

# Introduction

At first glance, the Second World War does not seem like it would provide a suitable background for European integration. This is true not only when considering European integration as it is commonly understood today – that is, as closely linked to the development of the European Communities and the European Union – but also when viewing it as a process of the entanglement of networks<sup>1</sup>. A war that started on the basis of National Socialist ideology does not appear to present the right preconditions for European integration because nationalism and internationalism are often represented as contradictory. Accordingly, post-war discourses have described National Socialist ideas on Europe as ‘anti-Europe’<sup>2</sup>. European integration is often viewed as having started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the Second World War is then considered an aberration in this process, which started anew after the war. However, this view of the war has recently been contested in light of new research on international cooperation, especially between the Axis powers.<sup>3</sup> This research shows that both the Italian Fascists and the German National Socialists were interested in using international organisations to gain control over several policy areas. The National Socialists spent considerable time and resources evaluating existing international organisations and deciding how to proceed with them – that is, whether to close them, take them over, replace them or create new organisations altogether<sup>4</sup>. The research underlines the long-standing international impact that National Socialist social policies have had even if they were taken as a counterexample<sup>5</sup>. Yet,

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- 1 Thiemeyer, Guido: *Europäische Integration*. Köln 2010, p. 9-13.
  - 2 Writer’s own translation: “Antieuropa”, Schmale, Wolfgang: *Geschichte Europas*. Wien 2001 (UTB für Wissenschaft Geschichte, 8213), p. 116.
  - 3 Cf. Fehlhaber, Nils: *Netzwerke der “Achse Berlin-Rom”*. *Die Zusammenarbeit faschistischer und nationalsozialistischer Führungseliten 1933-1943*. Köln 2019 (Italien in der Moderne, Band 25), Martin, Benjamin George: *The Nazi-fascist new order for European culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts 2016.
  - 4 Herren, Madeleine: Fascist Internationalism, in: Sluga, Glenda, Clavin, Patricia (Eds.): *Internationalisms. A twentieth-century history*. Cambridge, United Kingdom 2017, p. 191-212, p. 208.
  - 5 Kott, Sandrine / Patel, Kiran Klaus: Fascist Internationalism: Nazi Social Policy as an Imperial Project - An Introduction, in: Kott, Sandrine / Patel, Kiran Klaus (Eds.): *Nazism across borders. The social policies of the Third Reich and their global appeal*. Oxford 2018 (Studies of the German Historical Institute London), p. 1-25.

the internationalist efforts of fascists and National Socialists lacked one important component: a clear vision of what the future Europe – in propaganda terms, the ‘New Europe’ that was supposed to result from victory in World War II – would actually look like.<sup>6</sup> This ambiguity suited the general despotism often attached to the leadership style of National Socialist Germany and left room for various individuals to implement their own international projects.

This work centers on individuals who pursued such projects, in particular, staff within European postal, telegraphy and telecommunications (PTT) administrations. The choice of this group might be unusual, and research on this group’s actions during the Second World War is limited, but this work aims to explain why it is an important story to tell. The story combines and reflects different aspects of the ‘New Europe’ and continuous European infrastructure integration that occurred not despite but because of World War II. Given that PTT infrastructures depended on international cooperation and overcoming national borders, members of some PTT administrations felt that cooperation was even more necessary during the war time because communication lines had been cut and international communication faced multiple obstacles. In addition, the war had paralysed this group’s usual means of cooperation, namely the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) as well as their committees. Therefore, there was an opportunity for a new PTT organisation to emerge that would satisfy the administrations’ need for cooperation, represent continuity with previous technocratic work and perfectly fit into the propaganda surrounding the ‘New Europe’. The European Postal and Telecommunications Union (EPTU) emerged to meet this opportunity, and it is the focus of this work.

The EPTU was founded in October 1942 by 14 national PTT administrations from 13 countries<sup>7</sup> under the leadership of the two European Axis

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6 Mazower, Mark: *Hitler's Empire. Nazi rule in occupied Europe*, London 2008.

7 In Norway, the postal and the telecommunications administration were separated.

powers, Germany and Italy. The *Reichspost*<sup>8</sup> and the *Amministrazione postale-telegrafica dell'Italia*<sup>9</sup> made the first steps towards establishing European organisations for PTT services at the end of 1940 and set up the union in the following years. In addition to the 14 member administrations<sup>10</sup> that joined later and were from countries occupied by or allied with the Axis powers, four other administrations – from Turkey, Switzerland, the Vatican and Spain – sent delegates as observers to the European Postal Congress in Vienna in October 1942.<sup>11</sup> The union bodies included three permanent committees that discussed specific service-related and technical questions in the time between the sessions of the plenary assembly. Due to the war, only one permanent committee meeting each for postal services and telecommunications as well as one congress took place. A second congress, planned first for October 1943 and then for October 1944, was cancelled. The EPTU was not revived after the Second World War, likely because it was an Axis organisation. The little-known and scarcely researched union was a first in European PTT history: until then, national administrations had successfully averted the creation of a European PTT union to prevent weakening the UPU and avoid political interference in their field of expertise and daily work.<sup>12</sup> This work deals with postal services, and there is only a limited discussion of telecommunications.

A 1942 report on the European postal congress and the creation of the EPTU in the *Diplomatisches Bulletin* states: ‘A treaty has come about that will have a special place in the annals of postal history’.<sup>13</sup> Propagandistic

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8 The literal translation would be ‘Empire post’. The term designates the German administration responsible for postal and telecommunications services in German. The term ‘Reichspostministerium’ which could be translated into ‘ministry of the empire post’ designates the political structure of German PTT services and is used also in the sources – the delimitation of the terms is not quite clear and often employed as synonyms which will be done in this work as well.

9 Italian PTT administration.

10 Germany, Italy, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Albania, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania, San Marino.

11 *Europäischer Postkongress. Wien 1942*; Original-Nachdruck zur postgeschichtlichen Forschung in deutscher (ohne italienische) Sprache = Congresso Postale Europeo (2013). Lizensierte ed., [Nachdr.] der Ausg., Berlin, Reichsdr., 1942. Berlin-Schönefeld: Morgana-Ed (Moderne Postgeschichte, GG 77).

12 Laborie, Léonard: Enveloping Europe. Plans and Practices in Postal Governance, 1929–1959. In *Contemporary European History* 27 (2018), p. 301-325. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777318000085, p. 305.

13 Writer’s own translation: “Es ist ein Vertragswerk zustande gekommen, das in die Annalen der Postgeschichte seinen besonderen Platz einnehmen wird”. Diplo-

aims almost certainly fuelled this declaration, and it turned out to be false. The PTT administrations have largely written the EPTU out of postal history on a national and, more importantly, European level. It is therefore unsurprising that historical research concerning the EPTU is lacking. In addition, the Second World War has often been described as a caesura in international cooperation, and the creation of an international organisation during the war seems to contradict this narrative. Yet, ‘the hegemony of the Third Reich facilitated transnational connections and circulations, particularly when it came to the continent’s technological integration’.<sup>14</sup> This is also supported by Vincent Lagendijk’s research on a European electricity system during the Second World War.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, research in recent years has shown that the Reich pursued different European projects together with Fascist Italy in almost all policy areas.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the creation of a European union that coordinated and harmonised civilian communication in an Axis-controlled Europe should not appear surprising and, in fact, is consistent with these findings. After all, economic and propagandistic agendas need efficient communication to work, especially for a population at war and to establish the Nationalist Socialist’s vision of a future European order.

Postal services – which include the sending of letters, packages, newspapers and much more – were significant for states’ finances at the time because they were a state monopoly; generally, the revenue from these services went directly to the state. Postal administrations were also an important employer as their large size required significant manpower to sustain them.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the creation of the UPU in 1874 and other restricted postal unions such as the Nordic Postal Union (NPU) formally in-

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matisches Bulletin 19, Nr. 83 (28. Oktober 1942), 19. Jahrgang 1942: “Europäisches Einheitsporto beschlossen. Reichspostminister Ohnesorge würdigt das Wiener Vertragswerk”.

14 Laborie, *Enveloping Europe*, p. 302.

15 Lagendijk, Vincent: Ideas, Individuals and Institutions. Notion and Practices of a European Electricity System, in: *Contemporary European History* 27 (2018), p. 202-220. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777318000115.

16 Cf. Brydan, David: Axis Internationalism. Spanish Health Experts and the Nazi ‘New Europe’, 1939-1945. In *Contemporary European History* 25 (2016), p. 291-311. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777316000084; Fehlhaber, Netzwerke der Achse; Herren, Fascist Internationalism; Kott, Sandrine / Patel, Kiran Klaus (Eds.): *Nazism across borders. The social policies of the Third Reich and their global appeal*. Oxford 2018 (Studies of the German Historical Institute London); Martin, The Nazi-fascist new order for European culture.

17 Laborie, *Enveloping Europe*, p. 304.

stitutionalised international cooperation in postal services. These points underline the necessity of further contextualising the EPTU by starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The international PTT unions founded throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century played a major role in European postal cooperation, and more specifically, standardisation, because they remained a constant reference point for PTT experts. Mercantilism had formerly hindered the development of a well-functioning, cross-border infrastructure, but the emergence of railroads challenged this system.<sup>18</sup> The first multilateral postal union was the German-Austrian Postal Union (GAPU). Prior to the GAPU's establishment, the postal systems of the German states were fragmented, and sending letters was difficult. Starting with bilateral agreements between Austria and Prussia, the GAPU was created in 1850 and quickly attracted other German administrations that joined until the end of 1851. The majority of these administrations initially signed a 'participation agreement'<sup>19</sup> with Prussia.<sup>20</sup> Multilateral agreements were signed at five conferences between 1851 and 1866 that progressively standardised postal relations between the German states; this was done mainly because of practical necessities and despite political tensions.<sup>21</sup> The latter would lead to the formal dissolution of the GAPU when Austria left the German confederation in 1866. The participating member states committed to revising their agreements with foreign states to fulfil the conditions of the GAPU's provisions. The GAPU proved highly effective as foreign countries were interested in having access to the same conditions of one unified postal territory that extended from Hamburg to Trieste to the Black Sea and encompassed around 72 million people. The GAPU was an inter-governmental agreement that could only be changed during conferences at which every country was represented by a high-ranking member of the postal administration. While no legislative competencies

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- 18 Benz, Andreas: *Integration von Infrastrukturen in Europa im historischen Vergleich*. Band 3. Post. Baden-Baden 2013 (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Europäische Regionalforschungen, 18), p. 43.
- 19 Hörter, Christian: *Fahrpost in Deutschland 1808-1923*. Unter besonderer Beachtung von Bayern und Preussen: Pakete, Wertsendungen, Nachnahmen, Barzahlungsbriefe. Nürnberg 1992, p. 180.
- 20 Hörter, *Fahrpost in Deutschland*, p. 179-181.
- 21 Neutsch, Cornelius: Standardisierungen im Postverkehr zwischen 1815 und 1914, in: Ambrosius, Gerold, Christian Henrich-Franke, Neutsch, Cornelius, Thiemeyer, Guido (Hrsg.): *Standardisierung und Integration europäischer Verkehrsinfrastrukturen in historischer Perspektive*, Baden-Baden 2009. (=Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Europäische Regionalforschungen, Bd. 13), p. 59-80.

were transferred to a supranational institution, postal laws and services nevertheless became harmonised<sup>22</sup> prior to German unification in 1871. All important decisions had to be taken unanimously, which is why Andreas Benz characterises the union as trans-governmental and, in a limited way, supranational.<sup>23</sup>

The European and international postal relations of the 1870s mirrored those between the German states in the 1840s. Multiple bilateral and multi-lateral agreements with differing provisions made the international system complex and inconsistent. In particular, high transit charges and difficult accounting procedures between the national PTT administrations became increasingly untenable due to continuous societal and economic internationalisation, which heightened the need for information exchange.<sup>24</sup> Between 1869 and 1948, international traffic tripled while domestic exchange doubled.<sup>25</sup> Thus, ‘this system, which was no doubt adequate enough for the small and leisurely postal traffic of the seventeenth century, was becoming almost unworkable’<sup>26</sup>. In 1864, seven postal administrations of South and Central America had already formed a union.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, bilateral agreements were difficult to negotiate because every administration attempted to increase its income, and agreements were geographically and temporally limited.<sup>28</sup>

Against this background, in 1873, state secretary of the German Empire’s postal office Heinrich von Stephan wrote a 12-point memorandum that called for the creation of a unified postal area between participating states and the introduction of a single common transit charge regardless of distance. The overarching aim of von Stephan’s memorandum was to abolish the transit charge altogether. Furthermore, it stated that the administration of the letter’s origin country should keep the entire charges for sending the letter, and the member administrations should only conclude administrative agreements (not state treaties) with each other. It also set uniform rules for agreements with non-member administrations. These 12 points were the basis for the UPU, which was founded in Bern on 9 October 1874. The 21

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22 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 69-71.

23 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 71.

24 Neutsch, *Standardisierungen im Postverkehr*, p. 72-73.

25 Laborie, Léonard: *L'Europe mise en réseaux. La France et la coopération internationale dans les postes et les télécommunications (années 1850-années 1950)* / Léonard Laborie ; préface Pascal Griset. Bruxelles 2011 (Enjeux internationaux, 12), p. 96.

26 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 74.

27 Neutsch, *Standardisierungen im Postverkehr*, p. 72.

28 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 64.

participants were mostly from European countries, but access was open to all sovereign states, and the union expanded quickly. The member administrations met regularly and worked on detailed aspects of the broad range of postal services.<sup>29</sup> The conference was only possible due to the French defeat at the hands of the German states in 1871. A German-French agreement in 1872 signalled the end of French resistance<sup>30</sup> to a union, yet, the French delegation abstained from all votes during the month-long conference in Bern in 1874 and refused to sign the agreement.<sup>31</sup> Notably, the UPU was created nine years later than the ITU, even though postal services are much older than telecommunications.<sup>32</sup>

The international office of the UPU opened in 1875 in Bern, and its job was limited to coordinating, publishing and distributing information.<sup>33</sup> However, it was also able to establish its own structures and mechanics, such as conferences and congresses, and bring together a professional community that met every three or four years and became independent of diplomats.<sup>34</sup> The legal basis of the UPU consisted of one treaty that mainly determined its organisational standards; the more practical aspects of the postal services were stipulated in conventions and protocols, including the exceptions to the general rules of the treaty.<sup>35</sup> Certain principles guided the experts' work when drafting the treaties and regulations to achieve a unified postal area: freedom of transit, harmonised weight categories for all mailings, one common clearing currency, harmonised tariffs and the simplification of the netting of tariffs for international mail. The UPU had multiple bodies that performed its work. In addition to the bureau and the regular congresses, there were (and still are) different commissions that addressed specific questions regarding postal services. Arbitration was established for topics that could not be resolved within the bodies. The member administrations guaranteed the financing of the union; these were divided into seven contribution groups depending on the size of the country, the size of the

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29 Neutsch, *Standardisierungen im Postverkehr*, p. 72-74.

30 Bilateral negotiations gave the French administration an advantage due to its bigger power.

31 Laborie, *L'Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 98-104.

32 Griset, Pascal / Fickers, Andreas: *Communicating Europe. Technologies, information, events*. 1st edition. New York 2018 (Making Europe, 14816), p. 88.

33 Laborie, *L'Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 127-129.

34 Laborie, *L'Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 116.

35 Sasse, Horst: *Der Weltpostverein. französischer und deutscher Text des Weltpostvertrages und anderer grundlegender Bestimmungen mit einer Einführung*. Metzner 1959, p. 14-15.

population, the national economic situation and whether the country received the union's publications.<sup>36</sup> The UPU discussed all postal service aspects. Although the provisions for letters and postcards are pertinent to this work, they are too numerous to be fully described in this work as they concern topics ranging from letter sizes and the material of postcards to logistics.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that a vast standardisation machinery was already in place and had regulated multiple questions surrounding letters and postcards before 1942. Thus, the members of the EPTU were able to build on this standardisation work and did not need to start entirely anew.

The First World War presented a great challenge to the UPU, not only because it interrupted traffic but also because it destabilised exchange, making it impossible to uphold uniform tariffs. This paralysis of the UPU triggered the creation of restricted unions such as the Pan-American Postal Union<sup>38</sup> and the NPU.<sup>39</sup> These restricted unions also intended to aggregate voices within the UPU to gain more power in decision-making processes.<sup>40</sup> During the interwar period, the UPU's independence from diplomacy was tested by the creation of the League of Nations. However, the UPU was not integrated into this system because of the League's weak influence,<sup>41</sup> and the League had few consequences on the work of postal administrations.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, postal services were reformed by the introduction of a new infrastructure: aviation. Flying accelerated transport and led to the elimination of the majority of ground transit. The postal administration had to collaborate with airline companies to establish a working system, but trains nevertheless remained an important means of transport due to their lower costs.<sup>43</sup>

The interwar period was also characterised by further proposals to create a European postal union, which the Swiss postal director deemed 'relatively easy to achieve'.<sup>44</sup> This idea had been discussed well before the First World War, such as during the GAPU's first conference in 1851,<sup>45</sup> and it re-

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36 Sasse, *Der Weltpostverein*, p. 18-34.

37 Universal Postal Union Convention of Buenos Aires, 23.05.1939, Table of Contents.

38 In the beginning only Latin-American States. After several new adhesions, it is today the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal.

39 Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland.

40 Laborie, *L'Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 250.

41 Laborie, *L'Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 278-281.

42 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 187.

43 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 171-177.

44 Laborie, *Enveloping Europe*, p. 306.

45 Sasse, *Der Weltpostverein*, p. 10.



emerged more strongly after the war. These types of proposals were also put forward by economic actors, such as the International Chamber of Commerce.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, there were plans for a postal union for Central Europe based on the idea of *Mitteleuropa*<sup>47</sup> – a concept which would be alluded to in the German National Socialists’ ideas for a ‘New Europe’.

In 1927, 38 administrations from mostly European countries<sup>48</sup> held a conference on the issue of air mail due to the growing number of air mail connections.<sup>49</sup> The multilateral agreement concluded in Den Haag in 1927 harmonised the bilateral agreements that had previously existed.<sup>50</sup> The UPU recognised the results of this smaller conference as important work,<sup>51</sup> and a first step towards European organisation within the UPU had been made. The Briand Plan of 1930 signalled the strongest political attempt to create a European postal union; it included plans for a European postal area and aimed to establish a European regime for PTT services, starting with, among other ideas, the introduction of a European stamp. Stresemann, the German Foreign Minister and Briand’s counterpart, responded to first contents of the Briand Plan and championed the idea of a European stamp by underlining that it would create new links between European peoples. The inclusion of postal services in the Briand Plan was the result of a concerted lobbying effort by ‘liberal Europeanists’,<sup>52</sup> which included the International Chamber of Commerce and the International Committee for a European Customs Union. The aims of these unified postal services were economic (erasing barriers to trade) as well as political (promoting the idea of a unified Europe).

However, the national PTT administrations did all not support these plans. They answered about a year late to the Briand Plan – during which time, for instance, the influential French and British PTT administrations formed a coalition against the plan. Their arguments can be summarised

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46 Laborie, *Enveloping Europe*, p. 305.

47 Cf. Elemér Hantos, *Mitteleuropäischer Postverein*. W. Braumüller, Wien/Leipzig 1929 as found in: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, N1006/80, and Soutou, Georges-Henri: *Europa! Les projets européens de l’Allemagne nazie et de l’Italie fasciste*. Paris 2021, p. 72.

48 Henrich-Franke, Christian / Laborie, Léonard: *European Union by and for Communication Networks: Continuities and Discontinuities during the Second World War*, in: *Comparativ* 28 (2018), p.82–100. Available online at <https://comparativ.net/v2/article/view/2823>.

49 Laborie, *L’Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 252.

50 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 173.

51 Laborie, *L’Europe mise en réseaux*, p. 254.

52 Laborie, *Enveloping Europe*, p. 305.

into the following points: the Briand Plan would lower incomes; it would add to the complexity of the international system because a new tariff would be introduced and endanger the UPU; it could threaten the independence of the postal system from political projects, an issue postal experts were concerned about.<sup>53</sup> However, the postal community did not universally share this view. For instance, while the German postal director was opposed, the responsible minister was in favour of the plan. Similarly, Károly von Forster, the later deputy Director General of the Hungarian postal services, supported the idea, as did Swedish, Yugoslavian and Czechoslovakian experts.<sup>54</sup>

Immediately before the war, in 1937 and 1938, when the Commission of Enquiry for European Union within the League of Nations took action again for a short period, the plans for a European postal union resurfaced. The argument made for a postal union at that time was that it represented a way to unite a new polity.<sup>55</sup>

Alongside the ideas for a European postal union proposed in the 1930s, the National Socialists' rise to power slowly started to influence European postal relations. The first issues arose in 1933, and they regarded censorship. The *Reichspostministerium*<sup>56</sup> was not the driving force behind the intensification of censorship – disagreements on the latter between the *Reichspost* and other German entities, such as the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW),<sup>57</sup> continued during the war.<sup>58</sup> The censoring led to complaints from other administrations, and it was feared that this would damage the *Reichspost's* reputation abroad. Nevertheless, reports of censorship incidents continuously appeared and in increasing numbers.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the German postal administration began preparing for war in 1935. Postal Protection, which became a section of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) in

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53 Laborie, L'Europe mise en réseaux, p. 322-325.

54 Laborie, Enveloping Europe, p. 308.

55 Ibid.

56 The term *Reichspostministerium* which could be translated into 'ministry of the empire post' designates the political structure of German PTT services.

57 Created in 1938, the OKW was an authority of the Wehrmacht directly subordinate to Hitler.

58 Bundesarchiv, Lichterfelde, R901/112559, Fernschreiben Wiehl an den Reichsaußenminister, 20. Mai 1942.

59 Lotz, Wolfgang: *Die Deutsche Reichspost 1933-1945, Eine politische Verwaltungsgeschichte*. Band I: 1933-1939. Berlin 1999, p. 176-179.

1944,<sup>60</sup> was strengthened for ‘the time of tension’<sup>61</sup> before a potential future war in September 1935.<sup>62</sup> The first tests of continued field and civil post service in case of war were conducted in 1937.<sup>63</sup>

Despite postal experts’ aversion to them, politics played an important role during the congress of Buenos Aires in April and May 1939. The question of the representation of the annexed territories of former Czechoslovakia and continued references to them as independent countries in the agreement of 1939 caused tensions because the German delegation claimed to represent these territories. Ultimately, Germany, Italy, Spain and Hungary did not sign the agreement during the congress and de facto left the UPU. The *Reichspost* did not support this exit, but Adolf Hitler had commanded it, which left the *Reichspost* delegates with no leeway in Argentina. The head of the delegation, ministerial director Karl Ziegler, stated that no political questions had been debated during the congress,<sup>64</sup> but the German military aggressions had nonetheless managed to influence international and European postal relations. The aggressions isolated Germany from the international postal community. However, the non-signatories quickly regained their foothold in the postal community as the *Reichspost* applied the conditions agreed upon in 1939 to the services conducted with non-hostile countries.<sup>65</sup> This solution simultaneously fulfilled two criteria: it favoured political allies and neutral countries, which would be accepted from the political and foreign affairs point of view, and it gave the *Reichspost* renewed access to the UPU and the postal expert community, which would appeal to technocrats. The ability to appease the demands of several sides would later also become crucial in establishing the EPTU.

The Universal Postal Convention adopted in Buenos Aires in 1939 was 244 pages long.<sup>66</sup> Its most important stipulated standards for this work concerned the tariffs for letters and postcards and the transit charge. The general principle – that the first weight category was up to 20 g, the second between 20 g and 40 g, the third between 40 g and 60 g and so on – did not change. The charges for those categories were lowered, from 25 cents to 20

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- 60 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/27017, Mitteilungen über den ehemaligen Postminister Ohnesorge, p. 11.  
 61 Writer’s own translation: “Spannungszeit”. Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11161, Anweisung für den verstärkten Postschutz, p. 2.  
 62 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11161, Anweisung für den verstärkten Postschutz, p. 2.  
 63 Cf. Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11154 and R4701/12132.  
 64 Lotz, Die Deutsche Reichspost, p. 281-284.  
 65 Lotz, Die Deutsche Reichspost, p. 284.  
 66 Universal Postal Union Convention of Buenos Aires, 23.05.1939.

cents for the first category and from 15 cents to 12 cents for every additional 20 g. The charge for a simple postcard was reduced from 15 cents to 12 cents, and the charge for a postcard with a reply card from 30 cents to 24 cents.<sup>67</sup> These reductions were justified given the currency devaluation in some countries in relation to the *Franc*; they were an adaptation to the new realities rather than actual reductions. The subject of the transit charge was discussed in one special commission but dismissed without a conclusion, so that the transit charge was upheld.<sup>68</sup>

The beginning of the military aggressions in September 1939 further worsened the state of international postal relations, and deteriorated the work of the UPU as well as restricted postal unions such as the NPU. The UPU had to reduce its services to, for example, distributing information from the postal administrations as well as stamp collections, identity cards and 'coupons-réponse',<sup>69</sup> and the NPU did not come together for a single congress between 1941 and 1946.<sup>70</sup> As information was crucial for both sides of the war, and Switzerland had become a key country in terms of information,<sup>71</sup> it is not surprising that the office of the UPU (located in Bern) reported cases of censorship. The office proposed that the Swiss Foreign Office introduce a special regime for its mail to be protected from the censoring regimes.<sup>72</sup> This weakening of the UPU did not occur without consequences. Doubts concerning the benefits of international organisations were even raised in France. In the beginning of 1942, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked to review a list of international organisations to define whether French participation in them was useful. While the ministry emphatically underlined the necessity of remaining in the ITU, the *Comité consultatif international télégraphique* (CCIT) and the *Comité consultatif international des radiocommunications* (CCIR), it did not show the same support to the UPU.<sup>73</sup>

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67 Ibid., Art.34.

68 Ibid., Art.75.

69 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0128\_11, Expédition des documents de service par le bureau international aux Administrations de l'Union, 05.1943.

70 Riksarkivet, Oslo, S-1342 - Samferdselsdepartementet, 1. postadministrasjonskontor A, F - Konvensjoner og overenskomster med utlandet, L0042 - Overenskomster Den nordiske Postforening.

71 Kreis, Georg: *Die Schweiz im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Aktual. Neuausg. Innsbruck 2011, p. 122.

72 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0128\_11, Expédition des documents de service par le bureau international aux Administrations de l'Union, 05.1943.

73 Archives politiques, Paris – La Courneuve, Union internationales, 429QO/356, F50dg, Offices internationaux – Dossier général – documentation, Décembre 1941- Février 1942.

In summary, the EPTU was founded alongside a weakened UPU and could build on over 50 years of international postal governance. PTT experts could take over processual and structural elements and the content of the cooperative, standardising work that the delegates of the participating postal administrations had done before. The administrations within the EPTU saw themselves as the continuation of this work, and the union was considered a restricted union of the UPU.<sup>74</sup> Article 5 of the UPU treaty allows the creation of such restricted unions to foster further cooperation in postal services between member administrations. Other restricted unions, such as the NPU,<sup>75</sup> the Balkan Entente<sup>76</sup> and the Pan-American Postal Union,<sup>77</sup> were established in the interwar years and talks of a European postal union reached their high point in 1930, when the idea was included in the Briand Plan.<sup>78</sup>

The UPU mostly focussed on harmonising postal services, agreeing upon standards for letter sizes, weight categories and so on. In addition, tariffs for international services were lowered, and coordination between the administrations' accounting systems was facilitated. Standardisation has thus been identified as a common theme in the postal history of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>79</sup> and unions have been recognised as means to achieve this.<sup>80</sup> Standards facilitate the interoperability and interconnectivity of cross-border systems and are therefore highly important in international infrastructure cooperation.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, once all members had agreed upon them, the international 'framework standards'<sup>82</sup> were characterised by longevity;

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74 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 6.

75 Created in 1919 (Universal Postal Union: *About NPU*, <http://www.upu.int/en/the-upu/restricted-unions/npu/about-npu.html>, last access: 27.05.2020).

76 Created in 1936 (Bridg.-Gen. Sir Mance, Osborne (1944): *International Telecommunications*, London: 1944, p. 7).

77 Created in 1911. Spain joined in 1921. (Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/984)

78 Laborie, L'Europe mise en réseaux, p. 315.

79 Neutsch, Standardisierungen im Postverkehr, p. 60.

80 Neutsch, Standardisierungen im Postverkehr, p. 68.

81 Cf. Ambrosius, Gerold: Standards und Standardisierungen in der Perspektive des Historikers – vornehmlich im Hinblick auf netzgebundene Infrastrukturen, in: Ambrosius, Gerold, Christian Henrich-Franke, Neutsch, C., Thiemeyer, Guido (Hrsg.): *Standardisierung und Integration europäischer Verkehrsinfrastrukturen in historischer Perspektive* 13, Baden-Baden 2009, p. 15-36.

82 Writer's own translation: "Rahmenstandards", Ambrosius, Gerold / Henrich-Franke, Christian: Pfadabhängigkeiten internationaler Infrastrukturnetze, in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte / Economic History Yearbook* 56 (2015), p. 291-312, DOI: 10.1515/jbwg-2015-0012, p. 292.

this is partly due to the high costs that having to renegotiate these overarching standards would incur within a complex politico-administrative international environment.<sup>83</sup> The supposed path dependency of these infrastructure standards requires a deeper investigation of standard-setting within the EPTU.

As an organisation founded during the Second World War, the EPTU cannot be discussed without considering the wider context of the development of the war. Throughout this work, the history of the EPTU is contextualised in relation to the events of the war. While it would go beyond the scope of this work to summarise the existing research on the Second World War, some general findings on the course of the war are important. Generally, the Battle of Stalingrad and the defeat of the Wehrmacht on 31 January 1943 is often considered the most important turning point in the war. In his historiography of the Second World War, John Keegan uses the year of 1943 to chronologically structure his work.<sup>84</sup> Schmidt similarly describes the Battle of Stalingrad as having changed the overall war situation to the detriment of Germany.<sup>85</sup> As will be shown in Part III, this development had an influence on the workings of the EPTU. However, this change in the course of the war was not necessarily foreseen. At the beginning of the Battle of Stalingrad, the Embassy of the United States of America in Moscow expected ‘the collapse of the Soviet regime at any moment’.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, while the Second World War is often designated as a ‘total war’ or a ‘totalising war’<sup>87</sup> with respect to the mobilisation of weapons, people and natural resources,<sup>88</sup> parts of the population remained immobilised,<sup>89</sup> and there was

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83 Ambrosius / Henrich-Franke, *Pfadabhängigkeiten*, p. 292-296.

84 Cf. Keegan, John: *Der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Kober, Hainer). Rowohlt 2009 (rororo, 61914).

85 Schmidt, Rainer F.: *Der Zweite Weltkrieg. Die Zerstörung Europas*. Berlin 2008 (Deutsche Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, Bd. 10), p. 155.

86 Writer’s own translation: “jeden Augenblick den Zusammenbruch des Sowjetregimes”, Beevor, Antony: *Der Zweite Weltkrieg*, 1. Aufl., München 2014, p. 411.

87 Pearson, Chris: *Environments, states and societies at war*, in: Geyer, Michael / Tooze, Adam (Eds.): *The Cambridge History of the Second World War. Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*. Cambridge, United Kingdom 2015 (The Cambridge history of the Second World War, 3), p. 220-244, p. 221.

88 Pearson, *Environments*, p. 242.

89 Cf. Cocks, Geoffrey: *Hors de combat: mobilization and immobilization in total war*, in: Michael Geyer, Adam Tooze (Eds.): *The Cambridge History of the Second World War. Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*. Cambridge 2015 (The Cambridge history of the Second World War, 3), p. 363-384.

still room for initiatives such as the European Youth Association<sup>90</sup> or the EPTU, both of which were founded in autumn 1942. These two organisations could be rhetorically connected to the war effort, but their goals were much more focussed on constructing a ‘New Europe’ to be created after the war was won. Thus, while the *Reichspost* supported the war effort with personnel, infrastructure, communication, research and field post and could thus be described as mobilised, there was an immobilised component of it that was able to work on projects beyond providing war assistance.

The EPTU can be considered from numerous perspectives, such as European, national, ideological, geopolitical or in terms of its place within the framework of other technocratic international unions before, during and after the Second World War. This leads to different conclusions.

From a technocratic point of view, the congress to found the EPTU and its further results were a success – beyond any foreign policy implications, they represented the goals of international postal cooperation since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his dissertation ‘Europe mise en réseaux’, Léonard Laborie concludes consequently that the two main innovations of the EPTU were the establishment of a single regime for letters and telegrams and the abolition of the transit charge. Nevertheless, he too cannot separate the technocratic from the political aspects entirely. From his perspective, the EPTU represented the first time that PTT services were successfully used for a European political project<sup>91</sup>: Henrich-Franke and Laborie highlight its integration into the plan for an Axis-led new European order as well as its utility for German PTT administration as a tool to regain importance and influence – especially in comparison to France – in international PTT governance. Consequently, they question whether the EPTU was a case of Europeanisation or Germanisation.<sup>92</sup> With a focus on telecommunications, Henrich-Franke reasons that international cooperation had to continue despite the war. He argues that the same PTT experts continued to work together but on a different, less formal level and classifies the EPTU as an attempt to govern intra-European affairs outside of the ITU.<sup>93</sup>

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90 Kühberger, Christoph: Europa als “Strahlenbündel nationaler Kräfte”. Zur Konzeption und Legitimation einer europäischen Zusammenarbeit auf der Gründungsfeierlichkeit des “Europäischen Jugendverbandes” 1942, in: *ZGEI 15* (2009), p. 11-28. DOI: 10.5771/0947-9511-2009-2-11, p. 14.

91 Laborie, L’Europe mise en réseaux, p. 336-345.

92 Cf. Henrich-Franke / Laborie, European Union by and for Communication Networks.

93 Cf. Henrich-Franke, Christian: Comparing Cultures of Expert Regulation. Governing Cross-Border Infrastructures, in: *Contemporary European History 27* (2018), p. 280-300. DOI: 10.1017/S0960777318000139.

In line with these conclusions, the EPTU is often represented as an organisation dominated by the German side. From this perspective, the EPTU constituted a part of the mission of the Reichspost ‘to hurry ahead as a “trail-blazer” in building the new Europe’.<sup>94</sup> Starting in the spring of 1940, the project was also important to the Reichspostminister<sup>95</sup> Wilhelm Ohnesorge, who envisioned the EPTU as an organisation that could serve a new world after the Axis powers won the war. Gerd Ueberschär portrays a dominant German administration that intensively planned the union and was determined to execute these plans; however, while the plans were initially supported by the events of the war, it was ultimately the war that impeded them. The declaration of war by some of the member administration countries and the capitulation of the Wehrmacht meant the end of the EPTU.<sup>96</sup> Rudi Keil places the EPTU even more clearly in the power-political context of the Second World War. Even though he acknowledges that the Reichspostministerium was not forcing other administrations to join the EPTU, he underlines what he sees as the clear connection between the EPTU and the National Socialist plans for ‘world domination’<sup>97</sup>: he describes the EPTU as an ‘institution for the promotion of German fascist expansionist policy’<sup>98</sup> as well as an instrument to achieve dominance within the ITU and the UPU.<sup>99</sup> There are however restrictions to the German hegemony: Valentine Aldebert and Sabrina Proschmann analyse the ideological and power asymmetries in the EPTU and determine that the asymmetries were at least partially flexible, meaning that the differences between technocratic internationalism and National Socialism were continuously renegotiated. Similarly, the imbalance of power between the German and French PTT administrations changed from situation to situation. The EPTU included an ongoing revision of the European PTT governance regime,

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94 Writer’s own translation: “beim Aufbau des neuen Europas ein vorauseilender ‘Wegbereiter’ zu sein”, Ueberschär, Gerd R.: *Die Deutsche Reichspost 1933-1945. Eine Politische Verwaltungsgeschichte*. Band 2: 1939-1945. Berlin 1999, p. 160.

95 Minister heading the German postal ministry from 1937 until 1945.

96 Ueberschär, *Die Deutsche Reichspost*, p. 160-187.

97 Writer’s own translation: “Weltherrschaftsplänen”, Keil, Rudi: *Die Gründung des Europäischen Post- und Fernmeldevereins während des Zweiten Weltkriegs und seine Bedeutung für die Expansionspolitik des deutschen Faschismus*, in: *Die Deutsche Post* 4 (1959) as found in Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, B257/343, p. 218.

98 Writer’s own translation: “Einrichtung zur Förderung der deutschen faschistischen Expansionspolitik”, *ibid*, p. 220.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 224.



making it dynamic.<sup>100</sup> These dynamics can be seen when analysing the role of other administrations within the EPTU. Unfortunately, an analysis of the role of the Italian administration is still pending.

With respect to administrations whose countries were occupied or dependent from the Axis powers, their reaction to and involvement in the newly founded organisation has to be contextualised within the broader framework of collaboration, cooperation and resistance. Regarding France, which was initially notably excluded from the union,<sup>101</sup> Laborie asks whether it was the French PTT administration that wanted to collaborate and was hindered by the Reich or whether the French resisted by making it difficult for the German administration to integrate France into the EPTU. The French administration complicated matters by insisting on using French as the official language and the Gold franc as the reference currency of the union (as was the international tradition).<sup>102</sup> Concerning the Danish administration's role, Bent Blüdnikow emphasises that the overlying 'politics of cooperation' which guided Danish actions towards Germany during occupation were also a politically dominant reason to first sign a bilateral agreement and then join the EPTU. However, Blüdnikow also mentions that the Danish PTT administration was generally in favour of the union and that Director General Kristjan Johannes Jensen described being impressed by the German orchestration of the congress. He describes the Danish role as an active one – the administration hosted a committee session in Copenhagen in 1943 – but remarks that Denmark left the EPTU immediately after liberation in 1945.<sup>103</sup> Thus, cooperation or foreign policy also influenced administrations' decision-making; this also applies to the Swiss.

Not unsurprisingly, the assessment of the EPTU also varies depending on the national perspective of neutral countries. Madeleine Herren analyses Swiss internationalism during the Second World War, arguing that the Swiss reaction to this attempt at German internationalisation fits perfectly into a pattern which she terms 'neither one way nor the other'. The difficult positioning of Swiss neutrality had already been challenged by its relationship with the Soviet Union. During the war, international organisations

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100 Aldebert, Valentine / Proschmann, Sabrina: L'Union Européenne des Postes et des Télécommunications (1942-1945). Un ensemble d'asymétries complexes, in: *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 275 (2019), p. 43-54. Available online at <https://www.cairn.info/revue-guerres-mondiales-et-conflits-contemporains-2019-3-page-43.html>.

101 At least in the beginning.

102 Laborie, L'Europe mise en réseaux, p. 343-345.

103 Blüdnikow, Bent: *Post og Tele under samme tag*. P&Ts historie 1927-1960. København 1993, p. 354-358.

based in Switzerland became even more important, and the warring parties tried to exploit these organisations for their own purposes. Additionally, the actions of the international offices based in Switzerland were interpreted as being based on Swiss foreign policy positions. In the case of the EPTU, this meant that the Swiss strategy was to undercut German political intentions by making decisions only on a technical basis. Switzerland sent observers who were fully aware that Nazi Germany would take advantage of Swiss participation and that the foundation of the EPTU presented a power grab of European PTT governance by the Axis powers.<sup>104</sup> Due to the importance of European PTT administrations, leading within Europe also meant having considerable influence on the global stage. Georg Kreis thus interprets the foundation of the EPTU as a way to challenge and weaken existing international organisations. He argues that these competitive, newly founded organisations were often framed as ‘European’, and he evaluates Swiss neutrality as a pragmatic position that led to indirect partiality in different situations. Swiss foreign relations were oriented towards current necessities especially in the case of communication and information flows, of which Switzerland became the main hub in Europe during the war.<sup>105</sup>

When contextualising the EPTU beyond the Second World War, there are clear continuities and discontinuities with interwar and post-war international technocratic cooperation. Laborie emphasises that the EPTU put into practice plans for a European postal union as early as the 1920s and 1930s, providing an inspiration which the National Socialists did not mention in their narration of the EPTU’s story. Laborie also stresses that while the Nazi project for a European postal union was based on concepts that previously existed institutionally and in terms of content, the EPTU was relevant for post-war projects as well – not as a model, even though the details remained similar, but as a sign that a European restricted postal union could be founded, even though the administrations had impeded this before the war.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Christian Henrich-Franke and Laborie note the continuities between the interwar, war and post-war periods regarding individuals, institutions and structures. They maintain that the EPTU connects pre/inter- and post-war international PTT relations. They even argue that ‘the war hardly mattered in [the PTT administrations’] negotiations. What’s

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104 Herren, Madeleine: “Weder so noch anders”: schweizerischer Internationalismus während des Zweiten Weltkrieges, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte - Revue suisse d'histoire - Rivista storica svizzera* 47 (1997), p. 621-643. Available online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.5169/seals-81207>.

105 Kreis, Die Schweiz im Zweiten Weltkrieg, p. 119-124.

106 Laborie, Enveloping Europe, p. 325-345.

more, the experts included war enemies like Great Britain into their plans for a peacetime European telephone network'.<sup>107</sup>

As these findings show, the EPTU can be understood as lying at the intersection of different research interests. The EPTU touched upon various related phenomena that materialised in the newly founded union, from its integration into the Axis vision of a 'New Europe' to the continuities in technocratic international cooperation and the interrelationships between the Axis powers and internal German power struggles. This explains the EPTU's importance in different research contexts, such as infrastructure and technical history, Europeanisation, foreign policy and national PTT history. This work is also at the intersections of different research directions but focusses on standardisation and its processes in European postal services. The interest in the relatively short-lived EPTU is thus not only justified by its relevance to different research fields but also because it represents the missing link between inter- and post-war international postal relations. It can shed light on the extent to which the war can be viewed as a caesura or continuity in international postal relations. The EPTU represents a first in European postal history, and it is a case of organisation-building and standard-setting in the time of a specific war; this means that it is a chance to test the validity of known theories of path dependency, organisation-building, standard-setting and policy coordination at different times – that is, what remains the same and what changes between the inter-war, war and post-war periods? Furthermore, the EPTU could provide important information for the growing research on Nazi-fascist European projects as it presents a different conception of the European integration commonly discussed and implemented in post-war Western Europe.

Hence, this work explores the following questions: how did the EPTU fit into the larger international postal system established by the UPU with regards to the standards established between 1942 and 1945? Which standards were continued or altered, to what extent, and was this successful? Where did the standard-setting happen? Which committees were of major importance? Which platforms and channels were used to make decisions regarding different standards? Which role did the Axis powers have, and how can their relationship be described? Which agents besides the administrations were involved? Which hierarchies between countries and their actors are reflected in the final standards? What role did the larger historical context of World War II play in the decision-making process or in shaping the

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107 Henrich-Franke / Laborie, *European Union by and for Communication Networks*, p. 89.

standards? How were these standards promoted inside the international postal community and to a larger civilian public?

In this work, the assumption is that the EPTU was a synthetic product responding as much as possible to the interests of political, technocratic and diplomatic agents not just from Germany but from other participating European countries as well. However, there is a strong German hegemony within the EPTU regarding the standardisation in postal services and in relation to the Italian postal administration. At different points in the preparation and working of the EPTU, interests and viewpoints sometimes overlapped but also diverged, leading to situations in which the hierarchy between the different interests had to be negotiated. This hierarchy was influenced by the type of standard under negotiation. For example, standards concerning postal services were heavily influenced by the postal administrations' opinion as it was their field of expertise and interest. In this area, German dominance was especially strong, and the EPTU represented a tool to export German standards to intra-European postal services. Regarding organisational and/or politico-symbolic standards, the situation presented itself quite differently: foreign ministries and sometimes even the heads of governments intervened as they had to agree to these standards.

Before analysing the EPTU, the scope of this research project should be set, both thematically and in terms of the available archival material. Thematically, there are two important restrictions: the scope of the postal services and the relevant agents examined.

While this work only considers postal services, it is nevertheless necessary to further hone this analysis to specific civilian postal services. Field post is excluded from the work because it was not important for the EPTU despite its key role during the war. The transport of German field post was organised separately from the civilian post; the *Reichspost* was responsible for transport of the civilian post, whereas the genuine 'field post' was a military task.<sup>108</sup> The EPTU itself was thus only concerned with the transportation of civilian post,<sup>109</sup> and it is not mentioned in the relevant documents regarding field post from the *Reichspost*.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the analysis focuses on letters and postcards; all other services, such as packages, jour-

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108 Lotz, Wolfgang (Ed.): *Deutsche Postgeschichte. Essays und Bilder*, Berlin 1989, p. 480.

109 The agreement does not contain any provisions for the field post. (Europäischer Postkongress, p. 98-103).

110 Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/12133, Feldpostsammelstellen 1939-1945.

nals, and postal cheque services, have a subordinate role because the standardisation work within the EPTU was mostly concentrated on these two postal services. Post was usually transported through different means (cars, trains, ships and planes), but during the war, the so-called ‘land post’ was the main channel of transport as it was the most secure within continental Europe.

This study also mentions different actors from the postal administrations and examines their role in the EPTU and after the war. However, it was difficult to find information about major agents beyond their position and career within the national postal administrations, especially regarding their political views or adherence to the National Socialist and/or fascist ideologies. Personal documents such as diaries are not available in the languages known by the author, which made it difficult to comment upon the intentions that were not officially stated. Except for *Reichspostminister* Ohnesorge, the Allies as well as the German *Bundespost*<sup>111</sup> do not seem to have done further research into individual actors. The barriers to finding information on non-German actors were even greater, which is why the agents must be treated disproportionately. The limited analysis of relevant actors due to missing material leads to a more general description of the available sources for this project.

With 14 member administrations, there were many possible archives for EPTU research. Additionally, in 1942, there were other interested postal administrations that were either not invited, were invited and then uninvited or were observers at the congress of Vienna. This dissertation is based on archives on eleven European countries: Spain, France, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Croatia.

The main archives consulted were from the PTT administrations as well as the foreign ministries. Given the lack of an important connection between field post and the EPTU, no military archives were consulted. In addition to the gap caused by the war destruction, which occurred between January and November 1943 for important German files,<sup>112</sup> some difficulties arose when accessing documents were the different organisation of each national archive and the relative ignorance surrounding the EPTU at the time of archiving. Additionally, most documents are Western European; the main reason for this bias are language barriers that hindered the necessary preparatory work, such as research in online catalogues. The Croatian archives

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111 Postal service of the Federal Republic of Germany.

112 Cf. Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11621 – R4701/11627.

provided documents, but these are limited to official agreements. The service of the Slovakian national archives answered upon request that they found no documents related to the EPTU. Similarly, no references to the EPTU were found in the Bulgarian and Albanian archives. Another difficulty is the lack of documentation from Belgian and British archives. Unfortunately, the research did not identify any folders containing information on involvement in or discussions about the EPTU. These findings contrast the results of other archival work, which heavily suggests that the Belgian postal administration was invited to participate in the congress but declined and was then uninvited.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, the facts that the Dutch government-in-exile was informed about the EPTU<sup>114</sup> and that a London-based German newspaper of the resistance published information on the union<sup>115</sup> suggest that the British government and postal administration most likely knew about the EPTU.

To be precise about the terms used in this work, they must be clarified. One key term is *standard*, along with related terms such as *standardisation* and *standardisation process*. *Standards* are a tool to reduce complexity, and they can influence all areas of life. Concerning infrastructure, ‘standards are about compatibility and connectivity or combinability of “systems” and its components in general’.<sup>116</sup> The aim of infrastructure standardisation is to work together at interfaces (interconnectivity), merge entire systems (interoperability) or transmit singular components (portability).<sup>117</sup> According to Katza Brøgger, standards are a ‘form of regulation’<sup>118</sup> that only exist when they are being practiced and are not rigid but instead constantly transformed, not only with regard to themselves but also to new developments and the processes that formed them.<sup>119</sup> Gerold Ambrosius and Henrich-Franke have defined standards as a ‘comparatively uniform or harmonised way to produce or carry out something that has established itself over other

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113 Cf. Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R4701/11615.

114 Cf. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken te Londen (Londens Archief), nummer toegang 2.05.80, inventarisnummer 4044.

115 PTT Archiv, Bern, P-00C\_0108\_01 Arbeiter Zeitung: “Gefährliche Postverhandlungen”, 15.10.1942

116 Writer’s own translation: “Bei Standards geht es um die Vereinbarkeit, Anschlussfähigkeit bzw. Kombinierbarkeit von Systemen und ihren Komponenten im Allgemeinen”, Ambrosius, *Standards und Standardisierung*, p. 18.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 15-18.

118 Brøgger, Katza: *Governing through standards. The faceless masters of higher education: the Bologna process, the EU and the open method of coordination*, Springer 2019 (Educational governance research, volume 10), p. 73.

119 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

ways and is generally accepted and usually applied (or is intended to)'.<sup>120</sup> The International Organisation for Standardisation describes them as the 'formula for the best way of doing something'.<sup>121</sup> More specifically, Olivier Borraz defines a standard as a 'document established by consensus that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context'.<sup>122</sup> This definition best describes what standards are in the framework of this work: the result of experts negotiating and finding a consensual solution.

This work analyses three types of standards: organisational standards, administrative-operational standards and tariffs. Organisational standards are those that shape an organisation, such as a postal union; for example, voting procedures or language provisions, as well as the structures created to formalise negotiations. Administrative-operational standards describe the rules for administrative procedures between administrations. Finally, tariffs concern all aspects related to postage.

This work thus examines three typical dimensions that Benz also uses in his comparative work on the integration of the postal infrastructure services<sup>123</sup>: first, the polity, which designates the structures in which standardisation processes happen; second, politics, which describe the decision-making and negotiation processes; and third, policy, which is defined as the contents – in this case, the standards – agreed upon by international postal services.<sup>124</sup>

Usually, legal and technical standards are included in the examination of standards in postal history. However, these standards were not negotiated within the EPTU. Legal standards designate agreed-upon rules translated into national (or international) law. In the case of translating these standards into law, this means that a unified postal law emerges solely for international postal relations. One could argue that the EPTU agreement would qualify as such a legal standard. However, the standards discussed in the agreement and the EPTU regulations for postal services did not change

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120 Ambrosius, Gerold / Henrich-Franke, Christian: *Integration of infrastructures in Europe in historical comparison*, Springer 2016, p. 135.

121 International Organization for Standardization: *ISO STANDARDS ARE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED BY EXPERTS*, URL: <https://www.iso.org/standards.html> (last access: 09.06.2020).

122 Borraz, Olivier: Governing Standards. The Rise of Standardization Processes in France and in the EU. In *Governance* 20 (2007), p. 57-84. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0491.2007.00344.x., p. 57.

123 Benz, *Integration von Infrastrukturen*, p. 30.

124 Rohe, Karl: *Politik. Begriffe und Wirklichkeit*, Kohlhammer 1994, p. 61-66.

postal law: They were simply further processing an already-existing legal framework. Additionally, there was an understanding – at least between the German postal administration and the German Foreign Ministry – that the agreement should not be turned into an object of international law at that time.<sup>125</sup> The other administrations agreed, though the request for the governments to declare the EPTU a states' treaty was formulated during the congress by the Hungarian delegate von Forster.<sup>126</sup> In Germany, this was more the wish of the Foreign Ministry than the *Reichspost*, but the latter was aware that it needed the approval of the Foreign Ministry. When Carl Bilfinger, a German constitutional and international law expert, wrote an article that suggested that the EPTU agreement could be more than an inter-administrative agreement and could constitute an international treaty,<sup>127</sup> the *Reichspostministerium* and the Foreign Ministry reacted quickly to dismiss this claim. Foreign Ministry envoy Georg Martius argued 'that Bilfinger's work is by no means fortunate from the perspective of the neutral countries'.<sup>128</sup> The representative from the *Reichspostministerium*, Friedrich Risch, agreed and confirmed that his press office would not further use Bilfinger's article.<sup>129</sup> The embassies in the neutral countries of Spain and Portugal were instructed to use a language regime that underlined the administrative character of the agreement and emphasised that a treaty between states would only be considered later.<sup>130</sup>

Technical standards are here defined as 'a means to achieve control and to regulate or coordinate the production and uses of technology. (...) [They] are a prerequisite for enabling the (international) interlinking of technical components and systems'.<sup>131</sup> In contrast to the negotiations surrounding the postal car innovations within the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>132</sup> these technical aspects were not on the EPTU's agenda.

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125 Politisches Archiv, Berlin, R106301, Martius an Dir.HaPol., 19.06.1942.

126 Europäischer Postkongress, p. 94.

127 Cf. Bilfinger, Carl: Völkerrechtliche Betrachtungen zum ersten europäischen Postkongress, in: *Postarchiv*, Bd. 71 (1943), p. 101-115.

128 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R901/116969, Vermerk Martius, 29.07.1943.

129 Ibid.

130 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, R901/116969, von Selzem an die Deutsche Botschaft Madrid, Gesandtschaft Bern, Lissabon und Stockholm, 03.08.1943.

131 Hommels, Anique/ Schueler, Judith / Fickers, Andreas: Introduction, in: Judith Schueler, Judith/ Fickers, Andreas / Hommels, Anique (Eds.): *Bargaining norms, arguing standards. Negotiating technical standards* (STT/Beweton publicaties, no 74), 2008, p. 12-17, p. 13.

132 Benz, Integration von Infrastrukturen, p. 177.



Having defined the standards pertinent for this work and those omitted from it, the work moves on to discuss the term ‘standardisation’. This is important as ‘standardisation runs through the postal history of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century as a clear thread’.<sup>133</sup> The unions served as a platform for it.<sup>134</sup> *Standardisation* ‘includes the development and approval of standards, the process of making these standards available, the acceptance and subsequent implementation of standards and the impact of them.’<sup>135</sup> The term highlights the processual and dynamic aspects of setting standards.<sup>136</sup> Another aspect of standardisation is especially important for this work: ‘Standardisation should be understood as technological as well as social and political’.<sup>137</sup> Thus, the standards resulting from standardisation reflect which ‘interests, values and norms will be institutionalised’.<sup>138</sup> Standardisation can thus also be understood as a normative act expressing the collective identity of the actors involved.<sup>139</sup> A *standardisation process* is defined as the ‘continual production, distribution or reproduction of’<sup>140</sup> standards; it denotes something more extensive than standardisation by including several cycles of standardisation. There are ‘high stakes involved in standardisation processes’<sup>141</sup> that concern technical, economic and political issues as well as prestige, reputation<sup>142</sup> and power. Finally, setting standards means essen-

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- 133 Writer’s own translation: “Standardisierungen durchziehen die Postgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts gleichsam wie ein roter Faden”, Neutsch, *Standardisierungen im Postverkehr*, p. 60.
- 134 Neutsch, *Standardisierungen im Postverkehr*, p. 68.
- 135 Vries, Henk de: Standardisation: A Business Science Perspective, in: Schueler, Judith / Fickers, Andreas / Hommels, Anique (Eds.): *Bargaining norms, arguing standards. Negotiating technical standards* (STT/Beweton publicaties, no 74), 2008, p. 18-33, p. 26.
- 136 Ambrosius / Henrich-Franke, *Integration of infrastructures*, p. 141.
- 137 Hommels / Schueler / Fickers, *Introduction*, p. 13.
- 138 Egyedi, Tineke: A Research Autobiography from an STS Perspective, in: Schueler, Judith / Fickers, Andreas / Hommels, Anique (Eds.): *Bargaining norms, arguing standards. Negotiating technical standards* (STT/Beweton publicaties, no 74) (2008), p. 34-47, p. 38.
- 139 Fickers, Andreas / Hommels, Anique / Schueler, Judith: Conclusions: Implications for Research and Policy, in: Schueler, Judith / Fickers, Andreas / Hommels, Anique (Eds.): *Bargaining norms, arguing standards. Negotiating technical standards* (STT/Beweton publicaties, no 74) (2008), p. 144-153, p. 148-152.
- 140 Brøgger, *Governing through standards*, p. 73.
- 141 Hommels / Schueler / Fickers, *Introduction*, p. 13.
- 142 *Ibid.*

tially also governing. This is of particular importance in this discussion because the experts within the PTT administrations aimed to work as much as possible without political influence.<sup>143</sup>

One result of standardisation and standardisation processes in Europe is the integration of infrastructures that occurred through the harmonisation of systems. As such, there are important parallels between how European integration and standardisation are theorised. Importantly, these theories are mostly conceptualised for times of peace, making it difficult to apply them to the situations of war and hegemony that this work addresses. The two main theories on European integration, inter-governmentalism and neo-functionalism, define integration as the transfer of competencies to a supranational body. However, the agreements in the EPTU occurred at the inter-administrative level, even though ministerial and governmental actors were involved in the process. Thus, the EPTU was not an inter-governmental or supranational organisation, and it seems inadequate to use inter-governmentalist and neo-functionalist theories on European integration to explain why standardisation happened during World War II. Nevertheless, these theories provide a partial basis for explaining coordination processes in this case. Liberal inter-governmentalism explains coordination based on vital interests that develop nationally and are aggregated on a European level. This theory is embedded in a rational-choice model of international cooperation.<sup>144</sup> Instead, neo-functionalism focusses on the spill-over effects from previous coordination as the main cause of coordinative efforts.<sup>145</sup> This means that the integration of one policy necessitates the integration of another policy. In addition to these two major theories, the less-studied theory of constructivism focusses on the influence of institutions on actors' preferences.<sup>146</sup> Constructivism's main idea appears pertinent here; the theory maintains that coordination stems from the formation of epistemic communities that work towards greater harmonisation. Constructivist theories stipulate that these communities shape their members and the ideas actors have regarding European integration, which in turn influences outcomes. Existing institutions play a crucial role in this theory by building the actors'

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143 See Part I Chapter I Technocratic traditions and the new political regime.

144 Pollack, Mark A.: *Theorizing EU Policy-Making*, in: Wallace, Helen / Pollack Mark A. / Young, Alasdair R. (Eds.): *Policy-making in the European Union*, 7th edition, Oxford: 2014, p. 12-45, p. 16-18.

145 *Ibid.*, p. 14-15.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

environments and creating systems of meaning that subsequently impact individuals' behaviours, ideas and preferences.<sup>147</sup>

Dirk Leuffen, Berthold Rittberger and Frank Schimmelfennig have developed the concept of differentiated integration. While this concept is not entirely applicable here, it sheds light on the fact that integration processes happen on different levels and with different intensities.<sup>148</sup> This concept can be transferred to standardisation: for instance, Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig distinguish between horizontal and vertical integration. Horizontal integration denotes the territorial expansion of the integration, or how many countries are involved. In contrast, vertical integration describes the intensity of integration, or how much political power has been given to a higher body. In this work, this idea is used as follows. Horizontal standardisation designates the geographical expansion of the standard and answers the following questions: in how many territories was this standard valid? How far did this system of governance reach? Vertical standardisation describes different intensities of standards. Two intensities are defined: bilateral standards and multilateral standards.

Standardisation and the standardisation process in international technocratic cooperation were cooperative and mostly formal, meaning that standards were set after bilateral and multilateral consultation through what is called 'cooperative committee standardisation'.<sup>149</sup> Additionally, cooperation was overwhelmingly formalised even though informal talks were also occurring. Final decision-making on the negotiated standards occurred in a formal setting between the representatives of the national administrations. For the coordination of standards, Ambrosius formulates three possible scenarios the actors may confront: everyone wants the same standard; everyone wants a common standard but not the same one; not everyone wants one common standard.<sup>150</sup> These scenarios are less complex than real ones,<sup>151</sup> especially during a war, but can be used as templates for further elaboration. The positions taken by different actors are not fixed: they are in flux and can vary at different stages of standard-setting.

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147 Ibid., p. 21-23.

148 Leuffen, Dirk / Rittberger, Berthold / Schimmelfennig, Frank: *Differentiated Integration. Explaining Variation in the European Union*, Basingstoke 2012, p. 757-767.

149 Ambrosius / Henrich-Franke, *Integration of infrastructures*, p. 145.

150 Ambrosius, *Standards und Standardisierung*, p. 24.

151 Ambrosius / Henrich-Franke, *Integration of infrastructures*, p. 147.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines cooperation as ‘the act of working together with someone or doing what they ask you’.<sup>152</sup> From a business perspective, cooperation denotes ‘the process of working with another company, organisation, or country in order to achieve something’.<sup>153</sup> Both definitions match the project of the EPTU. In this work, ‘cooperation’ denotes actors working together in formal and informal settings; this does not explicitly mean that different actors must have the same interests, that there are no conflicts between them or that there must be a successful result. This study does not use the word ‘collaboration’ as it has an additional historical connotation that varies from country to country and is thus not fruitful when telling a pan-European story. The work also does not focus on whether the actors involved incriminated themselves by working with representatives from the administrations of Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany.

This text follows Douglas C. North’s definition of ‘institutions’ as ‘the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, (...) the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction’.<sup>154</sup> Institutions set the formal and informal frameworks for behavioural choices, including within international organisations.<sup>155</sup> In contrast to this exogenous approach to institutions, Masahiko Aoki defines institutions as the ‘endogenous equilibrium outcome of the game’.<sup>156</sup> Institutions are only stable if they are reconfirmed by multiple games and based on shared beliefs.<sup>157</sup> Whether defined exogenously or endogenously, institutions have the power to shape individuals’ and groups’ actions and expectations. Additionally, institutional change is assumed to be complex and lengthy to achieve. While these definitions stem from game theory, they are nevertheless fruitful for this work. As is shown throughout this work, the relevant actors were involved in different levels of politics, both national and international, and in different policy areas, namely postal services and foreign policy. Following Robert D. Putnam,<sup>158</sup>

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152 Without Author (2014): cooperation, in: Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge University Press, URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/cooperation> (last access: 05.01.2021)

153 Ibid.

154 North, Douglass C.: Institutions. In *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5 (1991), p. 97–112. DOI: 10.1257/jep.5.1.97., p. 97.

155 North, Douglass C.: *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*, Cambridge 1990, p. 3-5.

156 Aoki, Masahiko: *Toward a comparative institutional analysis*, Cambridge 2001, p. 6.

157 Ibid., p. 9-10.

158 Putnam, Robert D.: Diplomacy and domestic politics: The logic of two-level games, in: *International organization* 42.3 (1988), p. 427-460.

one could characterise the creation and workings of the EPTU as a two-level, if not a multi-level, game. All these levels are shaped by different institutions which influence actions and choices. In contrast to the term ‘institutions’, ‘organisations’ is only used to describe the entity of the EPTU or the UPU as a whole. All other features of these organisations – such as regulations, provisions, informal rules and the resulting standards – fall under the scope of the term ‘institutions’.

The use of the term ‘European’ requires a short explanation as well. The EPTU did not cover all states typically considered European. Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia for example are missing. Nevertheless, a glance at the geopolitical situation – at least in 1942 – indicates that the Union’s territory includes a large part of geographical Europe, and thus it is appropriate to use the descriptor of European cooperation in postal services. Additionally, the actors involved also used the term European. This work does not attach any ethical, moral or political ideals to the terms ‘Europe’ or ‘European’. These terms are simply an expression of the geographic attachment of the project discussed. Finally, the term ‘Axis powers’ is here mainly understood as Germany and Italy. This is not to disregard the importance of the Japanese ally, yet as Daniel Hedinger points out the three imperial powers’ alliance started to disentangle at the end of 1942<sup>159</sup> which is when the EPTU was founded. In addition, Japan did not play an important role in the EPTU.

Methodologically, this work follows a hermeneutic approach to analyse the EPTU; a template used in this work is the sequential policy model. When defining the standardisation process, multiple attempts have been made to define clear-cut phases of policy development with different stages. According to Werner Jann and Kai Wegrich, the most conventional classification of phases is agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation. These stages represent an ideal type of policymaking, and it is highly unlikely that policymaking processes follow them strictly.<sup>160</sup> Frank Pfetsch identifies the following stages of the negotiation cycle: pre-negotiations, agenda-setting, negotiation formula, detailed negotiations, agreements, implementation and post-negotiations. These

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159 Hedinger, Daniel: *Die Achse. Berlin-Rom-Tokio 1919-1946*. München 2021, p. 368.

160 Jann, Werner / Wegrich, Kai: Theories of the Policy Cycle, in: Fischer, Frank / Miller Gerald J. / Sindey, Mara S. (Eds.): *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, 2017, p.43–62, p. 43-44.

stages are iterative.<sup>161</sup> This work divides the timeframe from 1942 to 1945 – or the years in which the EPTU existed – into three phases according to the establishment and functioning of the EPTU. This division is partially based on the model used by Henrich-Franke to compare the creation of the Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) and the Organisation for Cooperation of Socialist Countries in the Field of Telecommunication and Postal Communications (OCSC) in the 1950s.<sup>162</sup> The phases consist of the initiation phase, the decision phase and the working phase. More phases are barely detectable, coincide or both in the case of the EPTU, and a crucial part of the policy cycle – the evaluation – is largely missing due to the short span of the EPTU's existence. The initiation phase describes the time of draft elaboration, problem formulation, information collection and agenda-setting. This phase also includes the first negotiations. During the decision phase, content issues are resolved, and actors negotiate, identify compromises and create a consensus. A final decision regarding the adoption or rejection of a policy is then made. The working phase includes policy implementation as well as the further development of the union.<sup>163</sup>

This work is divided into three parts. Part I deals with the ideational background of a European PTT union created during a time of war. In the context of the EPTU, this means the intersecting of two internationalisms: technocratic and fascist internationalism. Both internationalisms influenced the founding and workings of the EPTU, and they are thus key to the analysis of standard-setting in postal services during the Second World War. On this basis, the initiation phase of the EPTU, as derived from the sequential model of the policy cycle described above, is analysed along three main lines: the discussions within the German *Reichspostministerium*; the cooperation between the Axis powers; the bilateral agreements concluded between the *Reichspost* and the majority of later member administrations of the EPTU. The main aim is to define the different arenas which were part

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161 Pfetsch, Frank: Bargaining and Arguing as Communicative Modes of Strategic, Social, Economic, Political Interaction, in: Schueler, Judith / Fickers, Andreas / Hommels, Anique (Eds.): *Bargaining norms, arguing standards. Negotiating technical standards* (STT/Beweton publicaties, no 74), 2008, p. 52-65, p. 56.

162 Henrich-Franke, Christian: Die Gründung europäischer Infrastrukturorganisationen im Ost/West-Vergleich: die PTT Organisationen OSS und CEPT, in: Ambrosius, Gerold / Neutsch, Cornelius / Henrich-Franke, Christian (Eds.): *Internationale Politik und Integration europäischer Infrastrukturen in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. 1. Auflage. Baden-Baden 2010, p. 113-142, p. 117.

163 Jann / Wegrich, Theories of the Policy Cycle, p. 46-51; Henrich-Franke, Die Gründung europäischer Infrastrukturorganisationen, p. 113-115.

of the early standardisation. Furthermore, the examination includes findings on the actors. Ultimately, the part attempts to describe the actors' network involved in setting standards within and outside of the emerging EPTU's structures. The initiation phase was crucial for the standardisation as almost all important decisions were made during this phase. A strong German hegemony characterised both the bilateral negotiations between the German and Italian PTT administrations and the expansion of the bilateral efforts to include more European administrations; this applies not just to the purely organisational aspect of the negotiations but also to the contents of standards related to union-building and international postal services.

Part II focusses on the decision phase, wherein the administrations chose to create a union, and revolves around the decision-making processes during the congress of Vienna. Although only a week long, the congress was essential in finalising the one-year-long preparations done mainly by the German and Italian PTT administrations. These preparations allowed the congress to be short: it mostly confirmed the results of prior negotiations. Thus, the congress officially created the first-ever European postal union, and the German postal system for letters and postcards was used for the international postal services between member administrations. After analysing the setting up of the congress and the negotiations concerning the EPTU's organisational structure, the part examines the decisions regarding postal services in detail. This examination concentrates on the committee sessions and their dynamics because documents on any informal talks are unfortunately missing. Finally, the part briefly analyses the politico-symbolic aspect of the stamps that accompanied the congress and the foundation of the union. Part II provides evidence that the experts mainly influenced the decision-making regarding postal standards, and German hegemony and the German administration played an influential role as they wanted to control the newly founded union, its contents and after-war postal governance in Europe.

Part III examines the working phase of the union and the continuities and discontinuities between the EPTU and post-war European cooperation in postal services. It evaluates the implementation of the 1942 provisions and the work and negotiations during the 1943 postal committee conference in Copenhagen, particularly the development of the standards set in 1942 and the introduction of new standards within this short period. Additionally, it analyses the continued efforts to enlarge the union, driven mainly by the *Reichspost*, and improve relationships with countries that remained outside of the EPTU. There is also a brief discussion of when to date the end of the union. This part thus discusses the final period of the EPTU's existence,

which was shaped by failed attempts to continue the EPTU's work. Although the first European postal union ended, two other European restricted organisations were founded after the Second World War, and European cooperation in postal services continued. Therefore, Part III gives an overview of the continuities and discontinuities in the institutions, actors, tariff standards and symbols. This evaluation goes beyond a comparison of different standards based on the previous findings and considers who set the standards. As much as possible, it considers both the CEPT in 1959 and the OCSC founded in 1958; however, research on the OCSC, which was attached to the Soviet Union, is scarce. This part shows that the Second World War can represent connection between the inter- and post-war periods in the field of European cooperation in postal services. However, the political situation influenced the shape of the after-war organisations and how they were created, meaning that there are also some important discontinuities.