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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Coreper
Subject:	Delegates Portal, a new community-based approach to document distribution

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Delegates Portal, launched in April 2015 for pilot-testing by a number of GSC policy units and Council working parties, is the result of work in progress under policy orientations endorsed by Coreper in 2013¹ to transform the Extranet web application into an increasingly collaborative platform capable of meeting all information exchange requirements of the European Council, the Council and their preparatory bodies.
2. The official period of pilot-testing for Delegates Portal ran from April until the end of December 2015.

¹ See doc. 6704/13 on modernising systems for handling and delivering European Council and Council documents.

3. The help of the Antici and Mertens groups was enlisted as part of the communication effort to inform pilot users from delegations of the implications of trialling the new system. Two progress reports² addressed to the Antici and Mertens groups were produced during the pilot phase. A survey to assess user satisfaction with Delegates Portal was posted online towards the end of November 2015 with a good rate of response.
4. A thorough evaluation of pilot results and user feedback was carried out from mid-December 2015 onwards. Subject to a number of fine-tuning requirements and clarifications on procedure, Delegates Portal was found to be suitable for deployment to all remaining GSC policy units and Council preparatory bodies.

II. DELEGATES PORTAL: NOVELTIES

5. Extranet gives delegates and member state officials online access to Council documents produced for general distribution³.
6. The novelties introduced by Delegates Portal with respect to Extranet are essentially:
 - access to meeting documents (rebranded "working papers") hitherto distributed by email;
 - communities as a new channel for distribution of documents in general and of working papers in particular, dispensing with email and emailing lists;
 - management of community membership by delegations themselves;
 - limited access to the platform for certain European entities and agencies involved in Council work.

² See docs. 9904/15 and 13277/15.

³ Standard Council documents (public and LIMITE STs, CMs, etc).

III. WORKING PAPERS

7. A new document category, the working paper, has been created to replace the array of meeting documents (including DSs) that circulate today within Council bodies during the preparatory phase of work. Like the documents they replace, most working papers are intended for specific groups of recipients. Unlike the documents they replace, working papers will not be circulated to recipients by email but rather delivered (without loss of real time) to communities on Delegates Portal.
8. By supporting both general-distribution and meeting documents, Delegates Portal addresses a longstanding need expressed by delegations for one-stop, web-based access to all documents produced for them by the Council Secretariat.

IV. COMMUNITIES

9. A community on Delegates Portal is an electronic replica of a Council preparatory body, set up in the system by the GSC for document distribution purposes. It has an internal structure consisting of delegations to which members can be added (see section V below). Delegation membership gives direct access to all documents delivered to the community including, in particular, the new working paper document category.
10. Correspondence between preparatory bodies and communities is not necessarily one-to-one. For working parties dealing with several files concurrently, a number of communities (perhaps even one community per file) may be needed to ensure that the right documents are delivered to the right recipients.

V. MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP BY DELEGATIONS THEMSELVES

Collaborative membership management

11. An important collaborative feature of Delegates Portal is the possibility afforded to delegations of managing community membership on their own, with limited intervention by the GSC.

Criteria for community membership

12. In keeping with the nature of the new document category supported by Delegates Portal (working papers intended for specific communities of recipients), the key criteria for community membership or access should be direct involvement in the business of the working group in question or legitimate need-to-know for other reasons. The parties best placed to determine whether such criteria are met in any given case or at any given time are delegations themselves. It therefore makes sense to largely devolve management of community membership to them.

The "nominated delegate" arrangement

13. Delegations will manage community membership on Delegates Portal through "nominated delegates" and / or "assistant nominated delegates".

14. The nominated delegate arrangement operates within working parties at the level of delegation. When up and running, it proved effective during pilot-testing. Its mechanics are relatively simple:
- within a working party, each delegation appoints at least one nominated delegate to manage its list of community members. It informs the relevant GSC department who has been appointed;
 - the nominated delegate is the point of contact for colleagues from his or her delegation or organisation who wish to join the community in question. As stated earlier, community membership is subject to involvement in work or legitimate need-to-know and gives access to all community documents including working papers. The nominated delegate establishes whether those criteria are met;
 - the nominated delegate manages his or her list of members from Delegates Portal by adding or removing names as appropriate;
 - the nominated delegate can delegate responsibility for membership management to an assistant nominated delegate if need be;
 - the list of nominated delegates for any given community is managed by the relevant GSC policy department on the basis of initial appointments made and subsequent changes communicated by community delegations.

Who should be a nominated delegate?

15. It can be concluded both from feedback received during pilot testing and from empirical analysis of system use so far that the GSC's initial recommendations on nominated delegates and their appointment have been widely taken up. Those recommendations were essentially as follows:
- a) a nominated delegate should be a physical person actively involved in or associated with the work of the community whose membership is being managed;

- b) acting on behalf of his or her national administration, a nominated delegate should either know or be in a position to determine who to include in or exclude from his or her list of community members;
- c) given that attachés or counsellors at the permanent representations liaise with their capitals on all or most policy areas and are also in frequent contact with GSC departments, they are strong candidates for the nominated delegate role. All delegations should therefore strive to ensure that at least one of their nominated delegates is an attaché, counsellor or assistant for the policy area concerned at their permanent representation;
- d) it may also make sense for delegations to appoint a nominated delegate for each ministry from the capital involved in the work of a given community;
- e) if need be and as mentioned, nominated delegates should avail themselves of the option to appoint an assistant nominated delegate to help them to keep their list of members up to date in the system and/or to replace them in case of absence;
- f) in any case, given that nominated delegates have a membership management role, their number should be limited to avoid the risk of compromising need-to-know;
- g) although permitted by the system, the appointment of functional mailboxes or group accounts as nominated delegates is likewise discouraged on the same grounds as in (f), i.e. increased likelihood of need-to-know being compromised.

16. As stated, the above recommendations were broadly followed by delegations, proved their worth during pilot-testing and thus provide a sound basis for future organisation of community management.

17. Furthermore, during its review of the pilot phase, the GSC established in particular that many (over 70%) of the nominated delegates or assistant nominated delegates who had been appointed by delegations were indeed staff based at the permanent representations of member states, whether attachés, counsellors or assistants. Consequently, as and when future communities are deployed on Delegates Portal and barring specific objections from delegations, the GSC will take the attaché or counsellor for the policy area concerned as its starting point for nominated delegate appointments in the system. This will considerably accelerate the community activation process. Needless to say, the persons designated will be free to propose alternative appointments or to delegate their membership management responsibilities to an assistant.
18. However, as noted in the second progress report addressed to the Antici and Mertens groups⁴, not all practices observed during pilot-testing were fully in line with the GSC's recommendations for the nominated delegate role. This was to be expected and the system is sufficiently flexible by design to adapt to or evolve towards specific needs on the ground. Irrespective of how the nominated delegate arrangement is implemented in practice, ultimately what matters is that delegations are satisfied that need-to-know is under firm control.

VI. LIMITED ACCESS TO THE PLATFORM FOR EUROPEAN AGENCIES INVOLVED IN COUNCIL WORK

19. Extranet is currently accessible to member state administrations, the Council Secretariat, the European External Action Service, the Commission and the Court of Auditors. Delegates Portal will be accessible in addition to certain other European entities and agencies involved in the work of Council preparatory bodies.

⁴ See doc. 13277/15, page 16, paragraph 14.

20. Bringing relevant European entities and agencies into community structures on Delegates Portal is consistent with the new community-based approach to delivery of documents, which dispenses with email distribution. However, access rights for the European entities and agencies in question will be limited exclusively to documents that concern them. The European entities and agencies for which access to Delegates Portal is envisaged at the present time are listed in annex I.

VII. THE ANTICI AND MERTENS GROUPS

21. In view of their close association with Coreper, the Antici and Mertens Groups will have access through Delegates Portal to all documents needed for their preparatory work, including working papers addressed to communities falling within their respective spheres of competence⁵.

VIII. APPROACH TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF DELEGATES PORTAL

Migration from Extranet to Delegates Portal

22. Extranet users will be migrated to Delegates Portal *en bloc* by the end of May 2016, as envisaged in doc. 5964/16 examined by the Coordination Committee for Communication and Information Systems at its meeting on 11 March 2016⁶. For users, the switchover will amount to no more than a change of interface. All existing Extranet capabilities will be supported but no new features will be offered.

⁵ Consideration is being given as to how to implement this in practice.

⁶ It should be noted that following consultations within the General Secretariat, the migration of Extranet users to Delegates Portal has been rescheduled from April 2016, the date stated in doc. 5964/16, to the end of May 2016.

Introduction of the new features of Delegates Portal, including communities, community management and support for working papers

23. The new capabilities offered by Delegates Portal as described in section II will be introduced to all working parties and committees simultaneously at the beginning of November 2016, following a six-month preparatory phase during which all data required for activation of communities in one go will be compiled and entered into the system. Delegations will be briefed through presentations for staff from permanent representations. Presentations will also be given in the margins of working party and committee meetings. The new capabilities will be operational as from their date of introduction. The timeline for the introduction of the new Delegates Portal features is illustrated in annex II.

Requests for new accounts

24. The discontinuation of email distribution for working documents is expected to trigger a significant number of requests for new accounts on Delegates Portal. The authorisation structures in place in capitals and at permanent representations should therefore be ready and in a position to respond swiftly to new account requests.

Automatic delivery of general-distribution documents to capitals and permanent representations

25. Delegates Portal will have no impact on the U32 Mail system, which will continue to distribute all ST, PE, AD, AC and CM documents electronically to reception points in capitals and permanent representations as usual.

**European institutions, agencies and other entities for which
access to Delegates Portal is envisaged at the present time**

COURT OF JUSTICE

EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

EUROPEAN UNION LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (EUROPOL)

EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR THE OPERATION OF LARGE-SCALE IT SYSTEMS IN THE
AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE (EU-LISA)

FRONTEX

EUROJUST

EUROPEAN POLICE COLLEGE

EUROPEAN MONITORING CENTRE FOR DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION

EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

EUROPEAN JUDICIAL NETWORK IN CRIMINAL MATTERS

EUROPEAN JUDICIAL NETWORK IN CIVIL AND COMMERCIAL MATTERS

EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR NETWORK AND INFORMATION SECURITY

EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

EUROPEAN GLOBAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEMS AGENCY

EUROPEAN UNION SATELLITE CENTRE

SINGLE RESOLUTION BOARD

Migration from Extranet to Delegates Portal and activation of the new community functionalities

