



Amsterdam – PostNL and Sandd are ready for consolidation of the postal market. Otherwise, thousands of jobs will disappear, say the postal companies.

In about a week, the so-called 'postal dialogue', an initiative from the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (EZ, Economische Zaken) to discuss the future of the postal market, will start. The postal market shrinks, as a result of more and more post being sent in the digital way. Last year, PostNL saw its volume of physical post diminish by 9.9%.

Last year, the Ministry of Economic Affairs (EZ) published a study into the future of the postal market. Several options came forward from this study, among which cooperation or a bottom price for business post, which would free Sandd and PostNL from fighting for the bottom price. Today, business contracts are sometimes sent at 0.15 € per letter, while the ordinary man pays 0.83 € per letter.

PostNL has been pleading for consolidation since a year, after a merger with the Belgian bpost had not become reality. Although Sandd felt initially more for a solution with bottom prices for business post, the challenger is now also considering consolidation.

Why there is still a need for starting a consultation round, a spokesman from EZ explains: "The usefulness of having a dialogue with an independent chairman, is that the Ministry of EZ finds it is extremely important that the directly involved participants in the market and both professional associations and the postal clientele can indicate what their wishes for the future are and participate directly in the discussion on desirable solutions".

In the meantime, in the period of a couple of years, PostNL has doubled the price for a letter stamp for private customers. "The reality is, that we have in the meantime reached a turning point and, with the current situation, tens of thousands of jobs will be lost in the postal companies. This will lead to Sandd making choices by itself, which will have an impact on the whole postal market".

The principal task of EZ will be to convince the Authority of Consumer and Market (ACM) that a merger of the two postal companies is a good idea. At the end of 2015, PostNL and Sandd already had plans to merge, but, at that time, it was not politically achievable. Moreover, the plan did not correspond with the liberalisation regulations at European level, although many postal companies in our neighbouring countries are still (partially) owned by the State.

In a recent time, ACM persevered in its task to enforce competition in a shrinking market, although liberalisation seems to have lost the race from digitisation. Finally, Parliament will have to make a decision on the future of the postal market.

Am I right, recalling a time when the Dutch were the champions of privatisation? Big money has been made and, now, workers will be the victims.

Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General EUROFEDOP