



**GUIDE FOR
PRODUCING DOCUMENTS
FOR THE COUNCIL AND
ITS PREPARATORY BODIES**

General Secretariat of the Council

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CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. GENERAL RULES FOR DRAFTING DOCUMENTS	4
III. REPORTS	5
A. Reports reflecting the state of play in a Working Party	6
B. Reports to a senior preparatory body or the Council	6
C. Information-type reports	7
D. Reports on meetings with third countries and organisations	9
IV. WORKING DOCUMENTS	9
V. NOTES	10
VI. BRIEFS FOR THE PRESIDENCY	12
A. Purpose of a brief	12
B. Designing briefs	13
VII. OTHER PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF DOCUMENT PRODUCTION	14
A. EU classified documents	14
B. Transparency and public access to documents	16
C. Translation of documents	16
VIII. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS	18
Annex: Illustrative list of “core” documents.....	19

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This manual is a practical guide for Council staff on how to use one of the most important tools of our trade – our pens, or rather nowadays, our keyboards. As document writers, we need to ensure that the papers we produce do what they are supposed to do – i.e. help the Council take decisions as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. The guidance set out in this manual reflects the collective wisdom of experienced officials and provides an introduction to the art of producing papers tailored to the needs of the Council.
2. Producing operational papers is not a luxury; it is a pre-requisite for the Council to remain an effective decision-making body after enlargement. This is why COREPER¹ has asked the Secretariat “*to simplify the presentation of documents for the Council and its preparatory bodies by ensuring that, for points on which decisions are required, such documents are designed as an operational negotiating instrument indicating clearly and concisely points of agreement, the main questions still open and possible realistic solutions or ways forward*”.
3. Designing documents as effective negotiating instruments is an art rather than a science; it is a skill which has to be taught, practised and honed. It pre-supposes a clear understanding of the nature of the Council, of the negotiating process which takes place in this institution and of the Secretariat’s role in assisting that process. Over the years, the Secretariat has developed from a logistics provider, record keeper and purveyor of legal counsel into a negotiation manager, counsellor to the Presidency, ‘good offices’ mediator, crisis management coordinator and political foreign and security policy secretariat. These roles will continue to evolve after enlargement. Fostering an efficient negotiating process involving a twenty-five member Council and the Commission requires a Secretariat willing and able to undertake all of these roles proactively.
4. The arrival of acceding States as observers from April 2003 will require substantial adjustments in working methods. Convening meetings with such a large number of participants, and producing successive iterations of a document in twenty or more languages, will be unwieldy and expensive. Efforts by the Secretariat to improve the quality of documents ahead of enlargement must go hand in hand with further efforts by the Council to adapt its working methods to take account of the new realities, building on the code of conduct and on existing provisions in the rules of procedure.
5. Against this background, this guide offers practical advice on producing documents building on best practice. Particular responsibility for ensuring that these guidelines are implemented lies with Directors General and Directors who must give due attention to document layout and content. The guide will help standardise the nomenclature for and presentation of Council documents, bearing in mind that this general framework cannot cater for every specific situation. *The guidance suggested should therefore be applied with the necessary flexibility and common sense so that documents are tailored to specific needs.* It will be reinforced by training seminars and, more importantly, by on the job supervision from superiors and mentors.

Pierre de Boissieu

¹ Summary record of the 1988th meeting on 4 December 2002, item 59(1)(c).

II. GENERAL RULES FOR DRAFTING DOCUMENTS

6. The following general rules should serve as a guide for drafting documents:

- (i) Documents must be designed according to their primary purpose, focus on the main issues to be decided and be readily understandable by any informed reader.
- (ii) The primary object of reports and working documents (see sections III. and IV. below) is to identify problems to be resolved, possible solutions and the respective degree of support which exists for these solutions (“issue-based papers”).
- (iii) Documents whose sole object is to set out delegations’ positions exhaustively should be avoided as far as possible (i.e. no purely descriptive reports setting out positions).
- (iv) Documents should only contain the minimum information necessary for comprehension of the matter under consideration and should avoid needless deviation or repetition (i.e. origins, history, detailed exposé of the Commission proposal, repetitive reminders, etc.). The aim should be to provide all relevant information as briefly as possible.
- (v) Reports and working documents are as a general rule to be drawn up under the responsibility of the Secretariat or the Presidency, which means that in principle there should be no “reading” or prior approval of such documents by Working Parties or other committees. In the exceptional cases when a reading is carried out, meetings should not engage in a drafting exercise or negotiate the wording of a report; it should generally be up to the Secretariat or the Presidency to draw the relevant conclusions from any views expressed.
- (vi) While efforts should be made to limit as far as possible mentioning individual delegations by name, delegations may be named where it is tactically or practically expedient for their positions to be flagged in the covering report and/or footnotes.
- (vii) In order to facilitate the production, translation and discussion of legislative texts, the actual text (or parts) of the legislative act, if submitted along with a report, should always take the form of a separate *addendum* rather than an annex to the report.¹
- (viii) Briefs for the Presidency must not duplicate the content of a report or working document, but afford added value (tactical considerations, arguments for defending particular outcomes, etc.).

7. All documents produced for the Council or its preparatory bodies fall into one of three categories: (a) *reports*; (b) *working documents*; and (c) *notes*. The following three sections describe each of these document types, how they are used and contain guidance for producing them.

¹ For technical reasons, track changes must be purged from documents sent to central coordination for distribution or translation.

8. The following sections are primarily concerned with documents internal to the Council. However, these guidelines should be applied *mutatis mutandis* for documents produced jointly with third countries or organisations, or which report on meetings with them.

III. REPORTS

9. There are four types of report: (a) those which *reflect the state of play* as a basis for further work in a Working Party; (b) those which *outline difficulties on a dossier* to a more senior preparatory level or the Council itself as a basis for a discussion and decisions; (c) those intended to be *purely informative*, possibly with procedural conclusions; and (d) reports on *meetings with third countries or organisations*.
10. Reports of the first and fourth type are produced under the Secretariat's responsibility. Reports of the second and third types (see B. and C. below) are as a general rule also issued by the Secretariat. Exceptionally, where a political steer is required in a debate, political responsibility for the report may be assumed by the Presidency (see also section IV. on working documents).
11. Whichever of the two assumes final authorship (and political responsibility) for the report, the Secretariat needs to be capable of producing both its own reports and high-quality draft "Presidency" reports which can be used as input for the Presidency's own reflections. These reports should be presented and structured as suggested below.
12. Reports as described in A. and B. below should not be submitted to Working Parties or committees for 'negotiation' or a drafting exercise before being issued, except in certain very specialised areas. Where reports have operational conclusions, the Secretariat should consult with the Presidency on these conclusions (but not on the body of the report.)

A. REPORTS REFLECTING THE STATE OF PLAY IN A WORKING PARTY

13. The main purpose of such reports is to *reflect the state of play* on a dossier in a Working Party as a basis for the next stage of work. The form of such reports should be adapted to the needs of the relevant Working Party, either in the form of a detailed report describing the state of play or a short report with an *addendum* containing the legal text, with footnotes if necessary.
14. As far as possible, reports should be structured around the issues which are open and reflect the position of delegations only to the extent that such information is useful for subsequent discussion in the Working Party. Reports of this type should be the sole responsibility of the Secretariat in terms of content, drafting and presentation.
15. At certain stages of a negotiation, in particular when a proposal or initiative is first received by the Council, the Secretariat may, in agreement with the Presidency, draw up under its responsibility a report reviewing the issues to be considered on the basis of written comments received from delegations.

B. REPORTS TO A SENIOR PREPARATORY BODY OR THE COUNCIL

16. These are the types of reports on a particular dossier which are produced every week for COREPER and other senior preparatory bodies (e.g. PSC, SCA, CATS, etc.) or the Council. The following general guidance should be followed for drafting such reports:
 - (i) As far as the *layout* is concerned, following a very short introductory section recapitulating the state of play on required procedural steps at EU and national level before a decision can be taken, the report should be divided into three operational sections, the latter two being optional:
 - (a) first, a description of contentious issues on which a decision (or progress towards a decision) is required at the meeting for which the report is destined;
 - (b) (when useful) a brief summary of points of agreement already achieved. However, this should be avoided where any risk exists of unravelling points already settled;
 - (c) and any procedural or handling indications for future work on the dossier.

- (ii) The most important part of the report is the first part setting out *the issues to be discussed* and on which a decision should ideally be obtained. Issues should be presented *concisely, in a logical order, along with realistic possible outcomes* and the relative strength of support which exists for each. The purpose of the report is not to give a detailed presentation of delegations' views, but to identify the issues on which decisions have to be taken.
 - (iii) Reports from Working Parties dealing with foreign and security policy issues and which are circulated by Coreu should continue to follow the present simplified format. They should begin with operational conclusions, if any. The body of the report should contain a very brief summary of the main points discussed by the Working Party.
17. Except in special circumstances, reports of this type are the responsibility of the Secretariat in terms of content, drafting and presentation. However, as part of normal contacts with the Presidency, the responsible desk officer will usually discuss the operational content with the Presidency before committing pen to paper, particularly as regards potential or likely outcomes/decisions expected from a discussion.

C. INFORMATION-TYPE REPORTS

18. The common feature of information-type reports is that they do not serve as the basis for discussion or decisions at a more senior level. Information-type reports are typically of two sorts: they either describe the state of play on a particular question; or express a consensual approach on a given subject.
19. *Reports giving the state of play on a particular subject* are intended to be a description or photograph of a negotiation or work underway in the Council, and should set out points of convergence and points still to be resolved. They reflect a common description of the outstanding problems, but are not designed to be fully consensual documents. These are usually Presidency reports prepared in fulfilment of a mandate from the European Council.

20. The practice, already frequent in many areas, whereby the initial input and drafting is done by the Secretariat, needs to be developed and become standard. If such a report is required by a specific deadline, it is particularly important for the Presidency to be given an initial draft early in its internal preparatory process. Such reports should not be negotiated, although the Presidency may decide to enter them into the system in order to elicit general comments and views. The main purpose of discussing preliminary versions of a report is to ensure that all ideas can be aired and covered. It is ultimately the Presidency's responsibility (on the basis of input from the Secretariat) to decide how these ideas are presented and how the report may be 'improved'. Examples include reports produced at intermediate stages in major negotiations inside the Union (IGCs, financial framework, etc.).
21. *Reports which express a consensual view on a given subject* are usually agreed by the Council and reflect the Council's collective will. Meetings considering drafts of such reports should not degenerate into detailed drafting sessions, although drafting is always possible on specific sensitive points in order to reach agreement. The Presidency and Secretariat should consider how best to reflect the main points raised in any discussion in such a way as to obtain consensus on the content. Examples include the reports submitted by the ECOFIN Council to the European Council's Annual Spring Meeting.
22. The Secretariat through its regular contacts with the Presidency should therefore:
- (i) offer advice on handling and tactics for submitting initial drafts and final reports;
 - (ii) produce an initial outline of the overall structure and content of the reports;
 - (iii) and, in the light of reactions from the Presidency, offer a detailed initial draft of the report at a sufficiently early stage for the Presidency to take it into account in its internal coordination processes.
23. The target audience will determine the style, length and level of detail of a report. A report for the European Council, for example, will be political in content and contain information appropriate for Heads of Government. It should be borne in mind that information-type reports are supposed to inform and provide a 'big picture' overview of activity in a particular area, rather than set out a detailed analysis or an exhaustive description of all work undertaken. To be effective, reports of this type should therefore be:

- (i) ideally between 5 and 10 pages long if destined for the Council or the European Council, although there may be exceptions, for example if the report is an end of Presidency review of the state of play on major negotiations. Reports longer than 10 pages should contain an executive summary or an introduction which summarises the main points of the report. Any necessary technical details should be consigned to an annex.
- (ii) be self-reading i.e. be understandable by the average reader without any specialist knowledge of the sector and without the need to cross-refer to other documents;
- (iii) be written in a concise, idiomatic and non-bureaucratic style;
- (iv) where appropriate, provide a balanced view of the range and relative strength of positions emerging in the discussion on a particular subject;
- (v) indicate the next steps or how the report should be followed up.

D. REPORTS ON MEETINGS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS

24. Reports of political dialogue and other meetings with third countries at whatever level (summits, Ministerial meetings, political/regional directors meetings, SOMs, or expert Troikas) are mainly designed to inform EU delegations who were not in the meeting about the general thrust of the meeting and the main points or arguments in the discussion, focussing on new elements. Reports should therefore concentrate on what the other side said and not repeat the remarks/replies of the EU side, unless they add to the report. Such reports should also be prefaced with a short introduction or executive summary, including the atmospherics and operational outcome or follow-up. When all EU delegations are present, summary reports for distribution to delegations are made only for meetings at ministerial or Heads of Government level.

IV. WORKING DOCUMENTS

25. This is a new generic denomination covering a wide variety of types of documents previously termed notes (containing compromise ideas), non-papers, working documents, etc. **The common feature of such documents is that they constitute a *concrete proposal* for advancing work on substance or on handling, rather than a report on discussions in one Council preparatory body to a higher level.** They may be submitted at any level, although will typically be used when work has advanced to a stage where a clear political steer is required. Their purpose is to help manage the negotiating process by introducing into a discussion a novel contribution or new compromise ideas on specific questions which will provide a basis for discussion in the body to which they are addressed in order to advance work. While in most cases they will be issued by the Presidency, working documents may also be produced by the Commission, the Council Secretariat or, in certain cases, by one or more delegations.
26. The nature and scope of working documents will vary depending on the matter under consideration and the aim of the discussion. They may *inter alia*:
- (i) set out a new approach for resolving a general problem;
 - (ii) put forward a compromise solution for reconciling differing interests on a specific issue;
 - (iii) propose specific amendments to draft texts;
 - (iv) outline a series of options on particular issues, and possibly the pros and cons of each, to enable the Council to take a decision;
 - (v) contain draft conclusions, recommendations, guidelines, etc. intended to be adopted by the Council;
 - (vi) make procedural suggestions.

27. Particularly in the latter stages of discussion, working documents (rather than reports) should become one of the principal instruments in the Council's decision-making process. Given the fact that plenary meetings in future will involve close on 30 participants, the traditional process of referring reports upwards and downwards in the Council's preparatory bodies will become unwieldy and move beyond manageable limits. Discussion in plenary meetings will always be essential in the initial and final phases of the process. However, between these two, the Presidency may have recourse to any procedures it deems necessary to advance work (see the code of conduct on working methods).

V. NOTES

28. All other documents submitted to the Council or its preparatory bodies can be categorised as "notes". A note can serve many purposes, but which is mainly of a procedural or informative nature (formal referral of proposals/initiatives to the Council, formal opinions, positions or information, organisation of work, minutes, agreed conclusions, etc.).
29. The following is the list of notes issued by the Secretariat, which should use one of the following headings:

(i) *"Proposal" or "Initiative"*

These notes contain the text of proposals from the Commission or other institutions, or initiatives from Member States (including requests regarding national aids) or the Secretary-General/High Representative, which constitute a basis for discussion in the Council¹. The text of covering letters accompanying proposals or initiatives are no longer reproduced unless there is substantive information in the letter which is not contained in either the proposal or the accompanying explanatory memorandum.

¹ Commission proposals and Member State initiatives should be reviewed at the earliest possible moment by the translation service.

(ii) *Note*

Notes contain:

- (a) either a consolidated version of Council conclusions after they have been agreed;
- (b) or a summary by the Secretariat of work or deliberations in another institution or body provided to delegations for information;
- (c) or a memo submitted by a delegation or delegations setting out their position on a specific proposal or issue;
- (d) or documents submitted by third countries for distribution in the Council.

(iii) *Transmission of a letter/document*

These are cover notes for texts forwarded to the Council by other institutions, bodies or Member States, along with any texts attached to them. Formal proposals or initiatives should, however, bear the heading “PROPOSAL” or “INITIATIVE” (see point (i) above).

(iv) *Provisional Agenda, List of ‘A’ Items and Draft Minutes*

These documents should continue to be produced as at present.

(v) *“I/A” Item Note*

The presentation of such notes should continue to follow current practice, but there is much scope for standardisation (templates can be found on ATRIUM).

(vi) *Legislative Acts and other Instruments*

These contain the texts of acts and statutory instruments revised by the legal/linguistic experts.

(vii) *“Opinion ” or “Contribution”*

Any formal opinion or contribution to the Council originating inside the institution from one of its preparatory bodies or from the Council Legal Service.

(viii) Outcome of Proceedings

The outcome or main conclusions of substantive discussions should normally result in a report as a new basis for discussion either in a Working Group (see section III.A above) or a more senior preparatory body (see section III.B above). Outcomes of proceedings for the sake of reflecting delegations' positions should only be produced if absolutely necessary. Outcomes of proceedings should normally begin by indicating the operational conclusions on a particular item, before giving any more detailed elements on the discussion (if necessary).

(ix) [Preliminary] Draft Reply to Parliamentary Written Question/Oral question with debate

Texts of draft replies to questions from the European Parliament.

30. The headings listed above and in the two previous sections will be used in standard document templates.

VI. BRIEFS FOR THE PRESIDENCY

A. PURPOSE OF A BRIEF

31. The purpose of a brief is to offer tactical advice to the Presidency alone and in confidence on the handling and substance on points to be tackled. It represents the Secretariat's considered judgement as to how the Council can reach a decision on the contested item as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. It is an important instrument at the disposal of the Secretariat in its role of advisor to the Presidency in the interest of the Council.
32. Briefs for political dialogue and other meetings with third countries are intended to ensure that the Presidency is informed of the issues, which need to be addressed, and to enable it to engage pro-actively in profitable discussion with the third party. Where appropriate, the following applies equally to such briefs.

B. DESIGNING BRIEFS

33. A Presidency brief should be as short as possible and should contain:
- (i) any recent information relevant for discussion of the item in question;
 - (ii) advice on tactical handling for the efficient conduct of the discussion;
 - (iii) a brief assessment of the political or technical difficulties to be overcome in order to strike an agreement;
 - (iv) possible substantive compromise suggestions or ideas going beyond those mentioned in the report;
 - (v) procedural indications on following-up the discussion;
 - (vi) and the most recent relevant background information (without recounting in laborious detail the entire history of the matter in question).
34. In all cases, this information must afford added value compared to the basic document under discussion. Briefs have to be presented in such a way as to be easily used given that the basis for the discussion is the report or working document issued to delegations. It is essential that the basic document and the brief complement one another.
35. Presidency briefs must not:
- (i) paraphrase, repeat or, worse still, develop the report on which it is based;
 - (ii) simply cross-refer to the report and set out some procedural banalities;
 - (iii) set out a new analysis of the situation or problem which is out of step with the content of the report, except where justified by new developments.
36. Briefs for COREPER and the Council should follow the standard models given in the most recent document templates (available on ATRIUM). These models reflect the needs of Presidencies in the light of experience, indicating document references and legal basis, the aim of the discussion, handling/tactics/difficulties, line to take, possible conclusions and background (if necessary).

37. Introductory remarks, line to take and possible conclusions – if there are any – should generally be set out as talking points containing the main elements, and should not generally be drafted as a verbatim speech. *However, scope obviously exists for tailoring briefs and the level of detail they contain to the particular needs of the chairperson who will be using them.*
38. Briefs for the PSC and for meetings with third countries should follow the appropriate standard models. The general points set out above apply *mutatis mutandis* to such briefs. Repetition of EU positions or declarations should always be avoided. As far as possible, the brief should be operational, providing elements for discussion (points to make, questions to ask). Briefs should include objectives and a focussed background (e.g. relevant to the country or organisation). The Secretariat does not, however, provide briefs or speaking notes for meetings at expert or regional director level.

VII. OTHER PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF DOCUMENT PRODUCTION

39. Three further practical aspects should always be borne in mind when producing a Council document, namely: whether or not a document should be *classified*; if a document is ***not*** classified, whether or not it should be made *immediately accessible to the public* via Internet; and whether any particular requirements apply as regards *translation*.

A. EU CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

40. The first point any document drafter must consider is *whether the document should be classified or not*. If a document is to be classified, there are specific rules governing the production, handling, marking and translation of such documents which are laid down in the Council's security regulations.¹ Depending on the level of classification given to a document, the document may have to be produced in a specially designated secure area.

¹ Council decision of 19 March 2001, OJ L101.

41. Under the security regulations EU classified information (EUCI) comprises four levels: TRÈS SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET, SECRET UE, CONFIDENTIEL UE and RESTREINT UE. Classifying a document is designed to afford the information contained in it a particular level of protection, and may only be undertaken where disclosure would result in damage or potential damage to the Union or Member States as set out in the Council's security regulations. Over-classification must be avoided. Classified documents must at all times be produced, handled, stored and destroyed by suitably cleared staff on the basis of the "need to know" principle, in accordance with the Council's security regulations.
42. Specific procedures apply for releasing EU classified information to third countries and organisations and these procedures vary depending on the nature of security agreements or arrangements entered into with the States or organisations concerned (acceding States, NATO, etc.). In cases of doubt, the Security Office should be contacted.
43. A document does not simply become classified by writing "confidential" on it. There is a clear distinction between EU classified information, as defined by the Council's security regulations, and "delicate" information to be circulated to a very limited number of persons on a "need to know" basis. "Delicate" information of this type, although often personally sensitive, is not classified since the damage caused by wrongful disclosure does not warrant it. In order to avoid confusion, "confidential" should not be written on non-classified material contained in meeting documents or briefs. It should be stamped "*Personal - In Confidence*" or "*A traiter de manière confidentielle*" to distinguish it clearly from EU classified information.
44. A comprehensive *Security Guide* for GSC staff and delegations dealing with these and other security issues in greater detail will be made available in Spring 2003. Training seminars on security are given regularly by security office and staff are strongly advised to attend.

B. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

45. If a document is *unclassified*, the next question to be considered is whether the document should be *immediately publicly accessible* or not. The rules governing access to Council documents are set out in Regulation 1049/01 and the Council's Rules of Procedure, and these determine whether documents are immediately accessible or not. It stipulates the types of document which must be made directly accessible, as well as exceptions to this requirement. Particular care should be taken with documents agreed jointly with third parties.
46. All unclassified Council documents are immediately accessible on the Internet (public register) as soon as they have been produced unless they have the distribution marking "LIMITE". Other "ST" documents are mentioned in the public register. When access to a document is granted following a request, that document also becomes directly accessible to the public.
47. Detailed practical guidance on the rules and exceptions on access to documents is contained in the Council's *Transparency Guide*. These should be studied carefully to ensure that the rules are correctly applied. Training seminars on transparency and access to documents are given at regular intervals, and staff are strongly advised to attend.

C. TRANSLATION OF COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

48. Concrete steps have already been taken to ensure practical improvements in working methods as far as translation of documents is concerned (e.g. limiting the size of new linguistic divisions, gradually reducing the size of existing divisions over time, improving the content and quality of documents, greater use of relay translation and use of two-way translation, etc.). These will serve as a model for the future to ensure that the Secretariat is able to cope, within existing budgetary constraints, with the demands of enlargement in regard to translation.

49. The annex contains the illustrative list of “core” documents to be translated into all languages drawn up by the Secretariat. After enlargement (i.e. after 1 May 2004), only documents on this list will be translated into new official languages. For existing languages, this objective will be achieved gradually. Other documents will, as at present, be translated on a selective basis, with DG A III (Central Coordination) having the authority, in the light of the volume of work, to refuse translations for any documents not on the core document list or failing to respect the deadlines laid down in the rules of procedure.
50. Notwithstanding Article 14 of the Rules of Procedure, the following documents are not translated into all languages:
- *Work programmes and annual reports produced by EU bodies and agencies.* These should only be submitted in the languages in which they are forwarded from the agencies in question.
 - *Annotated agendas for Association or Cooperation Councils or Committees and other meetings with third countries.* These should be submitted in the language in which they are drafted.
 - *Replies to requests by individuals for access to documents.* These should be available in the language in which they are drafted and the language of the individual to which the reply is being sent.
 - *Except in limited and duly justified circumstances, non-legislative documents classified CONFIDENTIEL UE and above.* This is to reduce the vulnerability of such documents. It will be up to Directors General to determine when circumstances warrant translation of such texts.
51. All services handling major legislative proposals or initiatives should draw up, in conjunction with the Presidency, a detailed programme fixing in advance the major milestone stages in the preparatory work (convening of working party meetings, COREPER, Council) in order to assess likely translation needs. This programme should be forwarded to central coordination.
52. Documents drafted by non-native speakers should be reviewed by a native speaker before being sent for translation in order to filter out linguistic errors or ambiguities.

VIII. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

53. It is the Secretariat's responsibility to ensure that the Council receives high quality documents. While the advice in a guide such as this cannot cover every situation, it should serve as a yardstick for document production henceforth to ensure a smooth transition to the active observer period for acceding States in April 2003. Any questions relating to this guide should be addressed to the Directorate for General Policy Questions.
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ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF “CORE” COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

- Draft legislation at certain milestone¹ stages;
- Agendas for the Council;
- ‘A’ item notes and their addenda;
- Documents for adoption or discussion by the Council whose reference number appears on a Council agenda²;
- Opinions of the Legal Service;
- Council minutes³;
- Council replies to European Parliament written questions and oral questions with debate;
- Declarations by the Presidency on behalf of the Union;
- (Where possible) Press releases for sessions of the Council;
- Written procedure telexes;
- Manuals which are intended for use by national departments in Member States⁴
- European Council Presidency conclusions

¹ Apart from the submission of the relevant proposal by the Commission in all languages, this includes important stages when the proposal is being examined by the Working Party, and each time the dossier is referred to COREPER and the Council, provided the deadlines laid down in the rules of procedure are respected.

² This includes all draft conclusions and draft legislation, common positions in codecision and cooperation procedures and the Council’s reasons for adopting them, and legislative initiatives by individual Member States, but not information-only type documents, provided the deadlines in the rules of procedure are respected.

³ But not minutes of Association and Cooperation Councils.

⁴ For example, the Common Consular Instructions and the Common Manual (External Borders).