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DS/COE(2017)5

Common Retention and Disposal Schedule

Council of Europe

1. Introduction

This schedule sets out the retention conditions for the common record types of the Council of Europe entities. It is a tool for managing records throughout their life cycle. It constitutes a major part of the framework policy on record-keeping duties requested by the External Auditor in 2017.

The schedule can be applied directly by entities that have any of these record types. Where entities have specific record series not covered by this schedule, separate retention and disposal schedules should be drawn up for them. This is also the case if they deviate from the common schedule with regard to any of the management rules.

2. Structure of the retention and disposal schedule

The functions and activities in this schedule are taken from the Council of Europe Business Classification Scheme (see an overview below). The record types are presented in the order of the function groups and functions (e.g. A.10, B.60) to which they belong. The Business Classification Scheme shows the Organisation's business activities and allows records to be connected to the context in which they were created. It is therefore used to organise documents in the Records Management System (RMS).

For each series, the following information is provided:

Series: records concerning the same type of activity, issue or procedure, and which are managed in the same way.

Master/copy: whether the entity keeps a master or a copy.

Medium, format & storage: whether electronic or paper; which electronic format; and preferred repository. (While awaiting a new collaborative solution and document management system, the current storage options are the existing collaborative spaces, public folders or RMS. The public folders and the local and shared drives should be avoided for new collections, if possible.)

Retention period: how long the documents should be kept. Retention periods are established according to requirements: business needs, compliance with rules, regulations or obligations, and historical value.

Disposition: final action taken at the end of the retention period, e.g. destruction, review or permanent preservation.

Access classification level: determines the 'read access' right assigned to a group of people for a series of records. Records are either public, restricted, internal or confidential.¹

Folder structure: how the records will be organised within the series.

3. Abbreviations used in the schedule:

CCM: Cost Centre Manager
 CoE: Council of Europe
 CS: Collaborative Site
 DGA: Directorate General of Administration
 DGS: Directorate of General Services
 DHR: Directorate of Human Resources
 DIT: Directorate of Information Technology
 DIO: Directorate of Internal Oversight
 DMS: Document management system
 GDD: Travel management system (« Gestion Des Déplacements »)
 MAE: major administrative entities
 MSA: Multiservice Assistant (Council of Europe's online catalogue of services)
 n/a: not applicable
 ODGP: Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
 PO: Private Office
 RMS: Records management system
 TPAD: Treasury, Payments and Accounting Department

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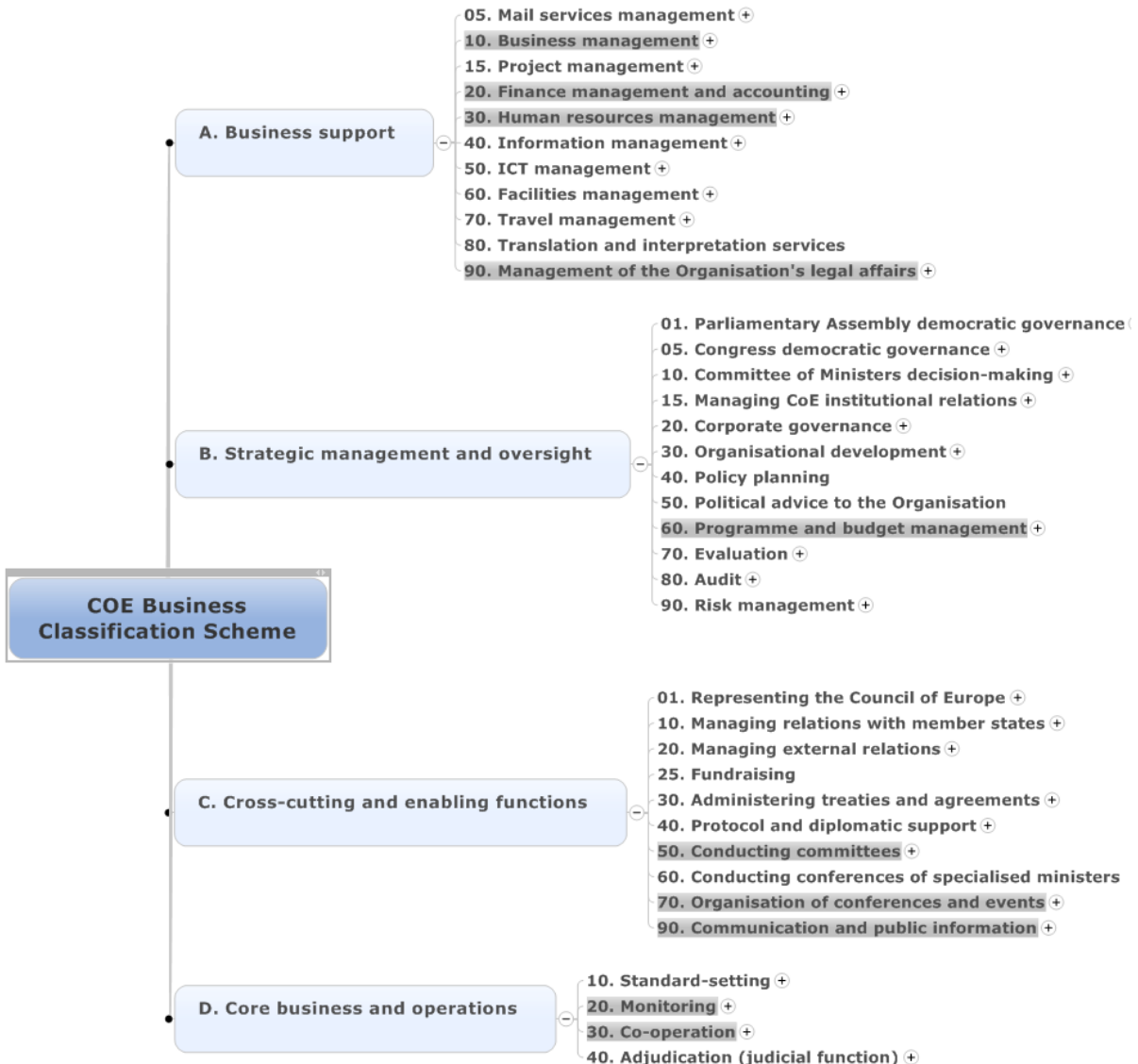
¹ For further information see the [online Glossary](#) under 'Access classification level'.

Overview of the Council of Europe Business Classification

This graph presents the high-level functions, grouped into four function groups, of the Council of Europe Business Classification Scheme.

To consult the full version, please use the links provided on the [Archive Correspondents' collaborative site](#) (internal access only).

The functions appearing in this common schedule are highlighted.



A.10 Business management

Series	Master / Copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Management and activity reporting							
Progress and activity records Include, for example, finalised statistics or activity reports that have been produced for management or for informing larger audiences, but without engaging in a proper publication process. For published activity reports, use <i>Council of Europe publications</i> series.	Master	Word (RMS)	15 years	Review for preservation	Public		Chronologically or by year
Conducting staff and management meetings							
Internal meeting records Records documenting meetings at unit, section, division and directorate level. Project meetings should be documented under the specific project. - Meeting minutes - Presentations	Master	E-mail, Word, PPT (DMS or RMS)	5 years(default) Up to 15 years (maximum)	Destruction or Review for useful information	Confidential (default) or internal	Retention and disposition depend on the administrative level of the meetings.	By year

A.20 Finance management and accounting

Concerns records held by the buyer administrative entity; not to be confused with records held by TPAD.

Series	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classi- fication level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Procurement							
Procurement accounting records Records documenting the actual agreements and commitments made during the procurement process. Typically include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request for offers including specifications - Memos to Tenders Boards with attachments and Tenders Board decisions - PV of openings of the bids - Unsuccessful proposals - Successful proposals including promise of sale - Purchase request and approval - Orders/Contracts - Contract amendments/waivers - Invoices - Acceptances of work - Authorisations of payment 	Master / Copy ²	Hybrid: Paper and Electronic (DMS, RMS for archiving) The Master containing signatures and/or handwritten notes must (also) be kept in paper format.	10 years after end of contract.	Destruction	Confidential (partly shared with TPAD)	Procurement files should be kept together during their active life. Rule No. 1333 of 29 June 2011 on the procurement procedures of the CoE (§19.4) indicating records management requirements, also for buyer entities: 10 years for accounting information, and 5 years for other information.	By year

² Concerning master or copy see [Instruction No.59 of 21 December 2007 on consultants' contracts](#) and [Instruction No.60 of 21 December 2007 on outsourcing contracts](#) (articles 24 and 26 respectively). Contrary to these instructions, practice established at the CoE is that original invoices are sent by MAEs to TPAD for payment, and MAEs keep copies of the invoices. Internal Audit approved of this practice (email to DIT 31/5/2012), and DGA will change instructions in this regard at the next update occasion (email to Audit 25/7/2012).

Series	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classi- fication level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Expenditure management							
Expenditure overview records Entity level overview records used for monitoring resources and spending throughout the year (HR, suppliers, telephone, printing, distribution, translation etc.). Also include registers of orders and contracts.	Master	Electronic (DMS, RMS for archiving)	10 years	Destruction	Confidential		By year
Mission and travel reimbursement records Records concerning the reimbursement of official journeys. Include authorised mission orders, expense reports, invoices linked to missions, and relevant exchanges and derogations.	Master/ Copy	GDD application; Word, PDF, E-mail (DMS, RMS for archiving)	10 years	Destruction	Confidential	Shared with TPAD. Concerns the financial aspect of staff members' official journeys. Masters of mission reports should be filed with relevant activity.	GDD: n/a Other systems: by year
Financial control							
Financial authority records Records documenting the delegation of financial authority and responsibility to CCMs by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Entities usually include a copy of the authorised Cost Centre signatures sent to TPAD, and a copy of the declarations of interest (made in the context of the procurement procedure) sent to DIO.	Master/ Copy	Email, PDF (RMS)	10 years	Destruction	Confidential	Sent in electronic form (scanned letter) by PO or Director General.	Chrono- logically

A.30 Human resources management

Concerns records held by each entity; not to be confused with records held by the Directorate of Human Resources (DHR). Special attention has to be paid to personal data protection: strict access restrictions apply. The Council of Europe Data Commissioner underlined the importance considering the retention periods under this function as maximum periods: these records may be deleted before the end of their retention period.

Series: title, description	Master / copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Recruitment and career management							
Recruitment records Records documenting an internal or external recruitment instance. Contain all or any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Copies of application files including CVs - Interview records - Candidate evaluation records (both written and oral evaluations) - Candidate comparison table - Entity's recommendation - Exchanges related to recruitment - Copy of the Appointment Board's minutes with decision 	Master / Copy	Hybrid: Electronic (DMS); Paper (secure filing)	2 months after the vacancy is actually filled	Destruction	Confidential	All paper copies of application files have to be returned to DHR for secure destruction.	By vacancy
Unsolicited applications Spontaneous applications and replies.	Master	E-mail, Word, PDF (DMS)	Keep until reply sent Or: Keep up to 2 years	Destruction	Confidential	Attention to personal data protection: If entity wishes to retain applications for a certain time, the applicant has to be informed and given the possibility to object to the retention (example).	Chronologically

Series: title, description	Master / copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Staff contract management / Remuneration and allowances management							
Staff issues follow-up records Nominal staff records which are needed at entity level. May include: - Staff requests to work part time, take special leave, etc. and subsequent exchanges and memos - Decisions ad personam (AP) (preferably as links to DHR) - Records linked to compensation for overtime - Follow-up of hours worked - Reference letters	Master / Copy	Electronic (MSA; DMS)	5 years	Destruction	Confidential, shared with DHR	Personal administrative files are kept by DHR and must not be duplicated at entity level. MSA requests should not be printed out. They are kept in MSA.	By staff category or by year
Staff overview records Records regrouping nominal HR information at unit or entity level. May include: - Staff salary cost tables - Official exchanges with DHR on cost tables (validation etc.) - PeopleSoft reports to create statistics - Staff lists by grade, gender etc. - Anonymised HR statistics and overview tables	Master	Word, Excel (DMS)	5 years	Destruction	Confidential, shared with DHR Internal		By staff category or by year
Leave and attendance management							
Absence tables - General absence tables - Sick leave tables	Master	Excel (DMS)	Current year + 1 year	Destruction	Confidential		Chronologically

Series: title, description	Master / copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Notifications of absence Messages by staff to inform about absence. Input for updating absence table to be transmitted to DRH.	Master	Email (mailbox of staff in charge)	2 months after absence table sent.	Destruction	Confidential	Contains sensitive data; swift deletion required.	n/a

A.90 Management of the Organisation's legal affairs

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Information compliance management							
Public disclosure authorisations Records documenting individuals' consent to the public disclosure of information resources which identify them, such as contact details or photos. Public disclosure refers for example to the publication on the Internet or in other media.	Master	E-mail with attachments, PDF (RMS)	For as long as the information resource is used + 10 years (Default: 15 years in RMS)	Destruction	Confidential		By event or publication

B.60 Programme and budget management

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Following the implementation of programme and budget							
Programme and budget monitoring records Records documenting the	Master	Excel, Word, PDF (RMS)	10 years	Destruction	Confidential		By year/ biennium

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classification level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
implementation of the budget throughout the budgetary cycle at corporate or cost-centre level. (For following the budget and spending at lower entity level, use <i>Expenditure overview records</i> series). Include for example: - Budgetary situations (including staff) - Budgetary forecasts							

C.50 Conducting committees

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Conducting committees							
Committee meeting preparation records Records documenting the preparation of a specific committee meeting. Include exchanges with delegates/experts, with other participants and Council of Europe staff on content-related issues, such as issues to be covered, documents to be finalised, etc. (For records relating to the actual invitation, use <i>Committee convocation records</i> series.)	Master	E-mail, Word, Excel (RMS)	10 years after committee meeting	Review for useful information	Confidential		By committee, then by meeting

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Committee convocation records May include: - Convocation letters - Invitation letters - Cover e-mails	Master	E-mail, Word, Excel (DMS or RMS)	5 years after committee meeting	Destruction	Restricted	Information about actual participation is recorded in the relevant list of participants, and is kept for 10 years by the Accounting Division with the information about experts' reimbursement.	By committee, then by meeting
Committee meeting records Records documenting the individual meetings of a given committee and their outcome. Covers intergovernmental committees in the sense of CM/Res(2011)24, committees established by a convention or resolution, and those set up under a partial agreement. May include: - Agenda - Working documents - Information documents - Adopted texts - List of decisions - List of participants - Committee meeting report	Master	Word (RMS)	Permanent	Preservation	Public after meeting, but exceptions possible (set down in the texts governing the Committee)	Consent of participants must be obtained before publication of list of participants.	(By committee) By meeting

C.70 Organisation of conferences and events

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classi- fication level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Organisation of conferences and events							
Conference and event organising records Records documenting the preparation and organisation of a Council of Europe event or conference. May include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exchanges with potential participants (internal and external) - invitation letters - speaking notes. 	Master	Word, E-mail (DMS or RMS)	Depends on conference: 5 or 10 years (default)	Review for useful information	Internal		By conference
Conference and event records Records documenting the content and results of a Council of Europe event or conference. May include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme - List of speakers, participants - Speeches, contributions, presentations - Conclusions, recommendations - Conference report or conference proceedings. 	Master	Word, PDF (RMS)	Depends on conference: 10 years 30 years (default) or Permanent	Preservation	Public	Owner of the Conference and event records is the entity responsible for the organisation of the conference or event. Consent of participants must be obtained before publication of list of participants.	By conference

C.90 Communication and public information

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access classi- fication level	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Media relations management							
Council of Europe press releases and news Media communications released by the Council of Europe or any of its bodies and entities, comprising press releases and news items published on the Organisation's Internet sites.	Master	Word (RMS)	30 years	Review for preservation	Public		Chronologically
Managing publications							
Council of Europe awareness-raising material To be used for glossy versions and flyers which are not to be kept permanently.	Master/ Copy	PDF, Word (RMS)	10 years	Review for preservation	Public	Publications produced by DGS are kept by DGS.	Chronologically, by year or by theme
Council of Europe publications Covers publications for sale and free publications issued or commissioned by the CoE. Includes brochures, flyers, books, published conference proceedings, posters, etc.	Master/ Copy	PDF, Word (RMS)	Permanent	Preservation	Public	Publications produced by DGS are kept by DGS.	Chronologically, by year or by theme
Web management							
Internet Entity's section on Council of Europe website	Master	Electronic	Keep current		Public or Restricted (Extranet)	Regular snapshots of CoE public web pages can be taken by Archive-It and kept as web archives (subject to any copyright restrictions).	n/a

D.20 Monitoring

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Coordinating monitoring programmes							
General monitoring coordination records Records documenting the coordination and planning of monitoring activities in general, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring calendars - Monitoring overview tables - Visit plans - Lists of themes or countries 	Master	Word, Excel, E-mail (DMS)	5 years	Review for useful information	Confidential		By year or monitoring cycle
Conducting monitoring instances							
Country or thematic background information External or internal general information (i.e. not related to a specific instance of monitoring) on the situation in a monitored country, or on particular topics. May include press clippings, reports written by other organisations, by other bodies of the Council of Europe, etc.	Master/ Copy	Electronic (DMS)	Keep current	n/a	Depends on monitoring mechanism (Confidential by default)	Management of this series depends on how country information is used in the monitoring process, i.e. if input for drafting the report has to be documented or not.	By country / by theme
		Electronic (RMS)	10 years	Review for useful information			
Specific monitoring preparation records Records documenting the preparation of an instance of monitoring (e.g. the drafting of a report). They concern the gathering	Master	Word, E-mail (RMS)	10 years	Review for useful information	Confidential		By monitoring instance

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
<p>of information for evaluating compliance (by visit, questionnaire, etc.). Can include any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit programme - Briefing notes - Observations/Impressions - Notes of delegation(s) - Complaints - Consultation of stakeholders - Relevant exchanges with monitored state 							
<p>Monitoring reports Records documenting the assessment of a state's compliance with a Council of Europe standard (convention, recommendation, statutory obligation). Records may include any of the following for an instance of monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country report - Evaluation report - Conclusions and/or Decisions - State report - Visit report - Opinion - Government response(s) / comment(s) / declarations or communiqués - Reply/ies to government - Public statement 	Master	Word, PDF (RMS)	Permanent	Preservation	Public (there might be exceptions to this, when publication is subject to approval by the state concerned)		By monitoring instance

D.30 Co-operation

Project records are filed together during their active life, and are accessible to all project participants (collaborative site, later DMS). Duplication should be avoided and authoritative versions should be used. This schedule provides a structure for managing co-operation project records after the end of their active cycle. It should be used together with the specific project filing plan. A sample filing plan for project records during their active life has been submitted to ODGP and awaits validation. It is complemented by a correspondence between the filing plan and the RMS structure.

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Conducting co-operation projects							
Co-operation project management records Records documenting the organisation and management of co-operation projects and programmes usually co-funded by the European Union as joint programmes and implemented de-centrally by the operational sector, often in collaboration with field offices. May include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inception report - Project board terms of reference - Stakeholder register - Project plans (Team plan, Work plans, Communication plan etc.) - Project progress reports - Description of activities - Relevant exchanges - Project reports (except interim/final) - Quality assurance documents - Risk management documents (risk register) - Evaluation documents - Background documentation - Project board meeting records 	Master	Word, E-mail, Excel, PDF (RMS)	10 years after project end	Review for useful information	Confidential.	After project closure, records to be kept should be transferred to one of the relevant co-operation series in RMS. See also <i>Procurement accounting records, Council of Europe awareness-raising material or Council of Europe publications.</i>	By project or programme

Series: title, description	Master/ copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Co-operation project action records Records documenting specific activities carried out in the context of a co-operation project such as capacity-building events (seminars, workshops etc.), peer reviews, provision of legal and policy advice, pilot activities etc.	Master	Word, E-mail, Excel, PDF (RMS)	10 years after project end	Review for useful information	Depends on project (Public by default)		By project
Co-operation project substantial records Records documenting the outcome of co-operation projects and programmes. May include: - Project contract including amendments and annexes - Interim report (financial and narrative) - Final report (financial and narrative) - Lessons learned - Deliverables and other evidence of project outcomes, e.g. publications.	Master/ Copy	Word, E-mail, Excel, PDF, links (RMS)	30 years	Review for preservation	Public	Paper version of the Project contract kept by ODGP. Masters of publications kept by DGS when produced by them. In such cases, the copies are to be replaced by links as soon as the masters are available in RMS.	By project or programme

Transitory records

Series: title, description	Master / copy	Medium, format & storage	Retention period	Disposition	Access level classification	Notes / Rationale	Folder structure
Transitory records							
Routine exchanges Any exchanges which do not need to be kept once the relevant procedure is finalised.	Master	E-mail (mailbox)	Keep until procedure finalised	Destruction	Confidential	Transient, no residual value.	n/a

Record series kept by specific entities

The following series are centralised by specific entities. It is important that neither the series, nor the records are duplicated by other entities; instead a link to the master must be used.

- **Agreements and memoranda of understanding**

DLAPIL registers and safeguards all agreements concluded with other international organisations, states, or other entities (except grant agreements). It maintains a list of these agreements, files them in RMS, and provides access to the text of the public agreements.

- **CM documents**

Documents of the Committee of Ministers (CM), including any translations of those documents, are kept by the Committee of Ministers in their RMS section. If a translation is missing in their collection, it will be entered into RMS by the Committee of Ministers itself.

- **Council of Europe conventions (treaties)**

Council of Europe conventions are kept exclusively by the Treaty Office, including translations in other languages. If a translation is missing in their collection, it will be entered into RMS by the Treaty Office itself.

- **ECHR case law**

Judgments, decisions and other texts are available in the HUDOC database of the European Court of Human Rights, in one or both of the Court's official languages (English and French). Translations into non-official languages are published in HUDOC for information purposes only and the Court accepts no responsibility for their quality or content. For translations in any language other than English or French, their inclusion into HUDOC should be requested following this [procedure](#).

- **Terms of reference of intergovernmental committees**

Consolidated versions of the terms of reference of Council of Europe intergovernmental committees are produced for communication purposes and kept by the Directorate of Programme and Budget as a record of the intergovernmental committee structure. These consolidated versions are extracts of the *Terms of Reference of Intergovernmental Structures* adopted by the Committee of Ministers. They will be available in RMS as of 2018.