

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE FOR THE ELABORATION OF A MANAGEMENT POLICY AND AN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CIRCULATION

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I. IDENTITY OF THE ORGANIZATION

I.1- The fundamentals

I.1.a- Its status

The first parameter characterizing an organization is its status. This status is going to impose the vision as well as the policies and the strategies in terms of information , and is also influencing about the means to be used.

If the organization is a public institution, it is better to point out the connecting or the supervisory institution.

If the organization is a non-governmental or operating in the private sector, it is better to point out whether it is nationally or internationally wide-spread , or whether it is linked to an international organization .

I.1.b- Its values

They are the moral principles to which the organization adheres , those principles that it respects and defends and uses as reference serve it as reference in the conception and realization of all of its interventions .

I.1.c- Its mission

The organization indicates here the formulation of the mission it has assigned to according to its status. The mission can give an indication whether the organization intervenes in the support and/or operational aspects.

I.2- The fields of intervention

If the formulation is rather global, the fields of intervention are much more precise because they categorize the different activities the organization undertakes . Here are a few examples :

- Environment : Management of natural resources , Conservation of biodiversity, Protection of urban environment ...
- Health : public health , health of reproduction...
- Research : environmental, health, applied research ...
- Institutional and organizational support : at community level, at the level of institutions ...
- Information system : conception, implementation, maintenance...

II. ABOUT THE VISION OF THE ORGANIZATION IN TERMS OF INFORMATION

II.1- The vision

The vision of the organization is an ideal situation to which it aims to get. All the efforts and the strategies used are aimed at/ justified for reaching this ideal.

II.2- The objectives

Besides the strategic objectives the organization has developed as an entity , the definition of more specific objectives concerning information can help for its management and appreciation . These objectives will guide the organization for the conception and the implementation of an information strategy that is coherent with its mission , and will justify the resources it may use/allocate for it.

II.3- The principles

The principles are assumptions guiding the policy of the organization for its management and information circulation . Here are a few examples :

- *The respect of values, of the mission and its objectives* : These elements express the fundamentals of the organization, and serve as guidelines and marks for any intervention . Whatever the mechanisms, the procedures , the means used , they have to comply with these fundamentals .

- *Independence and neutrality* : in the up-stream sphere i.e. for the selection and the choice of data and information to be collected as well as in the down-stream sphere i.e. for the content and the quality of the products to be provided , the organization commits its own responsibility and operates in an objective way , without being influenced by nor being under third parties' pressure .

- *Confidentiality* : to provide other concerned parties with (authors, technical and financial partners...) the insurance of the protection of information bearing commercial and /or moral values, or other considerations the organization considers as convenient . In general , confidential information cannot be communicated without the consent of their source . A list of confidentiality criteria could be established by the organization.

-*Transparency* : As far as possible and in the absence of imperative reasons requiring confidentiality , information about the management policy and circulation have to be available to the public.

-*Receptiveness to observations* : opening to various users' and partners' opinions in order to turn their contributions to account to accomplish its mission in a better way. This would not reduce in any way its responsibility to decide, on last analysis, on the strategies and operational activities.

-*A pragmatic and professional approach*: All interventions are carried out according to the rules, following procedures that respect norms and standards generally recognized in the field of information, developing the faculty of adaptation of the practices and the procedures to optimize the objectives achievement without deviating from its values, mission and organization orientations

A policy that reflects the vision and the main orientations of an organization in the field of information, and has to be stable in time and space. But, since the technical and institutional environment is evolutionary, the organization also has to take this into account and prepare itself to review its policy in adequate time.

II.4- Resources

II.4.a- Material

Material , equipments and tools to be used in the field of information depend on the importance and the development the organization wants to give to its informational aspects. This paragraph relates the main ideas on the material means the organization would like to use to reach its objectives. For example, the organization can express its opinions concerning the utilization of CIT in the informational field .

II.4.b- Human

The information system is also characterized by the staff appointed to it and developing it . If every member of the staff of the organization contributes, in a way or another , to the system of information, it has to be noted that certain key posts (at the level of collection, processing and circulation of information) have to be well defined to ensure the optimal and smooth "running" of the system .

This paragraph concerns the aspect of capacity building too, because the field of information, whatever the field of intervention of the organization, is very evolutionary. It is then indicated that the organization also presents its prospects in terms of the technical capacity building of its staff in the field of information , besides their competence in their of respective field of intervention.

It is then advised to assign, within the organization, a person who is responsible for assuring the follow up of the implementation of the information policy, and the management of the information system.

II.4.c- Financial

Depending on the place the organization wants to give to its informational aspects in its institutional development, this organization will have to relate in this paragraph the level of effort it will use for their development .

III. DATA AND INFORMATION ACQUISITION

III.1- Sources

The identification of the sources of the data from which the organization gets its raw materials on which its decisions are based, is one of the fundamental parameters composing its information policy .

- What are they ? Where are they ?

- What types of data do they provide ? What quality? What date ?...

Indicate whether it is a network of information givers or information provider institutions.

III.2- Data acquisition and information generation

III.2.a- The mechanisms

This part indicates the means through which the organization gets the data and the information it deals with. In practice, each organization adopts "formalized" or not procedures, to get these materials. It has to be noted here that these procedures have to be described in a precise way to ensure that the inputs with which the organization models/shapes/works its products respect the minimum required quality.

- For the direct collection undertaken by the organization, indicate the different constituting elements, the main ideas of adopted methodologies, and the persons involved. In principle, some methods of work respect the pre-established norms and standards (surveys, ecological and biological follow up, sampling of population...)
- For data collection from third parties, indicate how the organization has extracted the information it needed.

III.2.b- Reliability and validity control

As already expressed further up, in principle, acquisition methodologies and data collecting follow and respect some pre-established norms and standards and are generally admitted in various spheres of application. But it is always indicated that each organization has to provide for a procedure to ensure the reliability of the data and the information it gets and/or collects.

IV. DATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

IV.1- Characterization of data and information in stock

IV.1.a- About the types of data and information

It is fundamental for the organization to define and classify the types of data and information it is working with. The types of data and information also reflect the mission of the organization and allow it to focus more its efforts to maximize its results.

Let us also notice, among other things, the following types of data and information :

- Scientific data and information that refer to the results of researches either fundamental and/or applied on a specific topic.
- Technical data and information that refer to practice, know-how, and the application to an activity or a given topic/subject.
- Socio-cultural, economic, judicial data and information etc...
- Factual data and information describing facts.
- Localized data and information, combined with variables concerning their spatial localization. All types of information can be localized and are localizable.

The data and information can thus be classified according to their destination or their value compared to their utilization.

IV.1.b- About form and size

The forms of the collected/gathered information for an organization are the condition of access and exchange means it can use. Let us notice the examples of the forms these information can take:

- The standard forms in paper, like books, publications and reports.
- The analogical form, that combines the data and information representation in full-sized continuous variation forms. Maps and different graphs/charts are defined as analogical forms.
- The digital/numerical form, as opposed to the analogical form, is a kind of information representation in the form of features, figures particularly, or in the form of signals/pips with discreet/quiet values. The digital/numerical form is connected to the use of computerized means.

The organization can adopt a policy that tends to standardize the forms of data and information it produces and/or keeps.

IV.2- The administration

IV.2.a- The storage system

Indicate here the means used by the organization to store its capital of information and the way this storing system is organized.

- Identify the different computerized data base that are implemented and operational .
- Precise whether these data base are centralized , independent or in a network .
- For analogical information or those on paper version, indicate the system of recording them (library , archives...)

IV.2.b- The system of listing /classification

Any organization has to adopt a more or less elaborated system of recording or the management of information it keeps . But easy access to these data makes the main difference in the exploitation and the valorization of these systems. Indicate here whether the organization :

- Elaborates the metadata , and how ? in what form ? Let us notice that ARSIE has adopted the Metalite software to elaborate the metadata of its members .
- Elaborate a list of books and information .

IV.2.c- Data base updating

The information an organization keeps are first for internal use to reach its objectives . Define here the mechanism through which the staff can get access to the organization resources, whether they are computerized or not.

This is also necessary to regulate the organization data base updating . Let us note that a good management of the data base constitutes a form of information capitalization.

V. DATA AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

V.1- The mechanisms

This part is about the different types of the processing and analysis the organization uses to produce results according to its determined objectives . To each type of data , there is a series of appropriate processing , and for each type of processing , there should be precise procedures (who does what and how ?), what tools and what allocated resources . Here are a few examples :

- Unrefined data processing from the organization projects (socio-economical, scientific, technical, factual, spatial data processing ...)
- Systematic processing from data base or periodical/recurrent reports .
- The processing of information acquired from other projects or partner institutions .
- The documentary processing .

Another aspect of processing concerns the system of report , particularly when the organization has a system of hierarchical structures or is linked in a network . It is important to give here the main /guiding principles of the report chain , and the products coming out from these elements.

V.2- The products

« Products » here means what the organization has at the public's disposal . The characterization of these products is fundamental for the organization because :

- They will be the main inputs in the organization mechanism of decision making .
- They will be the reason of further and eventual circulation and exchanges .

The products can also be classified according to their types and forms . Each organization will then have to determine the level of detail to be presented about the products it places at the public's disposal .

VI. DATA AND INFORMATION CIRCULATION

VI.1- Information circulation

VI.1.a- Information categories , the rights and access conditions

The organization has to precise the different categories of information it detains or thinks to detain . A few main categories of information can be pointed out :

- Information that are accessible to all public, with free access under certain conditions or not .
- Information with restricted access
- Confidential information .

The organization has to define each category of information and this justifies its policy of circulation . One of the objectives of the information policy elaboration is to allow the standardization of the management, circulation and exchange of information . The circulation and exchange of information between the organization and its partners will then be facilitated if the mutual perceptions and understanding of the different notions are defined and transparent .

Here are some justifications of information confidentiality :

- The documents for internal use or that are classified as such by the organization .
- Information the circulation of which is likely to impair the relations of the organization with its partners or with the authorities /the government .
- Information the circulation of which might break the law .
- Information that the organization detains and the source of which is not from the organization itself, and that have been classified as sensitive and confidential by their author , or information the author of which has asked for a restricted circulation.

An easy and explicit way would be to present the categories of information in the form of a chart/table with their respective access conditions. Here are a few examples :

Category	Type	Access	Conditions	Localisation
All public	Book	Free	For sale	Library
All public	Report summary	Free	None	Website
Restricted access	Survey data	Regulated	Permission	Website
Confidential	Auditing report	Regulated	Head of departments	Directions

For each type of access, precise the different information access conditions .

VI.1.b- The target population

The target population have to be well defined and identified for a policy of information circulation has to be efficient and justified . The organization will have to identify the target population with whom it will focus its efforts and thus will develop its strategies accordingly.

VI.1.c- The mechanisms and tools

There are many means of circulating information , according to the type and category of information ; it is important to precise the procedures to be followed for a product to be circulated . Among the elements at stake , the organization will have to particularly take the following points into account:

- *The validation of the product* : what has started the process ? What are the steps to be followed ? In which temporal framework ? Who is taking part in the validation of the product ?

- *The choice of the circulation tool* : the choice of the tool depends not only on the type of information but also on the target population (books , publications, reports , Websites, mailing list...). Some products may then be circulated through different circulation tools, with or without adaptation.

VI.1.d- Pricing policy

The organization policy about the pricing of the products will mostly depend on its mission and its vision in terms of information valorization. Besides, the strategy of pricing takes into account several political and economical elements . This exercise requires a particular effort from the part of the organization, but the important thing in this prospect is the fact that the adopted system of pricing is applied in a transparent way.

VI.2- The protection of information

VI.2.a- Intellectual property

The rights of intellectual property are the rights that are granted to the author of an intellectual creation. These rights generally give the creator an exclusive right on the use of his/her creation for a certain period of time. The rights of intellectual property are generally divided into two great groups : 1) the copyright , and 2) the industrial property/the patent rights (patents and trade names are parts of this latter).

- Copyright...

- Industrial property/patent rights ...

The rights of intellectual property aim at establishing a fair balance between the need of incentive for innovation and the advantages of the maximum access to new creations for the society . This balance has to be preserved between the right holders and the users.

In this part , the organization has to precise its policy and practice vis-à-vis these clauses/provisions : Does the organization register its products at competent /relevant institutions in terms of intellectual property ? Does it require its rights when its products are used by a third party ? Does the organization require other conditions for its products to be used or exploited by third parties?

VI.2.b- Exchange agreements

It is possible and even likely to happen that in the prospect of institutional development, the organization contemplates/plans or already adopts this practice with its partners. Then, the organization will have to precise the justification and the objectives of these agreements .

Any agreement is launched by the research of an equally advantageous situation for both parties. Indicate here whether the organization allows or benefits from preferential rights in the exchanges of information .

VII. KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPEMENT

VII.1- Knowledge exchanges

Nowadays, the use of communication and information technologies and the constitution of cooperation networks allow exchanges within a wide national and international community concerned with environment and sustainable development . The organization can indicate in this paragraph the strategy it applies for benefiting from new knowledge through initiatives in the world web. The exchanges are a means to valorize knowledge because these latter can be used not only by those who have elaborated/produced them but also by the greatest possible number of people. The exchanges are also a form of capitalization of knowledge .

It has to be noted that ARSIE is a partner of MEDIATERRE, a project under the care of the Francophone agency to assist developing countries and the countries with transition economy to reduce the digital divide , and to constitute a gate for the Indian Ocean region.

VII.2- Technology transfer

According to its mission and its objectives, the organization can indicate here its policy on technology transfer towards its partners and the target population. Technology transfer is a kind of capitalization of knowledge too.

VII.3- Strategic updating

Strategic updating is a system of decision support which observes and analyses scientific, technical, technological environment, and the present and future economic impacts in order to deduce the threats and the opportunities of development. This strategy essentially depends on the information with strategic interest or important decisions associating it with the term of strategic updating. (David Coudol & Stéphane Gros).

Only enterprises and/or organizations that will have reached this important qualitative threshold in their capacity to foresee the « markets » will grasp/understand the potential needs, identify the technological innovations, anticipate the behavior change of economic, political and social actors, will be able to pretend to maintain their competitiveness and their efficiency. The organization will indicate in this paragraph its policy for maintaining its performance and the quality of its products which are always at top level.

Appendix 1: application of the guide case of [ONE](#) (in attached file)

Appendix 2: application of the guide case of [CNRE](#) (in attached file)