

## TOP15 Guidelines for an effective e-mail use at the European Commission

### Use the e-mail system properly

The e-mail system has been installed for official use. However, incidental personal use is permitted. The e-mail system should not be used contrary to the interests of the Communities, or in particular, in any way that might be interpreted as insulting, disruptive or offensive by any other person, company or organisation. Such abuse may lead to an investigation and even to disciplinary action.

### Do you need to send an e-mail?

An e-mail is not always an alternative for personal interaction. A simple telephone call can often be more effective.

### Use appropriate mailboxes

Avoid using personal mailboxes to support specific functions or services. Instead, create a service mailbox with at least one person responsible for checking it. Ensure proper collaboration between all those responsible for a mailbox so as to guarantee efficient message processing at all times.

### Check your mailbox twice per day

Users should check their mailbox and the mailboxes assigned to them at least twice per day.

### Clearly define your subject

A subject acts as an introduction to the information you are transmitting and is therefore a very important part of a message. It should summarise your message in a clear and meaningful way, so as to help your recipient to process it more efficiently. Therefore it should never be left empty.

### Use the "important" flag sparingly

Ask yourself whether the message really merits this indication. Make thoughtful use of this indication so that the flag keeps its intended meaning and impact. Thus both originator and recipient will attribute the same importance to the message.

### Use "To" for action, "Cc" for information

In every message you send, you should only put somebody in the "To" field, if you expect an action or reply in return. If not, ask yourself if they "need-to-know" or "want-to-know" the content of your message, before putting them in the "Cc" field.

### Strictly limit your recipients

Avoid using more than three "To" recipients and limit your "Cc" recipients to an absolute minimum. When you reply to a message, always cross check both "To" and "Cc" recipients to avoid unnecessary messages.

### Do not keep your messages forever

Archive or delete them as frequently as possible. When used properly, the importance flag can serve as primary indicator for a message's most appropriate retention period.

### Keep your messages brief

Limit the size of your messages to one fully opened window at most, and keep your content as clear and to the point as possible.

### Privilege content over format

Focus on the actual value of the information you are conveying and not on its look. Always restrict message formatting to an absolute minimum and only use it when it really adds clarity or value to your message. When your text becomes too long or requires special formatting, use an attached note or document.

### Beware of external incompatibilities

Some available message options (e.g. "Reply" request) and formatting (e.g. italic text) might be lost when you communicate with external correspondents, due to differences between e-mail systems.

### Greet others & identify yourself

Always greet or mention the people you are writing to at the beginning of your message and finish off with a short salutation and your Commission signature (i.e. your name and contact details).

### Rigorously limit your attachments

Limit attachments both in size and in number because they tend to take up over 75% of a message's overall size. Instead, privilege links to your DG's Intranet, IntraComm or the Internet.

### Protect your workstation

Make use of available security features, such as a password-protected screen-saver, to protect your workstation and thus your mailbox from potential abuse in your absence.