

## Annex III

# CLEANING UNITS' PREMISES - GUIDELINES – Selection of files -

## INTRODUCTION

The official files we produce in the course of our work belong to the Commission and have to be properly preserved, by us during their active life and by the historical archives of the Commission once they become inactive.

The purpose of this guide is to assist Units in the "Selection of files". Why?

We don't pretend that you need to become an expert in appraisal and selection but we do invite you to become aware of the different value of the files in your possession, 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). Also, we think we may save you time and effort if we help you to identify non-archival materials that can be discarded directly.

## Practical tips when sorting of files

Evaluation and selection of units' files is a collaborative task. The persons responsible for the actions in the unit have always a word to say, ultimate responsibility lies with the Head of Unit.

For the implementation of the decisions taken, your unit will have a co-ordinator. These are some practical tips to help in sorting files.

### ❖ Use Colour DOTS

Stick the colour dots on the back of your files to record your decisions as you go ...



BLUE = Keep it



YELLOW = you don't know yet



Red = Discard

If you have different persons going around to assess the value of your archives ... make them use the dots or go along with them. If there are different opinions, stick more than one dot and note inside the initials of the person who made each judgement!



Please take into account at least the **non-archival** materials listed at the bottom of page 3.

The following pages will introduce you to the process of the selection of files. Don't hesitate to contact the Document Management Officers of the DG for any further advice you may require.

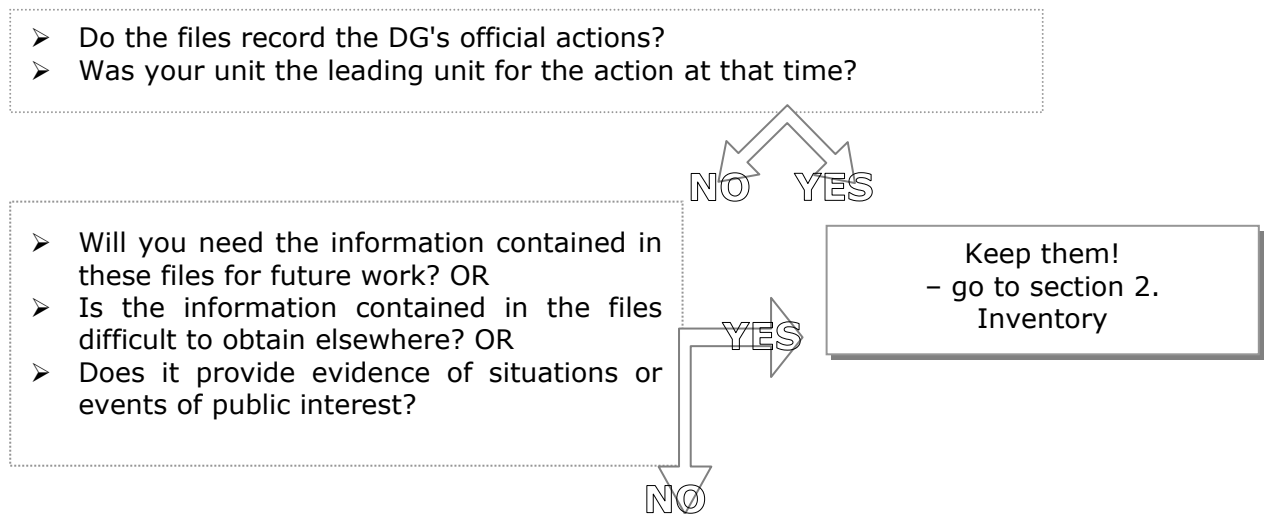
## 1. SELECTION OF FILES

### 1.1 Understanding the value of "old" files

The value of documents and files depends mostly on their content, but also on the role of the unit that produced them and, of course, on their physical condition. A file that records an official action, that is well arranged and complete, and that has been produced by the office responsible for that action has the highest archival value.

In practical terms, we can say that units have the obligation to keep all files produced in the course of actions for which the unit had direct responsibility. We can keep also other files simply because they contain useful information that cannot be found elsewhere.

The following questions may help you deciding what to do with the closed files that exist in your archives:



If you have replied "no" to all these questions, you can most probably discard the files. Before taking the final decision, however, check the list of to-keep and not-to-keep materials that follows. And, in case of doubt, call us for advice.

#### **BEWARE; your predecessor might have had a good reason to invest all that effort and care...**




The persons that have produced the files are in the best position to assess their value. Unfortunately, they are not always around. The condition of the files may give you a clue to their relevance, because we all tend to care more for things we consider important.


- ✓ Are the files well labelled?
- ✓ Are they arranged in a particular order?
- ✓ Are they dated, or marked as volume 1, 2, 3 etc. of the same action or subject?

If your answer is yes to one or more of these questions, **keep the files.**

## 1.2. To keep...

Valuable files	Examples
 <p><b>Policy &amp; decision-making</b></p> <p>Files recording the development of policies or legislation have historical value and may still have operational value for us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative proposals &amp; amendments</li> <li>Technical adaptations &amp; regulatory measures.</li> <li>General recommendations &amp; policy guidelines.</li> <li>Common negotiating positions &amp; records of international negotiation.</li> <li>Memorandum of understanding and other agreements to which we are party.</li> <li>Action plans &amp; strategies: elaboration and follow-up.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Files that record actions driven by legal constraints</b></p> <p>Files that record the implementation of Community legislation &amp; action determined by international agreements. They have legal value and possibly historical value.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings of Committees &amp; other groups.</li> <li>National plans, reports &amp; other information sent by member states or partners in response to legal obligations.</li> <li>Guidelines, reports and other documents elaborated by the DG following provisions of a legislative act.</li> <li>Decisions taken under existing international agreements.</li> <li>Permits, certifications and the like.</li> <li>Records of meetings and relations with parties to an international convention.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication actions</b></p> <p>Record of actions &amp; relations with the citizens, NGOs, etc. They have an informational value.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proceedings of conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. organised by the DG or where the DG had an important role.</li> <li>Records of relations with citizens, NGOs, industry and other partners – not deriving from legal obligations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The list is non-exhaustive. You are generally responsible for keeping all files for which you have been the leading unit, and the originals of all documents that have been registered.</b></p>	

## ... & Not to Keep

Non valuable materials	No value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collections of official documents (COM, SEC, etc. &amp; also documents produced by the Council, the EP, the EEA...)</li> <li>Collections of documents produced by other institutions (OCDE, UN &amp; UN programmes)</li> <li>Publications in multiple exemplars, including guidelines, leaflets, etc.</li> <li>Manuals, periodicals &amp; other reference material</li> </ul>	<p><b>Non-archival material</b></p> <p>These materials will probably be sent to the historical archives if you include them in your transfer.</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of LIFE files found outside the LIFE unit.</li> <li>Infringements and complaints other than those kept by the legal unit</li> <li>Call for tenders and offers received – originals kept by the finance unit.</li> <li>Administrative records (related to the management of human resources, logistics...)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Doubles</b></p> <p>Working files that are double of master files kept at other units (when you are NOT the leading unit).</p> <p>And of course, your own doubles - usually produced when different persons are involved in the same action.</p>
<p><b>The materials included in this list should not be sent to the historical archives. But this does not mean that you cannot keep them if you need them yourself!</b></p>	