

02. Content types

Introduction

A content type is a coherent collection of information elements that form an item a user will read and use, for example, a policy. Content types, available in the Content Management System (CMS), allow content producers to add content to their website in a structured and coherent way. Research and analysis are used to identify the fields required in a given content type as well as related metadata.

Structured content makes it possible to list content, which facilitates search and filtering (both for internal and end users). Content types 'knit together' as part of the data model. For example, the *Event* content type draws on the *Person* content type to organise content covering the speakers at an event.

The benefits of content types

Whom do content types help?

Content types help end-users to find and understand information more easily by ensuring content is relevant and consistently organised. Fields help avoid superfluous content. Agreed metadata help navigation where users can refine and focus the content, based on the task they wish to complete on the site.

Content types support content producers by providing the structures to facilitate drafting content and by making information easier to manage, maintain, re-use and distribute. Content types can also form the basis on which to establish an agreed workflow, e.g. around the development and validation of policy content; around archiving news articles, after a given period.

Content types help webmasters and reduce production costs by providing a common approach for pages addressing a given type of content (for example, policy, event, person, etc.). The common elements are available from the Europa Components Library (ECL).

How content types help the approach to the Commission's online experience

Given the devolved approach in which DGs are responsible for content on standardised sites, content types are critical. Investing in and deploying content types maintains a level of 'control' and helps deliver the Commission's objective of creating a coherent, relevant and cost-effective web presence:

- **Coherent.** DGs offer similar content on their sites. Currently, each DG has its own way of presenting that content, so the way information is presented varies from one DG to another and, in some cases, from one site to another (even where the same DG is responsible). Without content types, information presented in disparate ways can be overwhelming and confusing, particularly for users for whom the content is new.
- **Relevant.** Different approaches can leave users questioning whether they have the most complete and up-to-date information. Defining the fields for a content type, together with the ability to make certain fields mandatory, increases control by ensuring that only relevant content is featured, helping users quickly digest and understand the information. Establishing an agreed workflow around a content type such as news ensures that 'old news' can be archived and that only relevant content available features on the Commission's online experience.
- **Cost-effective.**
 - entering content in a consistent way helps cost-efficiencies. Content writers and editors become familiar with a single, standardised approach to entering content, thus speeding up the content production process. Drafters are able to remain concise, thus **saving translation costs**
 - content types enable the automatic aggregation and re-use of content, **reducing the costs of updating** content across different channels. Information becomes portable across formats for users to consume in a way that works for them
 - content types offered at platform level help **avoid costs of customisation** that would be incurred if DGs developed their own content types, as well as the associated duplication and maintenance costs

From experience, if the provided (corporate) content type is not fit for purpose (i.e. it is 'too rigid', does not cater for all possible options, offers only a couple of fields):

- DGs don't use it. This may lead to them setting up separate sites for content that could have been structured better and coherence and cost-effectiveness is lost.
- **Content types support end-users' needs.**
 1. *I want to see information presented in a similar way across all DGs in order to make it easier to apply for calls for proposals without having to spend time understanding different procedures and ways of presenting the information*
 2. *I want to see a clear, simple and comprehensive description of the funding available (amount of funding, conditions of funding, time frame) without having to refer to many different documents and sources in order to discuss with other parties and then prepare a proposal and apply for funding*

(Verbatims from user research)

If the Commission's web presence communicates *Funding* programmes, for example, in a consistent way, users quickly become familiar with the approach, find the information they're looking for and can easily compare programmes.

- **Content types support organisational goals.**
 - in the *Funding* example, deploying content types helps achieve the organisational goal, mentioned by several DGs during earlier research, of improving the range of participants and the quality of funding applications.

Summary

Content types - along with taxonomies - play a central role in meeting user needs and organisational goals, as well as delivering a coherent, relevant, cost-efficient European Commission online experience based on a solid metadata model.

- 01. Mandatory content types
 - 01. Department and related information
 - 02. Person
 - 03. Consultations
- 02. Other content types
 - 01. Announcement
 - 02. Contact
 - 03. Event
 - 04. File
 - 05. Publication
 - 06. Page
 - 07. Featured item
 - 08. Policy
 - 09. Timeline