Better document management in the DG

Access to documents and the need for accurate registration and filing

Following some high profile incidents where the Commission was embarrassed by the discovery of documents which did not appear in ARES, the Secretary-General has emphasised the need for better document management.

The key to this is improved use of ARES and its filing system. The Legal Service has confirmed that if all documents were registered correctly, then we could answer access to documents requests simply and quickly via ARES. A good use of ARES would have further benefits:

- a good record of the DG's activities

- organised and accessible electronic filing

- the possibility of future efficiency gains, for example via electronic signataires.

All staff therefore need to know how to use ARES and its files and need to register relevant documents and e-mails.

Changes

The Secretary-General's announcement of changes to how we use Outlook from 1 July means that a change of habits and organisation is essential. What will change?

- Emails in the inbox, sent and deleted folders will be deleted automatically after six months

- All staff will have ARESlook installed as a function in Outlook, which allows simpler and faster registration of emails.

What next?

- All staff need to be familiar with the tools and with the principles of registration and filing

- AD staff need to become more proficient and independent ARES users, particularly given the reductions in secretarial staff

- All units need to have a more robust system and better support for the secretaries and document management correspondents

- SRD1 will provide support, training and guidance at individual and unit level on request.

A prospectus of actions and supplementary information is attached.

Good document management – what it looks like

Staff would be registering all important documents and emails, directly in ARES or via ARESlook.

These documents would be filed correctly in the ARES files and are therefore easily and quickly retrievable.

Staff actively use ARES to file and retrieve their documents from their files.

All secretaries are ARES experts.

Each unit must have one or two document management correspondents responsible for coordination, training and advice on ARES and on filing in the unit.

Supporting material and actions

1. Learning to use Areslook

- Explanations on video – an easy, quick guide, everyone is recommended to watch it:
  https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/Ares/AresLook+Videos

- Quick reference card to print out and keep close to the PC:
  https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/Ares/AresLook+QRC

- 30 minute training courses in DG ENV, advertised on the Intranet, if required

- Individual coaching to managers - on request, simply contact the Document Management team.

2. Learning to use ARES

- 'On the job learning' – unit secretaries and the document management correspondents have an important role to play in helping other staff to use ARES, so they learn in an effective way.

- Specialist courses are available in DG DIGIT via syslog for those wanting in-depth knowledge.

- Quick reference cards on the basics for AD staff will be designed and distributed.

3. Learning about document management in the Commission

- Introduction to document management – this is a brochure with background information and explanations, and aimed at those seeking to understand better how document management works in the Commission:
  https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/sg/en/edomec/doc_management/Documents/toolkit_edomec_mai2010_en.pdf

- Slides and manuals from training courses, from general interest to the perspectives of the secretary or the manager, available for reference, as a follow-up to training or for those staff wanting to access more in-depth knowledge without following the full course:
  https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr_admin/en/training/learning-development-topic/records-management/Pages/courses_and_events.aspx

4. Working with the Units

- Visits to unit meetings by the document management team either to explain ARESlook or other components of the document management system, or on a consultancy basis to help units with the implementation of ARES and filing– on request, contact the DMO team.

- Regular meetings and support to the document management correspondents, including an Away Day, to be organised by SRD1 with the aim of building expertise in the DG and ensuring everyone has –to-date knowledge.

5. Information pack to Administrators

- Information and guidance material to all AD staff will be provided in the next few months to help them become familiar with the basics of using ARES. AD staff wishing to become 'advanced users' of ARES will be encouraged, but they should learn from their Unit secretaries or follow other training.

What to register

Documents to be registered are all documents, regardless of the medium, that:

(a)   are received or formally drawn up by a Commission department in the course of its activities;

and

(b)   (i) are likely to require action, follow‑up or a reply from the Commission or one or more of its departments;

or

(ii) involve the responsibility of the Commission or one or more of its departments;

And

(c)   contain important information which is not short‑lived.

Documents that are drawn up as effective administrative or legal evidence of decisions, situations, intentions or events linked to the activities of the Commission or its departments must also be registered.

Documents which fulfil either the condition set out in the preceding paragraph or all the conditions set out in points (a) to (c) above must be registered (unless they are governed by rules or procedures which determine otherwise).

It is not necessary to register a document in ARES if it is already registered in a specific register, eg Sysper, and vice versa.

Here follow some examples, note that the list is not exhaustive!

Documents to be registered	Examples
Policy and decision -making Documents recording the development of policies or legislation, have historical value and may still have operational value for us.	o Legislative proposals and amendments. o Technical adaptations and regulatory measures. o General recommendations and policy guidelines. o Common negotiating positions and records of international negotiation. o Memorandum of understanding and other agreements to which we are party. o Action plans and strategies: elaboration and follow-up. o Contributions to inter-service consultations or pre-consultations.

Documents to be registered	Examples
Legal constraints Documents recording the implementation of Community legislation and action determined by international agreements. They have legal value and possibly historical value.	o Minutes of Meetings, Committees & other groups, especially with other institutions or external stakeholders, and, for important meetings, briefings/speaking/defensive etc. o National plans, reports & other information sent by member states or partners in response to legal obligations. o Guidelines, reports and other documents elaborated by the DG following provisions of a legislative act. o Decisions taken under existing international agreements. o Permits, certifications and the like. o Records of meetings and relations with parties to an international convention. o Mission reports o Documents, even informal (e-mails or notes to the file) that attest situations or events, justify decisions made or otherwise explain the development of official actions, notes, guidelines.
Finance	o Financial documents (as per BUDG guidelines), reports o Correspondence with contractors o Invoices, contracts, payments, etc
Communication actions Documents recording of actions and relations with the citizens, NGOs, etc. They have an informational value.	o Proceedings of conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. organised by the DG or where the DG had an important role. o Records of relations with citizens, NGOs, industry and other partners – not deriving from legal obligations. o Internal and external formal notes/communications, both received and sent from/to other institutions or external stakeholders