Directorate General of Administration

Directorate of Information Technology

Council of Europe Metadata Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this metadata policy is to establish a metadata standard for the Council of Europe and to set out the responsibilities of all actors involved.

1.2 Metadata is data about data.[1] As descriptive data of documents, metadata serves the management and retrieval of documents and is therefore vital to ensure access to information. The value of metadata for finding, managing, controlling, preserving and understanding documents over time is thus of utmost importance for information and knowledge management at the Council of Europe.

2. Council of Europe metadata standard

The Council of Europe metadata standard is valid for text-based documents.[2] It consists of a common metadata scheme and instructions for standardised values for those metadata elements where the standardisation of values facilitates management and retrieval.

All documents carry metadata - e.g. a document is created by a certain author at a certain date - but often the metadata is not made explicit, let alone standardised. There is consensus across the Council of Europe that metadata should be standardised, as expressed in the development of a metadata scheme by the Information Management Working Group (Metadata Working Group) on which the present standard is based.[3]

2.1. Metadata scheme

2.1.1 The scheme consists of a list of metadata elements (see Appendix B). The scheme spells out for each metadata element if and how values are standardised.

2.1.2 The mandatory elements form the minimum metadata set, ensuring a minimum level of findability for documents (unstructured content). The seven mandatory elements of the minimum set are:

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[1] See definitions in Appendix A.

[2] A complementary standard for audio-visual documents will be developed at a later moment.

[3] See 3.1.7 of the Archival Policy 2009.

- ID – Unique system item identifier
- Language
- Author
- Title
- Access classification level
- Subject
- Date

2.1.3 The other metadata elements listed in the scheme are optional and can be used for a more advanced description. The mandatory metadata elements often might not be sufficient for all type of documents for all needs; the optional metadata elements are useful to further enrich the description of a document for better accessing and managing them over time. Optional elements of the metadata scheme can be made mandatory in a specific application, if they are applicable to all documents managed in that particular system.

2.2. Standardised metadata values through controlled vocabularies

2.2.1 Controlled vocabularies have been established for mandatory or optional metadata elements where this kind of standardisation will lead to more consistent metadata values and thus ease metadata capture and improve retrieval.

Currently seven controlled vocabularies are maintained as common standardised metadata:
- Languages using ISO 639-2 alpha-3 biblio codes
- List of corporate bodies
- List of document classes/types (in progress)
- List of access classification levels
- Geographical terms using ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 country codes and ISO 3166-2 codes for country subdivisions
- List of subjects
- Classification scheme of Council of Europe functions and activities

2.2.2 Common controlled vocabularies are made available for consultation and use via the Metadata Library on the Council of Europe Information Management site.[4] To ensure interoperability between systems, controlled vocabularies are provided in XML format. It is planned to make the controlled vocabularies also available in HTML format on the Internet.

3. Implementation of the Council of Europe metadata standard

3.1 All IT applications at the Council of Europe have to offer support for metadata.

3.2 The minimum set of metadata elements is mandatory for all IT applications managing documents at the Council of Europe.

3.3 Use of metadata elements – whether mandatory or optional – implies the use of the standard indicated for that element in the metadata scheme, as this will lead to greater integration across applications and improve common search.

3.4 Depending on software, field labels of metadata elements in the IT applications may be different from the labels of the elements in the Council of Europe metadata scheme. In the

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[4] https://cs.coe.int/team50/ilm/Metadata/default.aspx

interest of common search across applications, IT system administrators have to define associations between metadata elements in their systems and the metadata scheme.

3.5 Additional metadata elements and/or additional controlled vocabularies are only accepted if justified and weighed against the interest of common search. In case that metadata needs - both with regard to metadata elements and standardised values - are felt not to be covered by the metadata standard, requests for exceptions for local applications or local contents in Council-wide applications will be studied by DIT.

In the Council-wide Document Management System, local metadata needs will be covered, first of all, with the local metadata element "Business grouping".[5] This element reflects the activities in an entity and the values are standardised by the entity itself, thus ensuring greatest flexibility in adapting it to local business needs.

3.6 Metadata values are captured automatically or manually according to the nature of each metadata element. Wherever possible, preference is given to automatic capture of values or the use of default values. For example, the unique identifier of a document can be system generated; the value of title or author can be proposed by the system, etc.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 DIT ensures
- publication and maintenance of the metadata standard
- development of further metadata standards as required
- integration of the minimum set of metadata elements in the Council-wide applications
- integration of optional metadata elements where applicable
- documentation of mapping IT system fields to metadata elements in the scheme, if labels differ
- control of quality and compliance
- maintenance of common controlled vocabularies
- the provision of a tool to manage common controlled vocabularies

4.2 Local application managers ensure
- integration of mandatory metadata elements and their standardisation method into local applications
- integration of optional metadata elements where applicable
- documentation of mapping local application fields to metadata elements in the scheme, if labels differ
- maintenance of entity specific metadata

4.3 All staff ensure
- capture of metadata for documents which enter Council-wide applications (Document Management System, Records Management System, Web Content Management)

5. Maintenance procedure

Responsibility for maintenance of common controlled vocabularies lies with DIT. Every user of the Council-wide applications may propose additions and modifications to the metadata

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[5] For a definition of "business grouping", see the Council of Europe metadata scheme in the appendix, where all metadata elements are explained.

scheme and controlled vocabularies. They will be processed respecting the general Council-wide scope and interest of common search.

Users can send proposals and their documentation to dit_imd@coe.int. Some IT applications allow also direct sending of proposals from the respective metadata field, such as the "Send-feedback button" in the Document Management System. The requester will be informed about the new or modified metadata. If proposals cannot be accepted, users will receive an explanation and a recommendation of alternative elements or values to use.

6. Governance

DIT is responsible for the development and update of metadata standards. In his function of Chief Information Officer, the Director of DIT passes this policy on to the appropriate Council of Europe governance body.

Appendix A: Definitions

Capture of metadata

Process by which objects receive metadata, either manually through human input, or automatically through system generated metadata, inheritance of metadata from context, or rules-based auto-indexing. Objects that receive metadata can be documents, document aggregations such as folders, or content components within documents.

Controlled vocabularies

Prescribed list of terms, headings or codes, each representing a concept with one consistent label: examples are code lists, name authority lists (e.g. country names), classification schemes, subject-heading schemes, thesauri, ontologies. (ISO 25964-1-2011)

Taxonomies are a sub-set of controlled vocabularies that have a hierarchical structure. Thus, as a structured controlled vocabulary, a thesaurus is a typical example of taxonomy. Ontologies are a complex and complete representation of a domain of knowledge; as a structured controlled vocabulary, an ontology has relationships between terms that are much more complex than in a thesaurus. (Hedden, *Accidental Taxonomist*)

Metadata

Data that identify attributes of a document typically used to support functions such as location, discovery, documentation, evaluation and/or selection. (ISO 25964-1:2011)

Taxonomies

See under *Controlled vocabularies*.

Appendix B: Council of Europe metadata scheme

For more information see online version "MetadataScheme_CoE_v2.xlsx with links (not accessible from outside) at
https://cs.coe.int/team50/ilm/metadata/documents%20et%20recommandations/forms/allitems.aspx.

Metadata element	Description	Mandatory	Repeatable	Standard CoE
ID	Unique system item identifier	Yes	No	
Document reference	Document identification number, such as reference or ISBN.	No	Yes	
Language	Language of the document	Yes	Yes	ISO 639-2 alpha-3 biblio
Other language version	Other language in which the document is also available	No	Yes	
Author	Responsible for the intellectual or artistic content			
Personal author	Personal author	Yes*	Yes	Model: Surname, Forename
Corporate author	Corporate author		Yes	CoE list of Corporate bodies
Recipient	Addressee to whom a correspondence is sent.	No	Yes	
Title	Title describing the content of the document	Yes	No	AACR2 - Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (2nd edition)
Publication info	Information relating to the publication, printing, distribution, issue, release, or production of a document	No	No	Examples: - Strasbourg : Council of Europe - Paris : Gauthier-Villars ; Chicago : University of Chicago
Physical description	Information pertaining to physical characteristics such as pagination, file type, size, graphics, physical arrangement	No	No	
Document type	Category of the document, such as mission report, resolution, press release, etc.	No	No	CoE list of Document types
Series	Collection to which the document belongs which may also include a number designating the sequential position of the document in the series	No	Yes	
Related item	Other object or level of aggregation, realised either by mentioning the object or establishing a link to that object	No	Yes	
Access classification level	Security classification	Yes	No	CoE list of Access classification levels
General note	General public note	No	Yes	Free text
Content note	Content, abstract (synthesis) or summary	No	Yes	Free text
Conditions of access and use	Copyright information, conditions of reuse, if any, payable information (pay to access)	No	No	Free text
Preservation note	Registration of preservation actions (archiving)	No	Yes	Free text

Subject				
Personal name subject	For content concerning a person		Yes	
Corporate body subject	For content concerning an organisation		Yes	CoE list of Corporate bodies
Geographical term	For content related to geography - country, regions within a country, group of countries (world regions, political groupings, etc.)		Yes	List of geographical terms based on ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 country codes and ISO 3166-2 regional codes
Subject - free keywords	Non-controlled keywords or headings describing content		Yes	
Subject - controlled terms	Keywords or headings describing content which are controlled by a thesaurus, authority list, or else.	Yes**	Yes	CoE list of subjects CERES
Topic	Large subject areas in the sense of themes, used to represent Council of Europe contents.		Yes	Themes developed for the Documentary WebCube
Business grouping	Activity, project, meeting, event or process, specific for an administrative entity, to which the document relates. Groups together all documents that belong to a specific "case" and can thus be used to reflect the local business needs of an entity in metadata values.		Yes	List to be developed by each MAE according to local needs. For the DMS, the list has three levels with the lowest being the metadata value.
Function	Major tasks performed by the Organisation to accomplish its mandate, presented in a hierarchical list of functions and activities.	No	No	CoE business classification scheme
Date	Date of publication, validation or adoption of a document	Yes	No	
Created date	Date of document creation	No	No	
Modified date	Date of document modification	No	No	
Declared date	Date of declaration as record	No	No	
Acquired date	Date of acquisition in archives	No	No	
Date range	Starting and end date for serial publications or for a compilation of documents	No	No	
Edition statement	The issue of a publication	No	No	
Retention period	How long a document is kept	No	No	

* At least one of the author elements must be filled in, for Council of Europe documents at least the corporate author.
** At least one of the subject elements must be filled in with at least one value.