



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
CLIMATE ACTION  
SRD - Shared Resources Directorate (ENV + CLIMA)  
**SRD.1 - Human Resources and Administration**

**Annex II**

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# **Guidelines on implementation of efficient electronic filing system for finance files in DG ENV and CLIMA**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Operational Units in collaboration with their e-DMCs request the creation of one file for every signed contract for which they are responsible in the DG.

These include procurement contracts (studies, technical assistance & service contracts) as well as grants or projects. These files are special because they are composed of two separate parts kept by different units:

- The financial part, kept by the finance unit (SRD.2);
- The operational part, kept by the different technical and legal units in charge.

However in Ares, this is one single file, where both SRD.2 and Operational Unit file documents related to the contract.

## 2. THE CONTENT OF CONTRACT FILES

### 2.1. What is kept in SRD2

SRD.2 keeps paper originals of all financial documents of a contract.

### 2.2. What is kept by the operational Units

The operational units keep the deliverables of the contract (e.g interim reports, final reports, studies and other deliverables) and important correspondence with the contractors. Therefore the Operational Unit should normally have electronic documents registered and saved in ARES only. However, if the deliverable is voluminous or stored on a media that can not be uploaded into Ares, (eg.: Video, USB or CDs), the Operational Unit needs to create also an official paper file.

The official contract file, if such exists in the Operational Unit, is to be transferred to the Historical Archives but cannot contain offers from tenderers, which are kept with SRD.2.

Offers/proposals can be kept by the operational units in a file clearly marked "working file", which will be eliminated when no longer needed. However, copies of non-retained offers/proposals **must be eliminated** three years **after closure of the call for proposals (decision to award the grant)**.

The content of the financial part of the file is well defined by the financial procedures. The content of the operational part is more variable. The file has to contain all documents that are not considered part of the financial file, but are nevertheless relevant for the follow-up of a contract:

- Notes related to the launch of a specific contract: request for commitment, evaluation of offers and exchange of emails with tenderers during the evaluation. ENVAC committee ( if applicable);
- Correspondence and important e-mails exchanged with the beneficiary of the contract (in Ares);
- Notes to the file, mission reports and any other documents that are considered necessary to explain events or situations in relation to that contract (in Ares);
- Interim and final reports and other deliverables of the contract these have to be kept in the operational part of the files because they contain information that is technically

relevant (the financial unit usually keeps just a copy of the first page with the stamp *bon à payer*, as basis for the payment) (in Ares if not too voluminous. If the report is voluminous, then a transmission letter and 1<sup>st</sup> page of the report are scanned in Ares, and the entire document is kept in an official paper file of the Operational Unit, responsible for the contract);

- Request for de-commitment (if applicable).

You can consult DG BUDG lists of **financial documents which** are to be kept in its original paper format. In general this concerns documents which require blue ink signatures, such as originals of offers, contracts, invoices (except where electronic invoicing is in use) and others. As a guiding principal ask yourself whether you might need to produce the document in a court case or when the auditors come to visit.

- DG BUDG's specific guidance document – Procurement Information on when a paper or electronic signature is required for financial documents in relation to procurements (01.2012, updated 01.2013) - [https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document\\_management/filing/Documents/financial-documents-signature-procurement.xls](https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document_management/filing/Documents/financial-documents-signature-procurement.xls)
- DG BUDG's specific guidance document – Grants Information on when a paper or electronic signature is required for financial documents in relation to grants (01.2012) - [https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document\\_management/filing/Documents/financial-documents-signature-grants.xlsx](https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document_management/filing/Documents/financial-documents-signature-grants.xlsx)

### 3. CREATING CONTRACT FILES IN ARES

#### 3.1. The file code

Contract files receive the Activity code 1.3.5 = management of contracts, under 1.3, Budget and Finance.

(As an exception, projects funded through an existing Financial Programme, (eg. LIFE), can be created using the Activity code **5.3**, but this code is to be used only by the same unit responsible for the Programme).

The complete code of the contract file will be created following the usual rules of the DG: "**policy code-activity code, abbreviation of title of the contract**" (or name of the beneficiary, or any other keyword preferred by the technical unit to identify this contract). Example:

**102-1.3.5 EIA5** where:

**102** = Policy code in Matrix, stands for "Environmental Impact Assessment"

**1.3.5** =Activity code in Matrix, stands for Management of contracts

**EIA5** stands for "Study contract 5 years of application of the EIA directive"

### **3.2. File title**

The title of contract files **starts with the contract number assigned by the financial unit** –something like SI2.689155. In the example above, the complete file code and title is:

**102-1.3.5 EIA5**      SI2.689155    STUDY CONCERNING THE REPORT ON THE  
APPLICATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EIA DIRECTIVE

Note: If the contract number is not yet available at the time of creation of the file, the title will start with the characters **SI2.XXXXXX**, which will be replaced as soon as the number is known (all contract numbers start with the letters SI2.)

Every unit has to ensure that this financial number is communicated to the Unit's e-DMC as soon as it is obtained.

## **4. REGISTRATION AND FILING IN ARES**

### **4.1. Registration**

Documents in relation to contracts have to be registered in Ares (this includes important e-mail exchange with the contractor).

Usually, complete documents are uploaded into ARES, including annexes (scanned or attached in electronic format). However, in the case of contracts, this is not always compulsory. Many of the documents related to contracts have to be kept in paper format and are in addition too bulky to be easily scanned. This is notably the case of the reports sent by the beneficiaries. When a document is composed of a cover note and a big paper annex, CD-ROM or any other physical format, it is possible to scan only the cover note and keep the annexes in their original format.

When an annex exists in paper, CD-ROM or any other physical format, this will be mentioned in the Ares fiche, in the field Comments. The physical annex will be clearly marked with the corresponding Ares registration number and preserved by the unit.

### **4.2. Filing**

All the documents created in ARES in relation to a contract will be linked to the same file, no matter who signs the documents and/or creates the fiches.

The operational unit will file all the documents they create themselves, plus those created by their Directors. Unit SRD.2 will either file its own documents related to the contract<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> LIFE projects constitute an exception to this rule.

or create a CLASS-task for the Operational Unit's virtual entity if the contract file can not be found in ARES.

The ARES file code will provide the link between the two parts of the same file, even if they remain physically separated (the financial part is kept in paper format by finance unit SRD2).

If the operational unit considers that an official paper file is required (based on the exceptions), the official paper file has to be linked to its official electronic files (using labels that can be download here:

[https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/envclimasrd/srd/working/document\\_management/filing/Pages/Filing-and-Filing-Plan.aspx](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.

## **5. FILE MANAGEMENT**

As any other file, contracts are managed following their lifecycle:

- While the contract is ongoing, the file is open and is used to file new documents related to that contract;
- When the contract is finalised, the file is closed and can be used only for consultation, not to file new documents;
- After a certain period (10 years) closed contract files are transferred to the Historical Archives of the Commission (the transfer of files will be prepared by the e-DMC following the common transfer rules);
- The rules of sampling/selecting applies.