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# Guidelines for document referencing and classification of Council of Europe documents

Standard issued by DIT

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## I. Introduction

The following guidelines have been established to ensure coherence in document management while facilitating effective security classification and access to documents. This document replaces the previous guidelines, issued as document Archives(2005)2 *Document referencing and classification* of 19 April 2005.

## II. Document references

Official documents of the Council of Europe bear a document reference. The document reference is identical for all language versions of a record. The document reference can also be included in the file name, as long as it respects the rules for file naming.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the syntax and structure of document references, the following guidelines should be taken into consideration:

### 1. Source

References usually include an indication of the source, i.e. the authoring body, committee or department.

Entities can establish their own references which indicate the origin by use of an acronym, e.g. CM for Committee of Ministers, or CDCPP for Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape, as long as they take into account the guidelines presented in this document.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a slash is usually not allowed in file names. For clarification, check with the manager of the application concerned or with your archive or computer correspondent.

In this case, they have to manage the sequential numbers for documents themselves. Entities should use acronyms that already exist for a structure (see the acronyms in [vocabularies.coe.int](http://vocabularies.coe.int)).<sup>2</sup>

It is also possible to use as a reference the identifier provided automatically by the Council of Europe Records Management System. In this case, the acronym used is COE, e.g. COE(2012)0001724.<sup>3</sup> For these references, both the year and the running number are generated automatically.

## **2. Year**

When references include the calendar year of issue, this should take the form (YYYY), 4 digits within round brackets, e.g. CM(2004)10. If a document is re-issued, it should receive a new reference with the actual year of publication; the relationship to previous documents should be explained on the title page, for instance as a sub-title. The relationship has to be mentioned also in the document's metadata ("properties").<sup>4</sup>

## **3. Length**

The reference length should not exceed 25 digits (excluding suffixes).

## **4. Diacritics / Spaces**

The reference must not include any diacritics (accents), nor spaces.

## **5. Language**

The language of a document is not part of the reference. The reference is identical for all language versions. It is not recommended the language version be written on the document. The language is part of the metadata of the document and registered in the Council of Europe repositories for documents and records.

## **6. Suffixes**

It is possible to use suffixes to distinguish between versions or parts of a document. It is recommended to use abbreviated suffixes and these should be the same for all language versions, as they are not language specific. Suffixes can be further distinguished by numbers, for instance add1 or part2.

A suffix is hyphenated to the core reference without spaces, e.g. CM(2004)10-rev. If several suffixes are used, they are added directly without the addition of a hyphen, for example CM(2014)10-revadd. Adhering to these rules enables the use of "magic links" in the Council of Europe Records Management System: whenever a document reference is mentioned in the text of a Word document, an automatic hyperlink to documents which bear that document reference can be created with the help of a special function developed for MS Word.

The exact nature of the document version should also be mentioned in the title.

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<sup>2</sup> Please request addition of new entities and committees, including their acronyms, to the [corporate body vocabulary](#) via [MSA form 1610](#).

<sup>3</sup> The identifier created by the Records Management System includes an indication of language and version, which must not be taken over for the reference, e.g. COE(2015)0369427eng1.0 would become COE(2015)0369427.

<sup>4</sup> The appropriate metadata element in the Records Management System for relationship between documents is "Document history".

Abbreviations of suffixes are to be used consistently throughout the Council of Europe. The following abbreviations are recommended:

<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Used for</i>
add	Addendum
amdt	Amendment, Amendement
app	Annexe, Appendix
corr	Corrigendum
fin	Final, Définitif
prov	Draft, Provisoire
part	Part, Partie
rev	Revised, Rév, Révisé
vol	Volume

### III. Dates

Official documents of the Council of Europe bear a date. If different versions of a document exist, this is indicated by the suffix -rev and the date of revision. The year indicated in the date of revision can be different from the year used in the document reference. However, if a new version of a document has been adopted or issued by the responsible committee or structure, a new reference is required.

### IV. Access classification and declassification

1. The access classification is a piece of information that is indicated on the title page of a document.

According to Resolution Res(2001)6 on access to Council of Europe documents, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 June 2001, documents with an official reference fall into one of the following classifications:<sup>5</sup>

- public (default)
- restricted, with automatic declassification after 1 year
- confidential, with automatic declassification after 10 years
- secret, with automatic declassification after 30 years.

Any derogations from this general rule for Council of Europe organs, monitoring mechanisms and partial agreements are enshrined in the respective official texts such as treaties or rules of procedure and registered in the Council of Europe Transparency Database at [www.transparency.coe.int](http://www.transparency.coe.int).<sup>6</sup>

**There is a risk that documents lacking a clear access classification will be circulated more widely than intended and accessed by unauthorised persons due to the application of default access classification rules.<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016803c9b69>

<sup>6</sup> The appendix to the Transparency Database User Guide (see [www.transparency.coe.int](http://www.transparency.coe.int) under "Help") contains an explanation of all access classification levels.

<sup>7</sup> See [Resolution Res\(2001\)6 on access to Council of Europe documents](#), adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 June 2001 and the [Council of Europe's Archival Policy](#) of 2009.

2. It is recommended to indicate the access classification of a document in a footnote inserted next to the reference, together with information on its future declassification. For example:

- This document has been classified restricted until examination by the XYZ Committee.
- This document has been classified confidential at the date of issue; it will be declassified in accordance with Resolution Res(2001)6 on access to Council of Europe documents.

This procedure has been introduced by the Committee of Ministers and should be followed as good practice, as it is in line with records management principles; official documents of the Council of Europe are locked records and modifications are not possible.

The advantage of the procedure is that the document itself does not require any changes when it is declassified: the change of classification is only recorded in the document's metadata ("properties") and effected by adjusting the IT permissions.<sup>8</sup> Throughout its access classification cycle, the document's actual content thus remains unaltered.

3. A new document is required only if the content needs to be edited following declassification, for example when redacting personal data. In such cases, a copy is created and the title page of the new document should clearly indicate the related restricted or confidential document, including its reference.<sup>9</sup>

4. Older documents, or documents created before the introduction of this good practice often bear the access classification level below or beside the document reference. No retrospective action is required for these.

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<sup>8</sup> The appropriate metadata element in the Records Management System is "Access classification level". Any changes in the access classification and the basis for this change are to be mentioned in the metadata element "Change of access classification level".

<sup>9</sup> The appropriate metadata element in the Records Management System for indicating the relationship between the newly edited public document and the original one is "Document history", in combination – if applicable - with "Related content".