



FLASH OF THE ERGP REPORT ON QUALITY OF SERVICE, CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMPLAINT HANDLING – AN ANALYSIS OF TRENDS¹.

I. BACKGROUND

National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) have to ensure compliance with the obligations arising from the Directive, in particular through the follow-up of quality of service. Quality-of-service standards regarding the universal service (US) are established in order to guarantee a postal service of good quality.

The ERGP continuously monitors the effects of postal liberalisation through appropriate indicators such as benchmarking the quality of postal services and their development over time, including consumer protection and complaint handling, to ensure that consumers are protected in accordance with the provisions of the Directive.

The report is based on the 33 replies received from the ERGP members to a questionnaire requesting data for 2014 on quality of service and end-user satisfaction, including complaint handling and consumer protection. This ERGP report describes the current practices of NRAs regarding two components, namely quality of service and end-user satisfaction on the one hand and consumer protection and complaint handling on the other.

The report examines five key issues in the field of quality of service and end-user satisfaction, namely:

1. measurement of quality of service concerning transit time;
2. collection and delivery;
3. access points;
4. measurement of consumer satisfaction;
5. surveys regarding customers' needs.

The report also examines four key issues in the field of consumer protection and complaint handling, namely:

1. competence of NRAs on complaint handling;
2. information provision and access to complaint handling and dispute resolution;
3. compensation schemes for individual customers;
4. collection of data on complaints.

The objective of this flash is to highlight some of the key findings of the report, regarding quality of service, consumer protection and complaint handling.

¹ Please note that the flash does not substitute the report, which includes the methodological, additional notes and references to specific national circumstances. Therefore, you should always refer to the report to have a complete picture regarding quality of service, consumer protection and complaint handling and also to the related footnotes notes. The report is available at [ERGP WEBPAGE Documents](#).



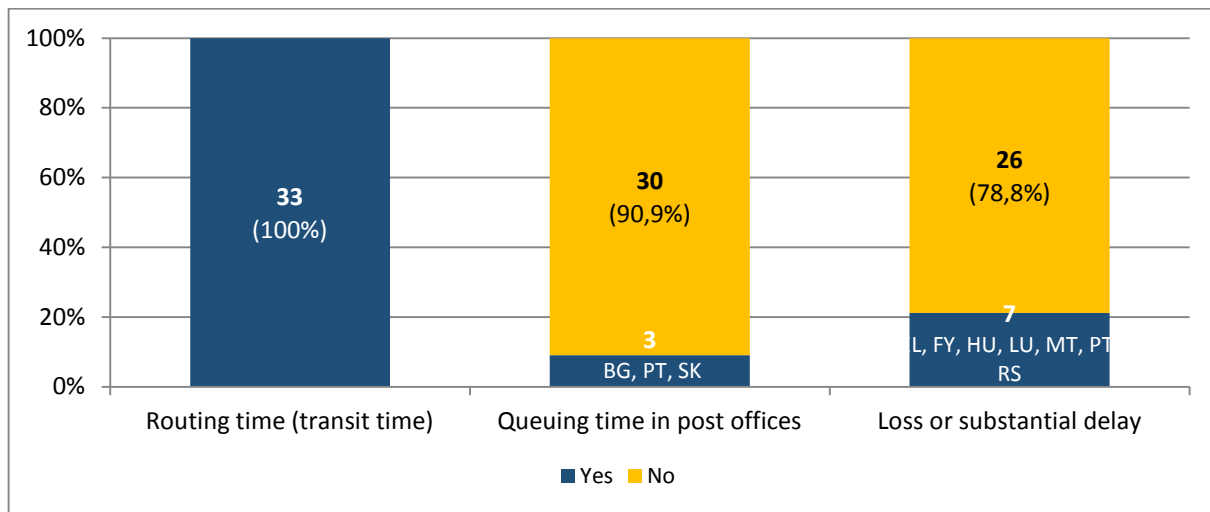
II. CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING QUALITY OF SERVICE AND END-USER SATISFACTION

The quality of service and the end-user satisfaction have been analysed taking into consideration the following five dimensions:

1. Measurement of quality of service concerning routing times and the regularity and reliability of services

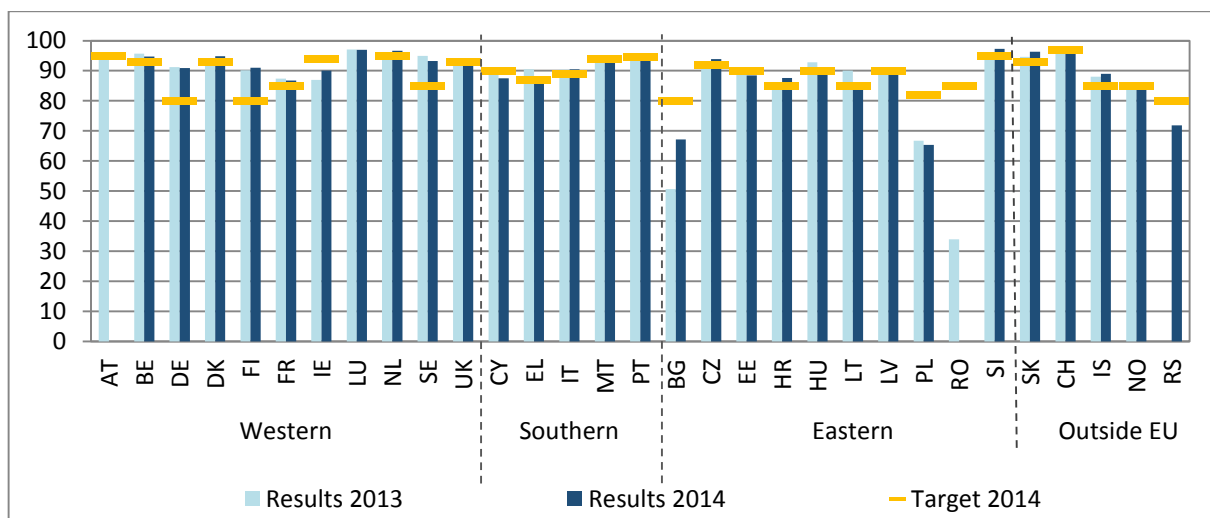
All 33 ERGP members have regulatory objectives for routing times (100% of the respondents). Only 3 countries (9%) have regulatory objectives regarding queuing time in post offices and 7 countries (21%) regarding lost items or substantial delay.

Figure 1 – Regulatory objectives



In 2014, amongst the 28 countries which provided their targets and results (D+1), 22 countries achieved their target regarding D+1 delivery, while 6 countries did not. Amongst the 28 countries which provided their results for 2013 and 2014 (D+1), 14 recorded a progress in transit time quality, while 14 did not (but for 5 of them, the quality was just slightly lower).

Figure 2 – Targets (2014) and results (2013 and 2014) regarding D+1 delivery of single piece priority mail²



² ES, LU: no target regarding D+1 delivery for priority mail in 2014
 FY: no regulatory objective for priority mail
 RO: no measurement of quality of service for priority mail in 2014.

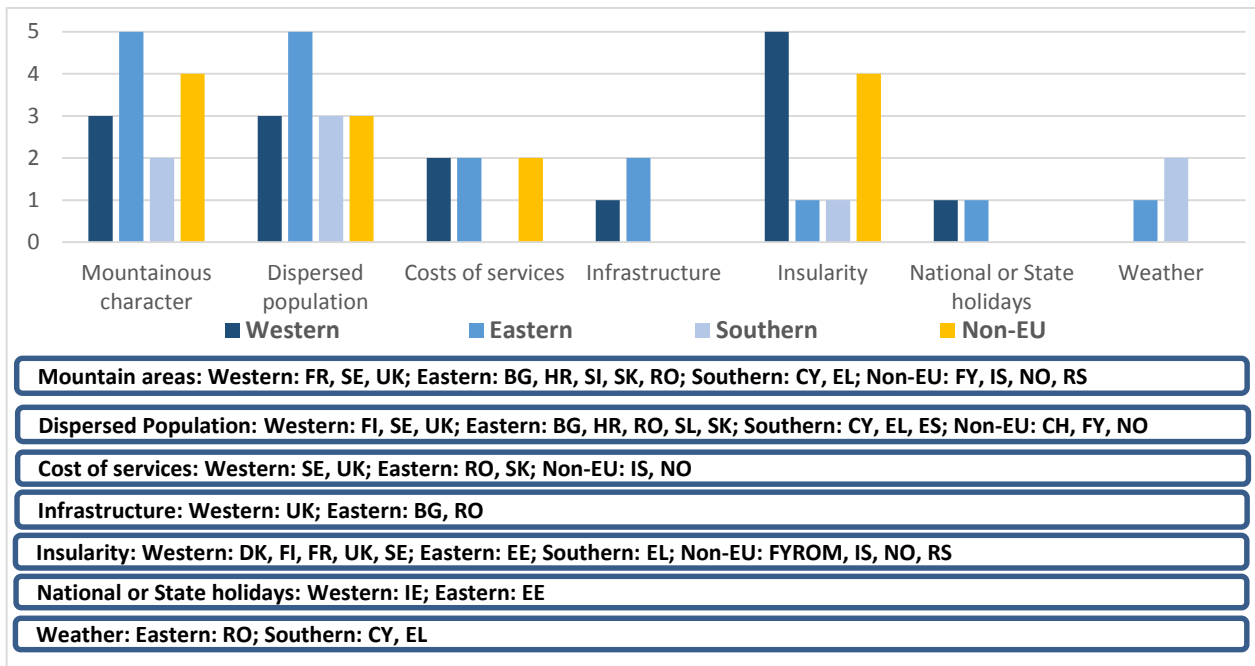


2. Collection and delivery

Regarding the frequency of collection and delivery to be carried out by the USP, the responses received revealed that the Directive has been implemented by all ERGP members establishing at least one collection/delivery for 5 days a week (in some countries the obligations have been extended to 6 days per week).

Nonetheless, many countries have granted exceptions regarding frequency of collection and in particular delivery. Responses revealed that exceptions are mainly related to disperse population, mountain areas and islands. Figure 3 gives a general picture regarding derogation in the frequency of collection and delivery.

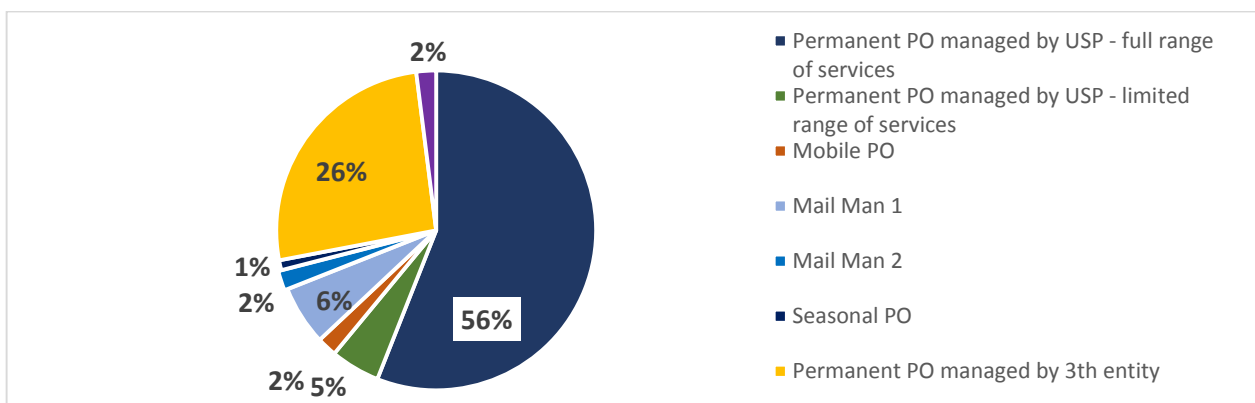
Figure 3 – Derogation in the frequency of service



3. Access points

The access point is a rather sensitive issue and this is reflected by the fact that a vast majority of the countries deem it necessary to have requirements or standards to ensure an adequate number of collection letterboxes and points of contact/postal establishments. There are different types of points of contact at the European level as indicated in figure 4. The most common is the permanent post office managed by the USP offering a full range of services and the permanent post agency managed by a third party.

Figure 4 – Percentage by type of points of contact in 2014





4. Measurement of consumer satisfaction

According to the responses, 14 out of 31 NRAs (45%) use or monitor indicators of consumer satisfaction in their countries. The results from the 2015 questionnaire show that 9 USPs in Europe conduct studies regarding the level of consumer satisfaction and publish the results.

5. Surveys regarding customer needs

In terms of surveying consumer needs and market, 16 NRAs (48%) do conduct such surveys. The consumer needs surveys carried out by the USPs are in most cases not publicly available.

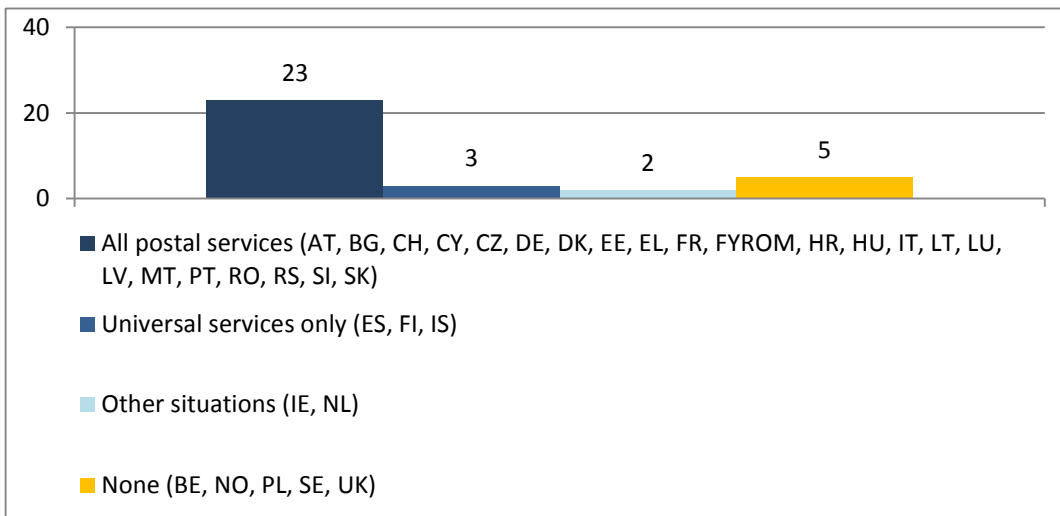
III. CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING COMPLAINT HANDLING AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

The report examines four key issues in the field of complaint handling and consumer protection, namely:

1. Competence of NRAs regarding complaint handling

In 26 (79%) out of the 33 countries, the NRA is generally responsible for dealing with user complaints. In three of these countries (9%), the NRA only handles complaints with regard to the universal service, while in the majority of the countries (67%), all postal service issues can be addressed. Six (18%) NRAs stated that they are not obliged to handle user complaints.

Figure 5 – NRAs dealing with user complaints



2. Information provision and access to complaint handling and dispute resolution

Figure 6 below indicates which postal services are subjected to regulation of complaint handling procedures. The postal services providers' complaint handling procedures are regulated in the majority of the cases (25 countries or 76%). The regulation covers the USP in all cases. Seven (21%) out of the 33 respondent NRAs stated that there is no regulation. Other service providers active within the scope of the universal service and other operators providing services outside the universal service scope are covered in 19 (58%) and 18 (56%) cases respectively.



Figure 6 – Regulation of complaint handling procedures

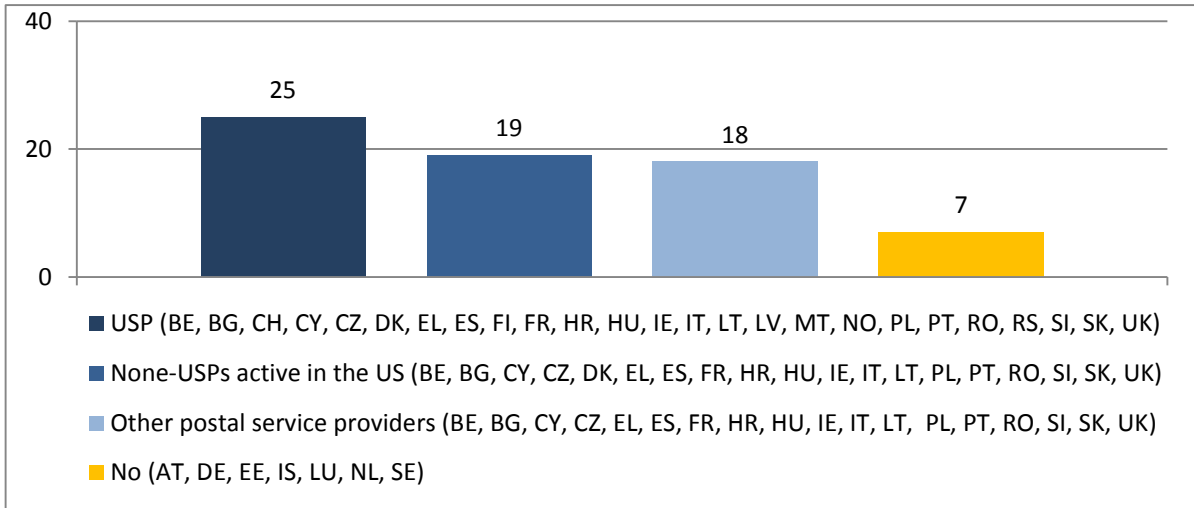
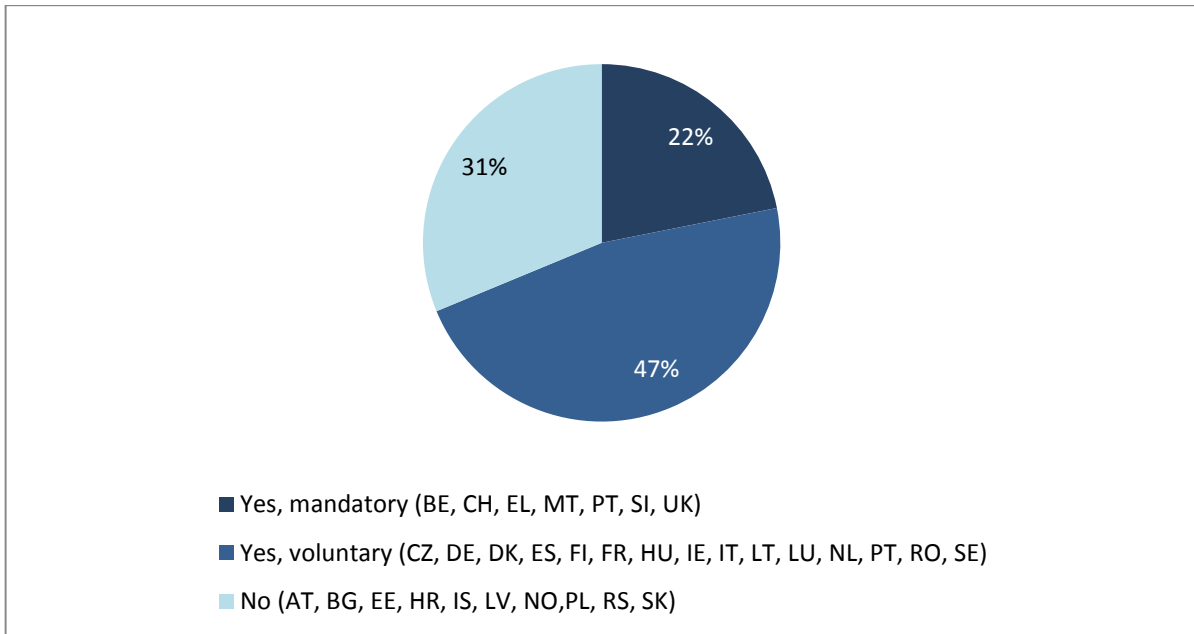


Figure 7 below indicates whether an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) exists and if so, which kind.

Figure 7 – Alternative (or out-of-court) Dispute Resolution (ADR)



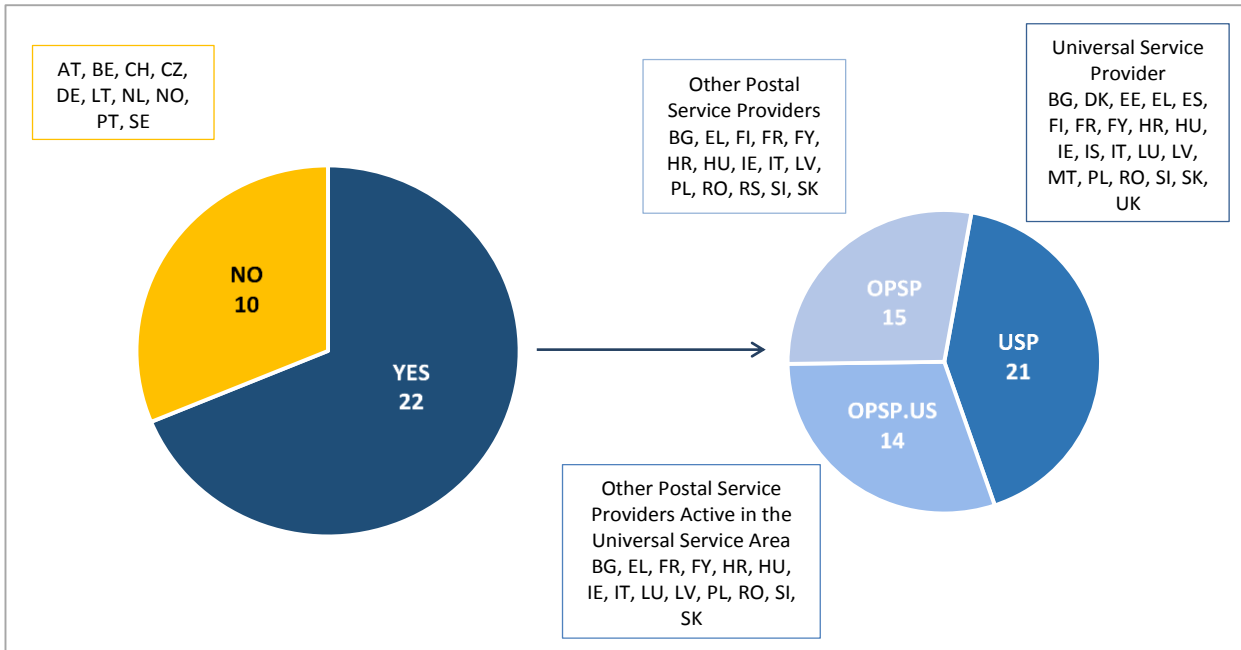
The majority of countries have Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). This can be either general or specific to the postal sector. ADR is voluntary in 15 countries, whilst being mandatory in 7 countries.



3. Compensation schemes for individual customers

Regarding the scope of existing compensation schemes, most countries (22 out of 32) have an obligation for a specific compensation scheme which concerns the USP. This is also extended to other postal service providers as indicated in figure 8.

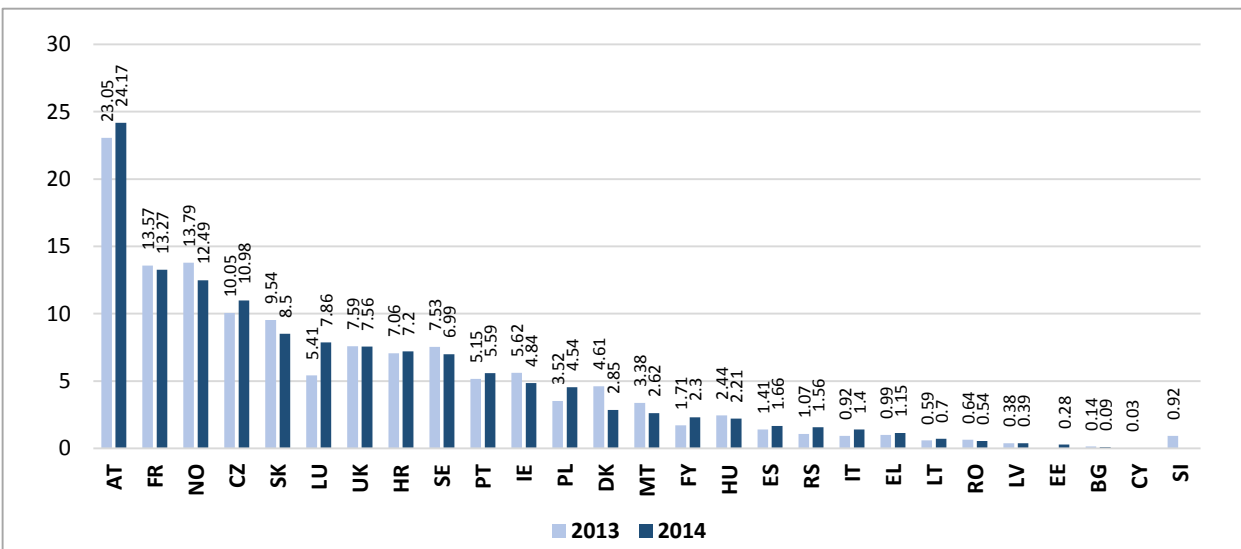
Figure 8 – Mandatory compensation schemes for individual customers



4. Collection of data on complaints by NRAs

With regard to collection of data on complaints, almost all NRAs collect data on complaints received by the USP regarding US (29 out of 33). Figure 9 shows the complaints received by USPs about universal service per country per 1000 inhabitants. The complaints range in 2014 from 24,17 (Austria) to 0,09 (Bulgaria).

Figure 9 – Complaints received by USPs about universal service per country per 1,000 inhabitants, 2013-2014

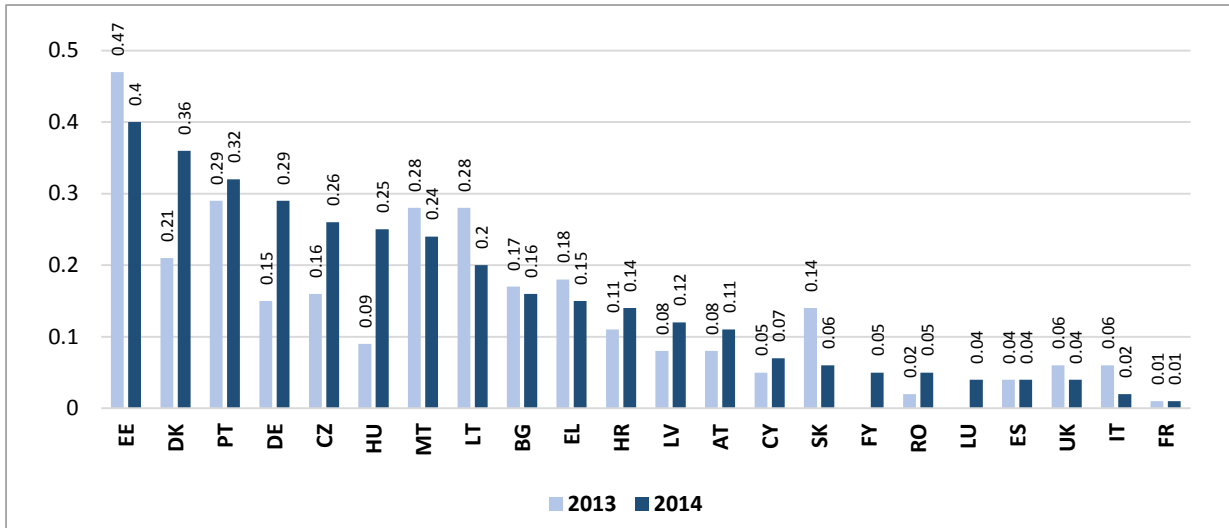


Note: The number of complaints received by USPs and the population per country are included in the appendices as well as notes regarding NRA particularities (annex 8.2.).



Figure 10 shows complaints received by NRAs about postal services per country per 10,000 inhabitants. The complaints range in 2014 from 0,40 (Estonia) to 0,01 (France).

Figure 10 – Complaints received by NRAs about postal services per country per 10,000 inhabitants, 2013-2014



In turn, figure 11 shows complaints received by USPs about cross-border services per country per 1,000 inhabitants. The complaints range in 2014 from 2,65 (Portugal) to 0,002 (Malta). In the majority of countries the complaints on cross-border services have increased, as was the case when considering the 2012-2013 information.

Figure 11 – Complaints received by USPs about cross-border services per country per 1,000 inhabitants, 2013-2014

