

# AIRMAIL PROCESS HARMONISATION (FOMBA)



Enhancing airmail transport by ensuring more transparency and visibility

## Why?

In 2006, posts were experiencing increasing delays and required more visibility in the transport leg within the postal pipeline. Meanwhile in the air cargo industry, several airlines involved in mail carriage were facing financial difficulties and a few even considered no longer carrying mail. Because the sustainability and reliability of the airmail network was at risk, IPC invited executives from leading air cargo operators and member posts to discuss the future of airmail.

Airlines confirmed posts are key customers, but they expressed concerns regarding mail-specific handling and misalignment with air cargo processes and systems, which resulted in dropping yield. On the other side, posts wanted to address service performance and the lack of visibility. Posts and airlines agreed to closely cooperate and expand electronic data interchange to provide more visibility to mail in transport and to create conditions to replace paper-based handling and accounting processes with paper-free transport and invoicing.

## How does it work?

The Future of Mail by Air (FoMBA) initiative is governed by the executives of the initial group of member posts and airlines. It is open to all posts and airlines willing to actively contribute and willing to commit to deploy the commonly agreed measures.

The key working areas are: space allocation, electronic proof of custody and proof of delivery, data capturing efficiencies and electronic settlement based on standard operating and messaging procedures.

Posts and airlines agreed to benchmark best practice and define enhanced business processes aimed at aligning air cargo and airmail operations to achieve cost reductions. This developed into standard operating and messaging procedures that define both the standard operational processes as well as the EDI messaging procedures.

Posts and airlines alike need real-time information to manage operations and meet quality targets, comply with security declaration requirements, improve efficiency, reduce costs, and determine payments to each other. The exchange of electronic data interchange (EDI) is a condition to help them to meet customer requirements. Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) interconnects posts and airlines, enabling the creation of an integrated end-to-end network.

Participants of the FoMBA initiative also work on meeting commonly agreed targets for KPIs defined for airmail measurability, service performance and paper-free deployment.

FoMBA is also the driver behind IPC-developed solutions that support the airmail industry, which include but are not limited to:

- The Integrated Forecasting Allocation and Booking Solution (IFABS): an end-to-end solution designed to assist posts and airlines in airmail transport planning. IFABS includes modules to forecast transport capacity needs, optimise transport plans, build allotment templates, and facilitate booking into the allotment.
- The Mail Registration Device (MRD): allows for the quick and simple registration of mail handovers between posts and airlines at postal facilities situated in airports.
- The FoMBA dashboard, Airmail Consignment Monitoring, and other Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reporting tools

## Benefits

The posts participating in the FoMBA initiative can provide more tracking information specifically from transport leg ( leg 2) to their customers and provide a more reliable and consistent service at a lower operating cost, thereby obtaining a competitive advantage compared to posts that have not deployed similar measures.

Both posts and airlines participating in the FoMBA initiative have obtained processing efficiencies through the expansion of EDI and paper-free transport. Some of the advantages offered by FoMBA are:

- Improved visibility and quality of service
- Increased interoperability and cost reductions
- Benchmarking and adaptation of best practices
- Industry platform to anticipate and adapt to future market trends
- Development and deployment of standards to meet business requirements

## Facts & Figures

Since the start of the FoMBA initiative in 2006 and up to 2018:

- The number of post–airline pairs exchanging EDI messages has quadrupled.
- EDI standards have been upgraded based on FoMBA requirements to achieve efficiencies and comply with regulations and e-commerce market demands. New data elements were introduced to support optimised tracking through nesting of receptacles in air containers. Moreover, these data elements improve accountability, allocation and settlement by introducing data fields like latest handover times, contracting carrier, contract reference and booking reference, among others. To align with air cargo processes, the postal airway bill number was included.
- All FoMBA posts and airlines have implemented the latest EDI message standards.
- The number of EDI-based consignments travelling paper free (i.e. with no paper delivery bill) continues to grow and has passed the 85% mark among FoMBA participants.
- The upgraded standards and best practices are being promoted to all posts and airlines involved in airmail carriage through cooperation with UPU and IATA. To promote the expansion of EDI for airmail, IPC produced a comprehensive EDI Guide, co-published with UPU and IATA. Over 5,000 copies of the English version and 500 copies each of the Russian and French versions of the EDI Guide have been printed. This document is addressed to the different stakeholders of the international mail industry including postal operators, airlines, ground handlers, system vendors, etc. and is the most complete EDI messaging reference in the airmail industry. It provides clear information about the post-airline supply-chain.

## More information

For more information, visit our website: [www.ipc.be](http://www.ipc.be).  
To find out more about the Future of Mail by Air initiative contact [fomba@ipc.be](mailto:fomba@ipc.be).



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