

# Records management practices and procedures: A road-map towards proper record management

Records play an important role within the context of any organisation since they provide accountability, compliance and transparency of organisational activities.

It cannot be overstated that records are a vital asset in ensuring that an organisation is governed effectively and efficiently and that its activities are open to public scrutiny.

Proper records management serves as a platform that can help to manage information efficiently in order to fulfill the organisational mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory and foster accountability and good governance.

The reality is that every organisation produces, receives and retains records in the course of its business making it necessary for the organisation to manage their records properly.

As records have varied benefits, ranging from operational concerns with efficiency and effectiveness, to managerial concerns, accountability and risk management, and to concerns with protecting future needs for research, it is desirable to manage them in a planned and methodical way.

Nevertheless, it can be argued

that accurate records management principally depends on a proper record management programme.

A records management programme serves as a platform/roadmap for accountability, transparency, integrity, protection, compliance, availability, retention and disposition of records contributing towards sustaining service delivery.

Effective record keeping and good governance are closely interconnected.

Good governance is one of the main goals of public governments and organisations to date which aim at achieving accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity, and rule of law in the community.

Proper records management can only be achieved if there are records management practices, procedures, policies and guidelines that drive records management activities/practices within the organisation.

Legislation has a tremendous impact on how records, including those created and stored in networked environment, are managed in any country.

Every organisation is subjected to laws and policies which govern the way agencies transact business. These laws and



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policies affect the management of records. Understanding the legal and organisational environment provides successful and effective records management.

The International Standard Organisation (ISO:15489) states that policies on the management of records should be developed, documented and implemented as they are derived from business objectives and supported by business rules or procedures for managing records.

Good records management practice is an investment for the organisation although it could easily be viewed as an overhead. The truth is that organisations should define and document a policy for records management. The objective of the policy should be the creation of authentic, reliable and usable records, capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required.

Organisations are required by International organisational

standardisation (ISO: 15483) to manage records systems in compliance with requirements arising from business, community or societal expectations and the legal and regulatory environment.

Poor management of records as a resource is evident in many African and Central American countries that were plagued by many problems which include poor layout of, and untidiness in, the records storage area, regular loss of files and information, lack of file indexes and registers and lack of control of file movements.

Other problems were the lack of retention and disposal schedules, poor supervision of records staff and lack of knowledge of the importance of information. Also, a poor records management programme gives room for corruption and other malpractices to flourish.

The absence of a proper records management programme may lead to a lack of evidence that an organisation carried on its operation in a transparent and accountable manner. Furthermore, without a records management system there is a danger of losing individual, corporate and collective memory.

The development of records

procedures manuals, records retention schedules and disaster preparedness plans will facilitate free flow of records throughout the entire organisation and benefit the organisation in physical and server space, save staff time, improved control of valuable information resources, compliance with standards and reduction in its operational costs.

Organisations that manage their records well reap immediate benefits in terms of being able to utilise all available information resources.

This includes speedy and accurate retrieval of records necessitates systematic filing and storage of records, saves space and prevents duplication of effort with similar records, easier retrieval, better utilisation of space, and less frequent loss of documents.

Records which are managed as part of an appropriate records management programme will help the organisation to conduct business in an efficient, accountable manner, deliver services consistently, support managerial decision-making and transparent policy formulation and ensure continuity in policy execution, management and administration.

An effective record management programme will ensure that records are available for use when needed, privacy and confidentiality maintained, redundant records destroyed and that records ultimately contribute towards sustaining service delivery.

# Moscow should choose either butter or guns

Are the sanctions against Russia useful? Yes, they are already hitting Vladimir Putin and his accomplices hard and their effects on the Russian economy will increase over time.

Since Russia deliberately violated international law by invading Ukraine, the EU has adopted six packages of sanctions against Moscow. Our measures now target nearly 1,200 individuals and 98 entities in Russia as well as a significant number of sectors of the Russian economy.

These sanctions were adopted in coordination with the G7 members. Their effectiveness is enhanced by the fact that over 40 other countries (including traditionally neutral countries) have adopted them or taken similar measures.

By the end of 2022, we will have reduced our Russian oil imports by 90 percent and we are rapidly reducing our gas imports. These decisions are gradually freeing us from a dependence that has long inhibited our political choices in the face of Vladimir Putin's aggressiveness.

He probably believed that Europe would not dare to engage in sanctions because of its energy dependence. This is not the most insignificant of the Russian regime's many miscalculations

during this conflict. Of course, weaning ourselves off Russian energy so rapidly also creates serious difficulties for many EU countries and for several economic sectors.

But this is the price we have to pay for defending our democracies and international law, and we are taking the necessary steps to deal with these problems in full solidarity.

Some may ask: do these sanctions really have an impact on the Russian economy? The simple answer is yes. Although Russia exports a lot of raw materials, it also has no choice but to import many high value-added products that it does not manufacture. For all advanced technologies, it is 45 percent dependent on Europe and 21 percent on the United States, compared with only 11 percent on China.

In the military field, which is crucial in the context of the war in Ukraine, the sanctions limit Russia's capacity to produce precision missiles such as the Iskander or the KH 101.

Almost all foreign car manufacturers have also decided to withdraw from Russia and the few cars produced by Russian manufacturers will be sold without airbags or automatic transmission.

The oil industry is suffering



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not only from the departure of foreign operators but also from the difficulty of accessing advanced technologies such as horizontal drilling.

The ability of Russian industry to bring new wells on stream is likely to be limited.

Finally, in order to maintain air traffic, Russia will have to withdraw a majority of its aircraft from circulation in order to recover the spare parts needed to allow the others to fly.

Added to this there is also the loss of access to financial markets, being disconnected from major global research networks and a massive brain drain.

As for the alternative offered by China for the Russian economy, in reality it remains limited, especially for high-tech products.

To date, the Chinese government, which is very dependent on its exports to developed countries, has not assisted Russia in circumventing Western sanctions.

Chinese exports to Russia have fallen in line with those of Western countries.

Will these significant and growing impacts lead Vladimir Putin to modify his strategic calculations? Probably not in the immediate future: his actions are not guided primarily by economic logic. However, by forcing him to choose either butter or guns, the sanctions lock him in a vice that is gradually tightening.

Regarding the impact of these sanctions on third countries, particularly African countries, which depend on Russian and Ukrainian wheat and fertilisers, where responsibility lies in terms of the food crisis is clear.

Our sanctions do not in any shape or form target Russian wheat or fertiliser exports, while Ukraine is prevented from exporting its wheat by the Black Sea blockade and destruction caused by Russian aggression. If such issues linked to our sanctions were to arise, we are ready to put in place the appropriate mechanisms to address these.

I have informed my African counterparts of this and asked them not to be fooled by the Russian authorities' untruths regarding our sanctions.

The real answer to the difficulties on the world energy and food markets is an end to the war. This cannot be achieved by accepting the Russian diktat, it

can only be achieved by Russia's withdrawal from Ukraine. Respect for the territorial integrity of states and the non-use of force are not Western or European principles.

They are the basis of all international law. Russia is blithely trampling on them. To accept such a violation would open the door to the law of the jungle on a global scale.

Contrary to what we thought rather naively just a few years ago, economic interdependence does not automatically imply a pacification of international relations.

This is why the transition to a Europe as a power, which I have been calling for since the beginning of my mandate, is imperative. Faced with the invasion of Ukraine, we have begun to move from intention to action by showing that, when provoked, Europe can respond.

Since we do not want to go to war with Russia, economic sanctions are now at the core of this response. They are already beginning to have an effect and will do so even more in the coming months.

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