



Document Management Policy

2020

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Document History

Version	Date	Author(s)	Remarks
4.0	23 Nov 2020	Philipp Wilhelm	Update in line with the Commission Decision on records management C(2020)4482, introduction of electronic signature, data protection rules for historical archives. Approved by Senior Management Team on 23 November 2020
3.1	July 2019	Philipp Wilhelm	Updating the information on data protection in line with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725
3.0	2018	Philipp Wilhelm	Complete revision, reflecting the implementation of the European Commission's HAN (Hermes, Ares, NomCom) document management system
2.0	2009	Philipp Wilhelm	Revision with an introduction to the new EDRMS Open Text eDocs Hummingbird
1.0	2005	Philipp Wilhelm	First version, establishing document management at EEA with Adonis as EDRMS



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1 Introduction

The document management policy has been in place at the EEA since 2005. The first version established comprehensive document management across the whole agency. The second version in 2009 marked the migration from the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) Adonis to Open Text eDocs Hummingbird, which met the requirements for EDRMS set in international standards. In line with the IT strategy to use IT systems of the European Commission where available the EEA decided in 2017 to migrate to the records management system of the Commission called HAN (Hermes, Ares, NomCom). This version of the document management policy takes into account the alignment of the filing plan and the retention list with the E-Domec rules of the Commission and the changes in the overall regulatory framework and international standards pertaining to document management.

The key benefits of records management at EEA are

- Easy search and retrieval of documents across the agency
- Improved transparency and accountability
- Compliance with legislation and regulation
- Tool for knowledge management
- Business continuity in the event of an incident
- Controlled security and data protection for documents

2 Scope

The document management policy applies to all records and the electronic records and document management systems (EDRMS) in which they are stored with the necessary metadata. Records are official documents that are evidence or an asset of legal value or business transactions. Records can be in paper or digital format. Documents is a broader term than records that includes also working documents like drafts and notes or historical artefacts. EEA's retention list applies to all the listed document types and not only to the ones registered in Ares. The filing plan is for the registration of records in Ares.

3 Definitions

Ares	Ares is the document management system of the European Commission. EEA joins Ares in 2018. In this document Ares is used synonymously for the HAN tools. In the E-Domec definition Ares is the information system for registering, filing and accessing documents and for the workflow management.
Documents	Documents is a broad term that captures both official records with legal values as well as working documents and drafts. In the EU institutions, the term is often used synonymously with records . Document management covers both the registration of official documents as well as the management of draft documents in a workflow.
e-Domec	E-Domec is the document management and archival policy of the European Commission.



EDRMS	An Electronic Document and Records Management System is an information system which is designed primarily to capture, manage and provide access to documents and records. Ares and Hummingbird are EDRMS.
HAN	Hermes-Ares-NomCom is the correct term for the complete suite of IT tools for document management at the Commission and some agencies.
Hermes	Hermes is the common structure for document management and storage at the Commission
Hummingbird	Hummingbird is the name of the Open Text eDocs DM document management system. It is a commercial off-the-shelf product that was in use at the EEA between 2009 and 2018.
NomCom	NomCom is a separate application for filing plan management accessible through Ares.
Records	Records are official final versions of documents that commit the agency legally, financially, or politically. In the English-speaking countries the term records is used for official documents of a business. Records management is the term for the processes of registration, filing and controlled retention and disposition of business records. In EU institutions, the term document management refers to the same tasks.

4 Regulatory Framework

4.1 Legal framework

Document management at EEA is governed by several regulations. On the one hand there are regulations defining the necessary registration and retention while on the other hand the data protection regulation and the Information Security Policy define access restrictions and disposition of documents.

Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to documents

In 2004 the EEA Management Board approved the Implementing Rules for Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 which gives all EU citizens the right to request documents from the EU institutions. The right to access extends to all documents '*drawn up or received by it and in its possession, in all areas of activity of the European Union*'. (EU, 2001). The right is limited by the data protection regulation, interest of third parties and the right of the institutions for internal consultations and deliberations. Article 11 asks the institutions to provide a public register of the documents with a minimum set of metadata. The institutions have the obligation to provide the requested documents or a reply if access is denied within 15 working days.

EEA Internal Control Framework (2017)

In 2017 the EEA Management Board adopted the revised internal control standards. The previous requirement to register all incoming and outgoing mail was dropped and replaced by the obligation to have appropriate information and document management systems in place. The principle no. 13 specifies some of the features that these systems need to have. The new Internal Control Framework does allow for information to be registered in other systems besides the specific electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) as long as the common standards for information and document management are met. At EEA the principle no. 13 applies



to the EDRMS (Hummingbird eDocs DM, ARES), ABAC, Sysper, Reportnet, and protected parts of the web site and the intranet.

13 Information and document management. The EEA identifies the information required to support the functioning of the internal control system and the achievement of EEA's objectives. Information systems process relevant data, captured from both internal and external sources, to obtain the required and expected quality information, in compliance with applicable security, document management and data protection rules. This information is produced in a timely manner, and is reliable, current, accurate, complete, accessible, protected, verifiable, filed and preserved. It is shared within the organisation in line with prevailing guidelines. (EEA, 2017)

Financial Regulation of the EEA (2019)

The Financial Regulation defines specific requirements for the retention of documents supporting financial operations. The basic rule is that the EEA needs to store documents for five years after budgetary discharge. Discharge by the European Parliament is usually given two years after the budget year. The disposition of personal documents that fall under the data protection regulation is possible if they are not required for audit purposes.

Article 44.5 The authorising officer shall conserve the supporting documents relating to operations carried out for a period of five years from the date of the decision granting discharge in respect of implementation of the budget of the European Environment Agency. Personal data contained in supporting documents shall be deleted where possible when those data are not necessary for budgetary discharge, control and audit purposes. (EEA, 2014)

The European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour (2001)

The Code of Good Administrative Behaviour underscores the citizens' right of access to documents and requests the institutions to implement proper document management.

Article 24 Keeping of adequate records

The institution's departments shall keep adequate records of their incoming and outgoing mail, of the documents they receive, and of the measures they take. (EU, 2001)

Data Protection Regulation for EU institutions (2018)

In 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and regulation (EU) 2018/1725 for the EU institutions and agencies on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data came into force. The regulation (EU) 2018/1725, the superseded (EC) 45/2001 and specific recommendations by the European Data Protection Supervisor have established clear boundaries for the processing and storing of personal data at EEA. The EEA retention list takes into account the (EU) 2018/1725, GDPR, the EDRMS recommendations and the provisions made for personal data in the Specific Retention List of the European Commission. Rulings on data protection can overrule administrative retention periods.

The new data protection regulation (EU) 2018/1725 puts more emphasis on the correct handling of personal data in IT systems. The regulation defines a number of principles for designing or selecting IT systems, the relation with individuals whose data is processed or stored and the necessary measures in case a data breach occurs. All information management systems that process personal data have to comply with these principles. For the electronic document and records management systems the following points are especially relevant: privacy by data base design, clear information about the processing available to the data subject, consent of data subjects, and procedures in place in case of breaches.



Commercial cloud service providers that process personal data of the EEA have to comply with the GDPR.

Historical Archives Regulation

In 2015 the *Council Regulation (EU) 2015/496 of 17 March 2015 amending Regulation (EEC, Euratom) No 354/83 as regards the deposit of the historical archives of the institutions at the European University Institute* in Florence was passed. The amendment to the Historical Archives Regulation extends the obligation to transfer paper documents of historical value to the Historical Archives of the EU in Firenze, Italy, after 30 years to all EU institutions and bodies. All EU institutions have to make a financial contribution to the management of the Historical Archives of the EU. The amendment also specifies the requirement for each EU institution to ensure the long-term digital preservation of electronic documents of historical value. The EEA Management Board will adopt the Internal Rules for the amended Historical Archives Regulation based on the example of the Commission's internal rules.

The Århus Convention

The Århus Convention (signed on 25 June 1998) establishes a number of rights of the public with regard to information on the environment. Article 8 of the Århus Convention:

"It is necessary to ensure that any natural and legal person has a right of access to environmental information held by or for public authorities without his having to state an interest."

While the Convention itself does not apply to the EEA the follow-up regulation EC 1367/2006 applies to all EU agencies. The implications 1367/2006 for the EEA do not go beyond the standards set in the regulation 1049/2001.

4.2 Standards for records management

EEA's document management is based on EU and international standards for records management.

ISO 15489

The ISO 15489 standard on records management has since the publication of its first edition in 2001 provided a clear international standard that defines the basic concepts and terminology of records management. It is the generally accepted framework for records management. Many of the definitions and concepts of the EEA policy are based on the ISO 15489 standard.

e-Domec

The European Commission provides on the e-Domec Intracomm site a wide range of Information on the document management and archival policy. E-Domec policies and rules do not apply directly to the EEA, which is an EU agency. Nonetheless the EEA uses the e-Domec Information where it is applicable. With the implementation of ARES the alignment of the EEA to the Commission's document management policies has become even closer. The EEA filing plan and retention list was checked by the Commission's e-Domec team. A wide range of manuals and guidelines for the practical use of Ares are available on Intracomm.



5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Document Management Officer

The Document Management Officer (DMO) coordinates the document related tasks. The DMO is responsible for the correct use of an Electronic Document and Records Management Systems ensuring that training and guidance is available. The DMO is also in charge of the filing plan and the retention list. He is the contact person for Ares at EEA and communicates necessary changes to the filing plan or retention list to the e-Domec Team of the Commission. The DMO manages the historical archives and the transfer of historical documents to the Historical Archives of the EU.

5.2 Management

The Executive Director has the responsibility that document management at EEA fulfils the legal and regulatory obligations. The Senior Managers and the Head of Groups are aware of the requirements for document management and historical archives. They ensure that their Programmes and groups implement document management and follow the specific guidelines. Management ensures that the EEA Specific Retention List is implemented.

5.3 Staff

All staff follow the guidelines on document management and makes sure that official documents are registered in the correct document management or information system. They inform the Document Management Officer if some of their documents have historical value for the EEA. They follow training and manuals to process documents in the document management systems correctly.

6 Records management processes

6.1 Appraisal

Appraisal is the process of checking and scrutinizing a document if it is an official record that needs to be registered in a records management system.

Official records are final versions of documents that commit the agency legally, financially or politically.

Documents including drafts or minutes that lead up to these official records should also be registered where they add information to the decision or the process.

Documents that contain historical value for the agency shall also be registered.

The appraisal criteria are the same for electronic and paper documents and are independent of the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) or other system used to capture the record.

Working documents can also be registered in an (EDRMS) to ensure the safety and availability of the document in workflows.



6.2 Metadata

Official records need to be registered with a number of specific metadata. Basic mandatory metadata independent of the system shall be:

- title
- sender/author
- date on document
- date of registration
- attribution to a file
- security

Where the system allows for it, metadata can be entered automatically, for example the electronic file type or the date of registration. A record consists of its content and its metadata.

6.3 Filing plan

The EEA filing plan has been developed for HAN (Hermes-Ares-NomCom) in collaboration with the Commission's Secretariat-General e-Domec team. The filing plan follows the e-Domec model for EU agencies and follows the NomCom structure. Its divided into two main areas: the organisational activities and the specific operational activities of the EEA. The organisational main headings include governance, strategic and coordination, and administrative activities. The operational headings mirror the project titles in the Multi-Annual Work Programme. Headings can only be added by the Commission's e-Domec team while the EEA document manager can create files.

6.4 Specific Retention List

The Specific Retention List of the EEA is based on the legal requirements for the storage and disposition of documents. The two main principles are the obligation to keep documents for a certain number of years and the obligation to dispose and destroy documents after a period of time. The main legal regulations that define the periods of retention and disposition are the financial regulation and the data protection regulation. With the amended Historical Archives Regulation the EU agencies are also required to ensure the correct management and transfer of historical records. The Specific Retention List applies to all documents independent of their medium and where they are stored. For example, the Specific Retention List also applies to administrative documents stored in paper files or electronic financial documents processed in the finance system ABAC.

The EEA Specific Retention List was developed with the Commission's Secretariat-General e-Domec team and follows the structure of the Common Retention List of the Commission. The column headings describe different stages of the document life cycle.

Column titles of the Specific Retention List

CODE

The code is the one given for the Specific Retention List and does not correspond to the filing plan.

CHAPTER TITLE AND/OR FILE TYPE

Describes the files or document types with the same retention periods and archival actions.

DESCRIPTION

Gives further information about the files or documents the chapter is applicable to

ADMINISTRATIVE RETENTION PERIOD (ARP)



Once a file is closed the Administrative Retention Period (ARP) begins. The period is given in years. In the ARP there can be defined administrative procedures taking place. The EEA is using the same three administrative procedures as the Commission Common Retention List (T₁ to T₃).

ACTION AFTER ARP (for the document manager)

After the retention period different archival actions are defined. EL means elimination or disposition. THA stands for the transfer to EEA's historical archives. SAM/SEL is for sample and selection processes.

ACTION AFTER TRANSFER TO THE EEA HISTORICAL ARCHIVES (for the document manager)

The actions include a second review or permanent preservation (PP) which would lead to the transfer of the documents to the Historical Archives of the EU after 30 years.

6.5 Disposition

Disposition refers to the documented process of disposing and destroying documents. Disposition covers the overall process while destruction refers to the physical deletion or destruction of a document. Disposition is triggered by the defined action after the administrative retention period in the retention list or by specific administrative procedures or by data protection measures.

The disposition action and the metadata of the files need to be documented. The destruction of the files is carried out with the necessary security measures (for instance secure shredding of paper documents) and includes potential copies and backups of the documents.

7 Electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS)

In line with the Internal Control Framework the records have to be stored in a system that is *'is reliable, current, accurate, complete, accessible, protected, verifiable, filed and preserved'* and fulfils the information security, document management and data protection requirements.

Records management standards (e.g. ISO 15489:2016) and specific standards for Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) (e.g. ISO 15801:2017, DOD 5015, MoREQ2) have defined the basic principles for these systems. These principles were used in the technical specifications in procurement for the previous EDRMS and are met by the Hermes-Ares-NomCom system of the Commission.

The Electronic Document and Records Management System has to ensure that the authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability of the records are maintained.

Since 2006 the EEA has been using specific electronic document and records managements systems (EDRMS) for document management.

From 2006 to 2009 the Commission system ADONIS was in use as a local installation.

From 2009 to 2018 Hummingbird OpenText eDocs DM was in use.

From 2018 EEA is using the Hermes-Ares-NomCom (HAN) system of the Commission. EEA is directly accessing the HAN system run by DG DIGIT and the documents are stored in Hermes on the servers of DG DIGIT.

There are a number of advantages for the EEA in using Hermes-Ares-NomCom (HAN) of the Commission instead of a commercial product like Hummingbird. HAN is tailor-made for the document management and archival policy needs of the Commission that are very similar to those



of an EU agency. The Commission has more resources and a team of document management specialists (e-Domec team) in the Secretariat-General and DG DIGIT who continuously improve the system. They can also provide a broader scope of manuals, training, and policies than an individual document manager in an EU agency.

The long-term digital preservation required under the amended Historical Archives Regulation can be better managed with HAN than with the commercial off-the-shelf EDRMS the EEA had used until 2018

The documents EEA registers with Ares are stored in Hermes on the servers of the European Commission. Email sent and registered with Ares will be sent from the mail servers of the Commission.

ARES gives the possibility for integrated document workflow directly from tabs of the registration profile. Assignments/attribution can be made for incoming documents as well as an e-signatory workflow for internal or outgoing documents. In the e-signatory workflow the documents are stamped when electronically signed. These electronic document workflows can contribute to the e-government initiative for more efficient administration and the EMAS objective to reduce paper. In line with the Commission practices, other IT systems that guarantee the records management principles can be used to register and store official records at EEA. The regulations and rules on document retention and data protection also apply to records registered in ABAC, the Mission-Meeting system and Sysper.

7.1 Information security

Information security for document management systems encompasses two elements: the security of the individual document and file, meaning the possibility to restrict access, and the security of the document management system as a whole.

Access restrictions can be set in the document management system. Only selected staff members are able to see the document.

Information security of the ARES system is managed by the EC DG DIGIT. The EU Login is used for the authentication to the ARES system.

8 Electronic signatures

8.1 Internal use of e-signatures in ARES, ABAC, Sysper

The EEA is using a number of IT systems that are designed and run by the European Commission, namely ARES for records management, ABAC for financial management and Sysper for human resource management. Electronic workflows in the systems ARES, ABAC and Sysper allow designated users to sign tasks and documents. The signatures in these Commission systems are replacing blue ink signatures for all internal purposes. If these systems are also used by another EU institution (e.g. the Commission) the validity of the electronic signatures is mutually accepted for most documents communicated between these institutions. The identification of system users is verified with the EU login authentication system. The identification of users and the validity of documents between EU institutions in Commission systems is defined in *Commission Decision of 6.7.2020 on records management and archives*:

[...] the procedure may be managed by computer systems, provided that each person is clearly and unambiguously identified and that the system in question provides guarantees that the content is not altered during the procedure. (EC, 2020, C(2020) 4482 Art 11.4)

The electronic signature stamp on registered ARES records has the same value for internal documents as a blue ink signature.



The EEA procurement group updates a list of signature requirements for procurement purposes.

8.2 *Qualified Electronic Signatures (QES)*

Signatures on contracts with external contacts have to be made with a blue ink signature or a Qualified Electronic Signature in line with the eIDAS regulation EU 910/2014. The Qualified Electronic Signature has the same validity as a blue ink signature on all types of documents and is, by law, accepted in all EU members states. Qualified Electronic Signature means that the signed person's identity has been vetted beforehand and the signature is applied with a token in a Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) process. Furthermore, the QES have to be issued by a qualified trust service provider that has been approved in line with the eIDAS regulation and which is on a national trusted list.

The EEA is using QES certificates issued by a private company, Universign, with headquarters in France.

9 Historical Archives

The EEA ensures that its historical documents and audio-visual products are archived according to the regulation and guidelines for the EU institutions. The Historical Archives of the EEA are essential for the memory of the institution. The EEA allows public access to its historical documents.

The Historical Archives of the EEA manage the paper documents after the end of their administrative retention period until their disposition or transfer to the Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU). The physical material of the Historical Archives of the EEA has to be transferred to the HAEU latest after 30 years. The transfer preparations should start for documents that have been in the EEA Historical Archives for more than 15 years.

Digital historical archives material will not be transferred to the HAEU. EEA remains responsible for the long-term digital preservation and accessibility of its digital archives.

9.1 *Historical Archives of the EEA*

The Historical Archives of the EEA manage paper documents, audio-visual products and artefacts of historical value between the end of the administrative retention period and the transfer to the HAEU.

The historical documents are registered in a simple description tool that can generate an Excel or .csv table that is necessary for the transfer to HAEU. The description tool is open for reading on the intranet.

The management of the EEA archives follows the HAEU guidelines for agencies (2017) that define the essential elements and processes of archives management, for example the appraisal, metadata, transfer of paper and audio-visual documents.

The HAEU published in 2018 the guidelines on storage requirements for EU agencies that define the necessary measures for the protection of archival material.

15 years after the end of administrative retention period the historical documents should be appraised for transfer to the HAEU. Personal data contained in the historical archives must be processed according to the data protection regulation.

The data protection regulation EU 2018/1725 restricts the disclosure to the public after 30 years if the rights of data subjects are infringed. The EEA shall review the historical documents for any data protection issues before transfer to the HAEU or public disclosure by digital means. The EEA



follows the archives policy of the Commission C(2020) 4482 that allows for derogation to the personal data protection in cases of public interest in the historical archives of an EU institution. In this context, some personal data might provide authenticity, validity and integrity to the historical documents and should not be deleted or altered. The evaluation between data protection and public information has to be made case-by-case for each document.

The paper collections of the EEA Historical Archives are small due to the early adoption of an electronic workstyle at EEA for most areas outside the regulated administrative and financial processes. The paper archives focus on the 1990s from the founding regulation, the establishment of the agency in Copenhagen since 1994, to the first State of the Environment Reports. Two collections are of special value for the Historical Archives of the EEA: the collections by the first Executive Director Jiménez-Beltrán and the Senior Manager David Stanners. The documents of EEA's Management Board provide a continuous source of the EEA history from the beginning to today.

9.2 Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU)

The Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) was founded in 1983 and is based in Florence, Italy, with the European University Institute (EUI). The amendment of 2015 to the Historical Archives Regulation obliges all EU institutions to transfer their physical archives material after 30 years to the HAEU in Florence.

The EEA has to contribute financially to the budget of the HAEU based on the establishment plan of the EEA. The HAEU has communicated to the DMO of EEA that the first transfer of historical archives material can take place from 2020.

The HAEU also provides guidelines for the agencies on archival topics.

The retrospective registration of EEA archival material with a description tool was designed with the help of the HAEU.

The HAEU acts as a data processor in accordance with Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, under instructions from the EEA, which acts as the controller of personal data contained in its historical archives, deposited at the HAEU.

9.3 Long-term digital preservation

The long-term digital preservation of historical documents is the responsibility of the EEA.

By implementing Ares the EEA can benefit from the Commission developments for the preservation of digital documents. A key element of Ares is the automatic conversion of common electronic formats like .msg or .doc to PDF/A which is considered to be the most secure format for long term archiving.

The Historical Archives Regulation demands the public access to the digital historical documents: *Wherever possible, the institutions shall make their archives available to the public by electronic means, including digitised and born-digital archives, and facilitate their consultation on the internet.* (EU, 2015)

The Historical Archives of the EU needs to have access to the digital historical archives of the EU institutions.

Furthermore, the EEA will cooperate with the Commission on long-term digital archiving solutions.



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