



## Press Release

### **Launch of The Free and Fair Post Initiative**

Brussels, 23 October 2000

The Free and Fair Post Initiative (FFPI) is a pan-European initiative of users of postal services who have come together to promote the liberalisation and a level playing field in the postal sector. Although FFPI is a “start up” it has already obtained the support of several companies, trade and professional associations in Europe, such as direct marketers, publishers, retailers, express couriers, etc.

One of the purposes of today’s launch is a call for membership. *“It is time that we have a well-informed and open debate about the future of postal services in Europe”,* said Philippe Bodson, President of the FFPI. *“The FFPI aims at being the voice of those (users, consumers and competitors) who believe that without a final date for liberalisation and a level playing field, there will be no improvement of postal services in terms of quality, choice and price. We therefore invite all those who share our views to join the FFPI in order to be able to counter-balance the influence of the anti-liberalisation groups”.*

The FFPI considers that the EU leaders have shown the way at the March 2000 Lisbon Summit when they confirmed that liberalisation of the postal sector should be speeded up to create a fully operational market in this area. The FFPI wants to ensure that this is not purely wishful thinking. Liberalisation should not be delayed by false arguments, such as the necessity to maintain a large reserved area to be able to keep the Universal Service Obligation (USO). Bodson stressed that *“The USO must be maintained and can be irrespectively of the reduction of the reserved area; this has been done successfully in other industries”.*

The FFPI is a new initiative that will put the interests of users and consumers first. The role of postal services will change dramatically in the coming years as they will need to adapt to new customers’ demands. *“The FFPI does not want liberalisation to be all a façade; public monopolies should not be replaced by private ones”* insisted Bodson. *“In addition, the increasing number of complaints on competition grounds shows that there is a need for the EU to police the market more effectively. The FFPI will raise this issue with the European Commission”.*

The ongoing debate in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the Commission’s proposal to further liberalise the postal market provides all interested parties with opportunities to inform European decision-makers about their concerns.

*“In a rapidly changing communication environment dominated by Information Technology, increased competition in the postal sector should not be feared by anyone. On the contrary, it should be seen as a mean to prevent a brutal and uncontrolled evolution of the postal market that would lead to the replacement of national monopolies by European monopolies”* concluded the President of The FFPI.

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