

- Preparation: Set goals, Define the scope, Define the implementation approach, Assign responsibilities, Conduct gap analysis, Define a plan;

- Documentation: Policy, Quality objectives, Scope statement, Procedures, Work instructions, Forms, Process maps (flowchart);
- Implementation: Provide training, Introduce the procedures, Achieve process improvement, Do work instructions, Keep records;
- Audit: Set up the audit program, Provide auditor training, Conduct the complete audit Certification: Undergo a certification audit conducted by an independent third-party auditor, Assessments, Get certified, Maintain certification.

Q5: How do you view the outcomes of the regional ORE follow-up workshop?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: The ORE 3 regional project for Asia-Pacific launched for the period 2022-2025 has made significant progress in operational efficiency and compliance in line with new functional and operational requirements. This workshop showcased DOs' advancements in OE-related activities, linking seven key ORE 3 pillars with QMC areas, including international transport, customs clearance, security, addressing and compliance of electronic data with UPU technical standards. The participating DOs of the region made a considerable progress in fulfilling the minimum operational, technical and regulatory requirements as well as in upgrading their systems and EDI messages in compliance with the UPU regulations and procedures. By implementing their action plans in accordance with the set deadlines, it is expected that progress will be also seen at the level of quality improvement and service reliability as well as in e-commerce integration.

Q6: What steps will address areas of improvement identified in the ORE-3 program?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: Post-workshop monitoring, developing and implementing realistic and practicable action plan is crucial. UPU's follow-up involves Country Project Managers, Regional Field Experts, the ORE Regional Project Facilitators, and the International Bureau. The aim is certifying participating DOs through country and regional organizational efforts. Progress updates will be reported to the Plenary of the Postal Operations Council by its POC Chair (France) as part of its key transversal activities with the POC work plan for 2021-2025 period.

Q7: How can the program's effectiveness be enhanced based on observations?

Mr. Chokri ELLILI: Building on previous regional projects, ORE 3 emphasizes practical capacity building and synergy between planned activities. Hands-on training will be a consistent approach. Of particular attention in the ORE 3 regional projects for this cycle is the development and setting up of Regional Operational Centres of Competence (ROCC) to supplement its activities and increase investment in capacity building, supply chain integration, operational efficiency and quality improvement, hence contributing to the enhancement of cooperation and networking among member countries and their DOs as well as in close cooperation with other postal organizations and stakeholders within the region, such as Restricted Unions. We are working on strengthening the implementation, monitoring and control expertise in the field by developing the capacities of a pool of experts complementing the cross-functional project team of ORE, with the aim of strengthening efficiency and effectiveness implementation of activities notably through the UPU regional experts in the field, the regional project facilitators and the national project managers, as foreseen in the organizational structure of the ORE project. We are also considering to develop online training modules through the development of professional videos and interactive electronic modules for specific ORE activities in order to reach wider targets/recipients.