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SRD - Shared Resources Directorate (ENV + CLIMA)
SRD.1 - Human Resources and Administration

Annex 1

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Guidelines on implementation of efficient electronic filing system in DG ENV and CLIMA

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines explain how electronic filing system can be applied efficiently in DG ENV and DG CLIMA. The guidelines should be read by all staff who handles documents, which means by all of us. This concerns the DGs official files that exist in Ares and are transferable to the Commission's Historical Archives.

2. WHAT MEANS A SINGLE ELECTRONIC FILING SYSTEM?

Working files in paper format used by staff for reference purpose are not concerned as they do not fall under the Commission's Common Retention List (CRL – see SEC(2012)713[1]) and can be eliminated when no longer needed. Unit's shared drives are neither concerned (eg.: U, P, Q or other drives), as these are not considered as Commission's official filing/archiving system, but as working space, which is not preserved in long term, and does not guarantee the authenticity as does Ares.

Our DGs have currently 7614 active files (6639 for DG ENV and 975 for DG CLIMA) in Ares containing approx. 180.000 documents for both DGs; each year this grows by +/- 30.000. If we would like to find efficiently documents in the future, perhaps five years from now after reorganisations and staff changes, we must have a single, manageable filing system.

The DGs currently use two official archiving systems: electronic files in Ares and paper files stored in the Units. This double archiving system has weaknesses and the risk multiplies as the size of the archive increases. Important incoming paper documents are attached, registered and filed in Ares. As a result, the folders "Official paper files" become redundant - unless exceptions.

Moving towards a single electronic archiving system consequently means that we have to improve the use of ARES and ensure that documents received on paper are conserved in electronic form.

In practical terms the following measures must be implemented:

- All official documents received on paper which are to be registered in ARES have to be fully scanned, attached to the Ares fiche and filed. So that they can be electronically archived (unless falling under exceptions). However, special attention has to be given to sensitive and/or classified documents. For more information on how to handle sensitive and/or classified documents please refer to Chapter 4 of this document.

- The person scanning is responsible for **checking the** quality of the scan (legible and complete) at that time.

- The same service destroys the original paper document **six months after scanning**.

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[1]
 https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/sg/en/edomec/doc_management/Documents/SEC(2012)713 _en_merged.pdf

Exceptions: **Documents to be conserved in its original paper format**
1. Documents requiring a handwritten signature as condition of its legal value, eg: international agreements, contractual and/or financial documents: call for tenders, grants, contracts or any other financial document requiring the original documents to be valid (see Annex II).
2. Classified Documents (eg. RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED) or documents with special markings (eg.: "ETS Sensitive" or/and "ETS Critical") that are registered in ARES but can not be uploaded (see chapter 4).
3. Documents difficult to be uploaded into Ares (bulky, voluminous documents, maps USB-sticks, form of book, etc.)
These documents will be preserved in the official paper file complementing the e-file.

Note: For documents that could not be uploaded into ARES the ARES registration number and date have to be copied on the 1st page of the hardcopy. If applicable, the mention 'paper annex/USB-stick/CD-ROM, etc. stored in binder XYZ' must be included in the Comments field of the Ares fiche.

3. WHAT RULES WILL APPLY TO YOUR UNIT'S OFFICIAL FILES (BOTH PAPER AND ELECTRONIC)

3.1. Official files created in 2004 and before

All files created in and before **2004** are considered as *non e-Domec compliant* and thus can be transferred to the Historical Archives for long-term storage at any time (both paper and electronic). If your Unit has such files, please complete the below documents for requesting the transfer (the forms can be downloaded from: https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document_management/archives/Pages/Archives.aspx):

- Transmission slip (Borderau de Transmission)

- List of the files (basic list)

3.2. Official files created between 2005-2009

All files created between **2005 and 2009** are "**in transition**" and transferred both in paper and electronic. However, the CRL applies.

If your Unit has such files, please complete the documents as above for requesting the transfer.

3.3. Official files created as of 2010

Official files that are created as of 2010 and that exist electronically in ARES are considered as *fully e-domec compliant*. ARES guarantees the reliability, readability and authenticity of digital documents.

Paper files will not be considered as official files and the lead unit must consider whether it is required (based on the exceptions). If this is the case, the official paper file has to be linked to its official electronic files using labels for your binders (you can download the

label here:
https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document_management/filing/Pages/Filing-and-Filing-Plan.aspx).

In practice, the official paper file must not contain documents which have been attached and registered in ARES and are filed in the corresponding ARES file. The Historical Archives will reject all transfer requests that concern paper files that are simply a duplication of the electronic file.

4. SENSITIVE AND CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

4.1. Registration in ARES

In ARES sensitive documents can be uploaded, but the fiche must be marked (eg.: "Personal" or "Limited Service"). On the contrary, classified documents (RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED) and/or documents with a specific marking (eg. "ETS Sensitive" or/and "ETS Critical") must be registered but they cannot be attached to the fiche.

For more information on how to handle sensitive and/or classified documents and specific registration rules that apply please refer to the Commission's Security Notices 1 and 2 [2].

For documents that could not be uploaded into ARES at the time of their registration the ARES registration number and date have to be copied on the 1st page of the hardcopy. The hardcopy has to be stored in a standard, steel, locked cupboard, either within an office or in a working area.

4.2. Declassification of marked and classified documents

Sensitive and classified documents require extra precautions and have to be handled with care. Also, they cannot be disclosed in case of public access request.

For these reasons, the classification/marking should be removed as soon as it is not strictly necessary. Therefore, classified/marked documents have to be reviewed by their author/originating Unit, with a view to their declassification, every 5 years.

The HOU and e-DMC of the Unit concerned, together with the DG's LSO and DMO will co-ordinate the declassification/demarking procedure to be applied.

The declassified document has to be scanned and sent to the DMO, who via the 'Declassify' functionality in ARES both uploads the document and adds a link to a registered document requesting or authorising declassification. This also applies to demarked documents where the attachments could not be uploaded into Ares.

The physical destruction of documents and/or files must always guarantee the required level of confidentiality of those documents/files.

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[2] For more information on markings, please read the European Commission's Security Notices 1 and 2: : https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/security/EN/Legislation/securitynotices/Pages/SecurityNotices.aspx

5. LIFE-CYCLE OF A FILE IN DG ENV AND CLIMA

5.1. Responsibilities

- **Heads of Unit** ensure that their list of files gives a good overview of the work of the unit and that e-DMC is informed by colleagues of all required updates;

- **All unit staff** has obligations with regard to the management of documents, among them, the obligation to cooperate with their e-DMC. They inform e-DMC of any new files to be created, closed and/or modified. They also ensure that their files are complete.

- **E-domec Correspondents** (e-DMC) request the creation and update of files in ARES to the DMOs (Document Management Officer). They do so following instructions from their HoU and/or colleagues.

5.2. Creating an official file in ARES

ARES files well represent the current activities of the Unit (using the DGs' matrix). The importance of complete electronic files in Ares is crucial, as only Ares electronic files will be transferred to the Historical Archives Service, unless exceptions.

Unit's e-Domec Correspondents (e-DMC) should send regularly Unit's list of files to Policy Officers for verification and sends requests for creation and modification to the DMO team (FMB: ENV-CLIMA-ARCHIVES-FILING@ec.europa.eu).

If the activity/case/contract is closed, the file has to be closed. You can also anticipate, and request creation for Unit's actions in the pipeline. One Ares file = one Action, one Procedure, one Contract.

The Ares file needs to be:

- ✓ clear
- ✓ precise
- ✓ a good title to indicate what will be filed in order to avoid mistakes and misfiling
- ✓ does not contain more than 200 documents (in order to find documents easily, also for technical reasons).

5.3. Closing of Unit's files

After consultation with the responsible Desk Officers, the Unit's e-DMC informs the DMO team when a file can be closed (= action, procedures, case, contract is finished). In addition, the DMO of the DG sends the list of Unit's inactive files to the Unit's e-DMC once a year, requesting approval to close them. e-DMC, after consultation with Unit's colleagues, replies to DMO indicating which files can be closed.

When closing the official file (paper and/or electronic) the Unit has to check if:

- **The electronic Ares file** is complete and contains all relevant documents received/created. In practice, this means that services should scan/import and register paper documents the first time they are handled (including the vital step of verifying that a scanned file is readable), to avoid risk of errors.

- **The paper file** is not a duplication of documents that are already uploaded in ARES. Duplications need to be destroyed (unless falling under the exceptions).

For any doubt and before destroying documents, please contact the DMO team.

If there are **classified documents** in the electronic or physical file please contact also the DMO team for further guidance.

5.4. Transfer to the Historical Archive

When the file is closed, the Administrative Retention Period (ARP) starts. The Common Retention List of the European Commission (CRL) applies to all files created as of 2005.

The CRL indicates how long is the ARP for a file, and what is next to happen with the file. During this time the paper part of the file should be stored in the Unit's intermediate Archive for consultation only.

After the ARP expires, some files (both electronic and paper) are either transferred to the Historical Archives for permanent preservation, or selected/sampled/or eliminated. This information is seen in Ares, when you click on information icon next to a file.

5.5. Sampling/Selection of files

The Commission can not preserve everything. Therefore some files have to be sampled/selected according to the CRL rules. Only sampled/selected files are going to be transferred to the Historical Archives for permanent preservation[3].

If your Unit's files fall under Sampling/Selection category, the DMO will ask you to identify, which files are to be eliminated and which are for Permanent Preservation. This information needs to be provided by Units at the moment of files closure.

When sampling/selecting your closed files be aware of the different value of your files, and of the high value some of them may have for the institution and for citizens. Take into account that your files might be subject to requests in relation to **Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001** (access to documents held by the Commission).

Selection: Retention of a limited number of files based on the selector's subjective criteria. Criteria might include: importance of the originator unit, importance of case, current or future reuse of file, interest research, media impact, diplomatic value.

Sampling: Retention of a sample of files representative of a greater set of files.

Cases: well adapted to serial files or with standard composition, whose historical value can be ensured by retaining a representative sample of the whole.

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[3] p.13-16 "Preservation of files, their appraisal and transfer to the Historical Archives" of 12 July 2010, Ares(2010)417659
https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/sg/en/edomec/faq/Documents/manuel_conserv_en.pdf

Systematic sampling: choice of each nth files after distributing the files chronologically, topographically, alphabetically, numerically.

 Example systematic sampling:

1. Take all files in one specific year (chronological criterion)

2. From this year, take all the files with the same topography (country, region)

3. Apply the formula:

$$\frac{[\text{number of country files}] \times [\text{maximum size of sample}]}{[\text{total number of files per year}]}$$