

IMS **User Manual 1: IMS concepts**
Irregularity Management System

Subject	IMS User Manual
Version / State	0.1/ Draft
Release Date	28/01/2019
Document Reference	AFIS-IMS-UserManual_IMS_concepts.docx
Document Owner	OLAF – D2



Document Identification

	Name, Function	Date	Signature
Written by	Ben van der Fels (OLAF D2)	28/01/2019	
Checked by			
Approved by			

Summary:	Keywords:
IMS is the application that allows the preparation and submission of irregularity reports to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). This manual is meant to describe the features of IMS.	Irregularity Management System (IMS)

Number of pages	Number of lines	Host system	Software
22	1364	PC-Windows 7	Word 2010

Document History

Ed.	Rev.	Date	Description	Action (*)	Sections
0.1	0	28/01/2019	Document creation	C	All

(*) Action: C = Create D = Delete I = Insert R = Replace

Reference Documents

Ref.	Title	Version	Date	Ref.

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About this Manual

The initial IMS-manual which was released in 2016 became too big, therefore it is has been split up into booklets. Each booklet is a manual which deals with a particular subject.

The following manuals have been created or will be created:

1. IMS-concepts
2. IMS-users and their roles
3. Cases and requests
4. How to access IMS
5. Create a case
6. Update, close, reopen and cancel a case
7. Amend and anonymise a case
8. Search
9. Excel export and import
10. List, view and print
11. Abbreviations and acronyms

All manuals will be published on ALIB (AFIS Library) and CIRCABC.

The manuals are meant as an orientation tool for all IMS-users. They gather information users should be familiar with in order to be able to exploit the IMS-application.

The overall description of the features of IMS, of the way in which users are organised, as well as of the procedures, sequences of steps and tasks implied, intend to improve the ease and efficiency of working with the application.

In its larger part, the manuals contain minute presentations of the functionalities, commands, fields, as well as the way in which users should work with irregularity cases and requests.

In order to make the best use of this manual, please note the following conventions:



This icon indicates warnings, preconditions or instructions that have to be strictly followed. If you see this icon, make sure to read the information written next to it.



This icon is used for temporary limitations of the system. They will be removed from the document in a future version of the system.



Warning! Very important information, please read carefully.



Tip to improve a working practice

This manual concerns the IMS-concepts.



The IMS-manuals are not meant to provide an in-depth-explanation or in-depth-interpretation of the regulations and reporting obligations. The Handbook on Reporting of irregularities in shared management 2017 provide such information. You will find the handbook on ALIB and CIRCABC.

1. Introduction

The Irregularity Management System (IMS) is the successor of ECR (External Communications Registry) and came into production in 2008.

The initial version of IMS was based on software of 2005. In 2014 the start was given to re-develop IMS on the basis of new software in order to have IMS fully up-to-date and ready for the future.

Stakeholders from Member States, candidate countries and Commission services participated in workshops to provide the developers with the necessary input to create IMS5.

IMS5 went into production on 1 April 2016.

The concepts on which IMS5 is based are:

1. Web based application
2. Access on basis of need-to-know
3. Cascaded reporting structure
4. Virtual reporting structure
5. Competences
6. Cases and requests
7. Creation, review and approval

These concepts are explained in this booklet in order to give you as IMS-user valuable background information which will ameliorate the use of IMS.

**Use and processing of IMS-information
(Article 5 of the delegated acts)**

1. The Commission may use any information provided by Member States in accordance with this Regulation to perform risk analysis, using information technology support, and may, on the basis of the information obtained, produce reports and develop systems serving to identify risks more effectively.
2. Information provided under this Regulation shall be covered by professional confidentiality and protected in the same way as it would be protected by the national legislation of the Member State that provided it and by the provisions applicable to the Union's institutions. Member States and the Commission shall take all necessary precautions to ensure that the information remains confidential.
3. The information referred to in paragraph 2 may not, in particular, be disclosed to persons other than those in the Member States or within the Union's institutions whose duties require that they have access to it, unless the Member State providing it has given its express consent.
4. The information referred to in paragraph 2 may not be used for any purposes other than the protection of the Union's financial interests unless the authorities that have provided it have given their express consent.



2. Concepts

2.1 Web based application

IMS is a web based application accessed over a network connection using HTTPS. HTTPS stands for Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure, which is the secure version of HTTP over which data is sent between your browser and AFIS.

AFIS is a secured network, operated by OLAF, which provides access to applications to exchange information with and between European Commission, Member States, candidate countries, third countries and international organisations. IMS is part of the AFIS-network.

Secured implies that all communications between your browser and IMS are encrypted.

A web based application also implies that IMS can be accessed at any time and at any place. You do not have to be at a certain place or in your office building to access IMS. You only need to have a device (desktop or laptop) on which the AFIS-certificate is installed, a username and a password, thus being registered as IMS-user, and you can access IMS.

2.2 Access on basis of need-to-know

Access to IMS is granted on basis of "need-to-know". The term "need to know" describes the restriction of data which is considered confidential and sensitive.

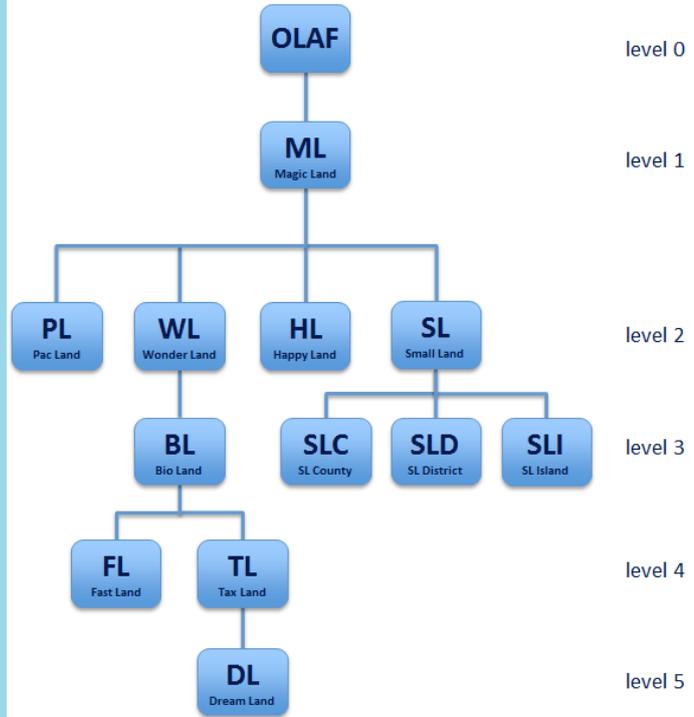
Need to know limits information access to the information that an individual requires to carry out his or her job responsibilities.

The competence to grant access to IMS belongs to IMS-country-officers and IMS-liaison-officers. These liaison-officers register users in the User Registration Tool (URT) and decide which role a user (country-officer, manager, creator or observer) should have.

Data-owner-ship

The ownership of data belongs to the authority that created it. This is one of the reasons to make the IMS-country-officers and IMS-liaison-officers competent for granting, modifying and revoking access to IMS.

OLAF checks if a request to grant access to IMS was created by the IMS-country-officer or IMS-liaison-officer. If yes, the request to grant access will be approved. All other requests will be rejected.



Fake States (FS) is an island country in the West Sea. It is a federal parliamentary republic composed of 9 states. Its capital and largest city is Brumo, located in Magic Land (ML).

Fake States' AFCOS is located in Brumo and responsible for all information and intelligence exchange between Fake States and OLAF.

Small Land (SL) has 3 administrative units (SLC, SLD and SLI) which fulfil all their administrative obligations via the administration of Small Land, including the reporting of irregularities.

Wonder land (WL) holds Fake States' seat of government and parliament. Dream Land (DL), Tax Land (TL), Fast Land (FL) and Bio Land (BL) report all irregularities directly or indirectly to Wonder Land (WL). Wonder Land checks all cases before submitting the cases to Magic Land (ML).

2.3 Cascaded reporting structure

IMS is based on a cascaded reporting structure. On page 12, an image of the reporting structure of the country Fake States is displayed.

The country Fake States (FS) is used in IMS-trainings to explain the functioning of IMS, to practice with the reporting of cases and to play with the different IMS-roles, country roles as well as Commission roles (manager, creator, observer, country-officer, Commission-officer, administrator etcetera).

The Fake States environment (officially called pilot environment) is permanently available for all IMS-trainers to be used for IMS-trainings.

In the ideal world, the irregularity is reported by the person who discovered the irregularity, for instance the auditor who performed an on the spot check. The person who discovered the irregularity has the best knowledge of the case therefore is the best person in place to process the information in IMS.

IMS makes it possible to process on local level information on detected irregularities. The information can then be forwarded to one or more other authorities in the reporting chain of a country. The reporting structure can be tailor-made to the specific situation of a country. The number of reporting authorities and the number of levels is unlimited.

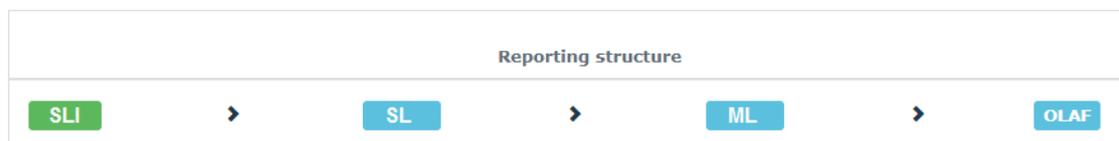
The reporting structure of country FS (Fake States) exists out of 5 reporting levels and 12 reporting authorities (RA).

Country FS (Fake States) has a centralised reporting structure: only one reporting authority reports to OLAF. The state ML (Magic Land) gathers all information from the other reporting authorities and submits it to the European Commission (indicated as OLAF in its role of Commission service).

On level 3 the following reporting authorities can be found:

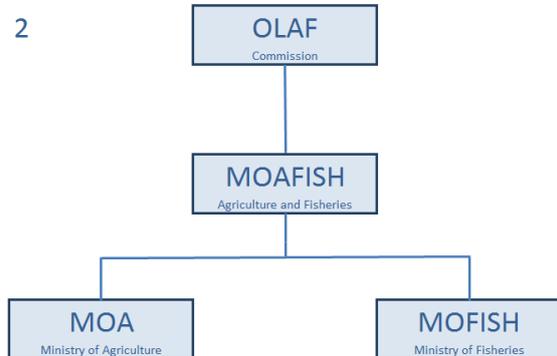
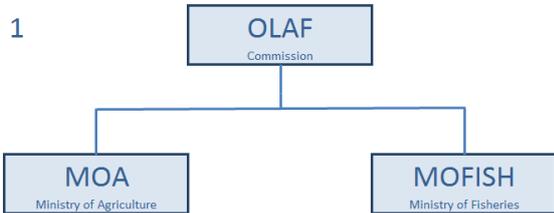
- BL (Bioland)
- SLC (Small Land County)
- SLD (Small Land District)
- SLI (Small Land Island)

The administrative unit SLI (Small Island) is a reporting authority on level-3 and reports irregularities to SL (Small Land). The state SL (Small Land) reports to the state ML (Magic Land), which reports to the European Commission (indicated as OLAF). In IMS, the reporting structure is displayed as follow:



The green marked box indicates the reporting authority which was selected in IMS to view or change its place in the reporting structure.

Only IMS-country-officers have access to the tab page reporting structure because they have administrator rights therefore have the competence to create, modify and revoke reporting structures.



2.4 Virtual

2.4.1 Virtual – access everywhere

IMS is a web based application which implies that IMS can be accessed at any time and at any place. You do not have to be at a certain place or in your office building to access IMS. You only need to have a device (desktop or laptop and in the future maybe even tablet, phablet, smartphone etc) on which the AFIS-certificate is installed and you can access IMS.

Example 1:

You are working for the Dutch administration and attending an OLAF-meeting in Brussels. You have your laptop with you and during the meeting you receive some information which you want to add to an IMS-case. You just log in with your username and password and update your case. It is not relevant where you are.

2.4.2 Virtual – person can be user of a different reporting authority

Virtual also implies that you can become an IMS-user (manager, creator or observer) of a reporting authority to which you do not belong, even in a different country.

Example 2:

A staff member of the Ministry of Finance can become an IMS-user of the Ministry of Justice. It is not relevant if he is already an IMS-user of the Ministry of Finance. In other words, you do not really have to belong to an administration to become an IMS-user of its reporting authority.

Example 3:

An AFCOS-staff-member of country X can become an IMS-user of a reporting authority in country Y. Of course, the likelihood is rather low but you could imagine that such access rights will be granted in case of cross border cooperation (CBC).

2.4.3 Virtual – a non-existing authority can be created

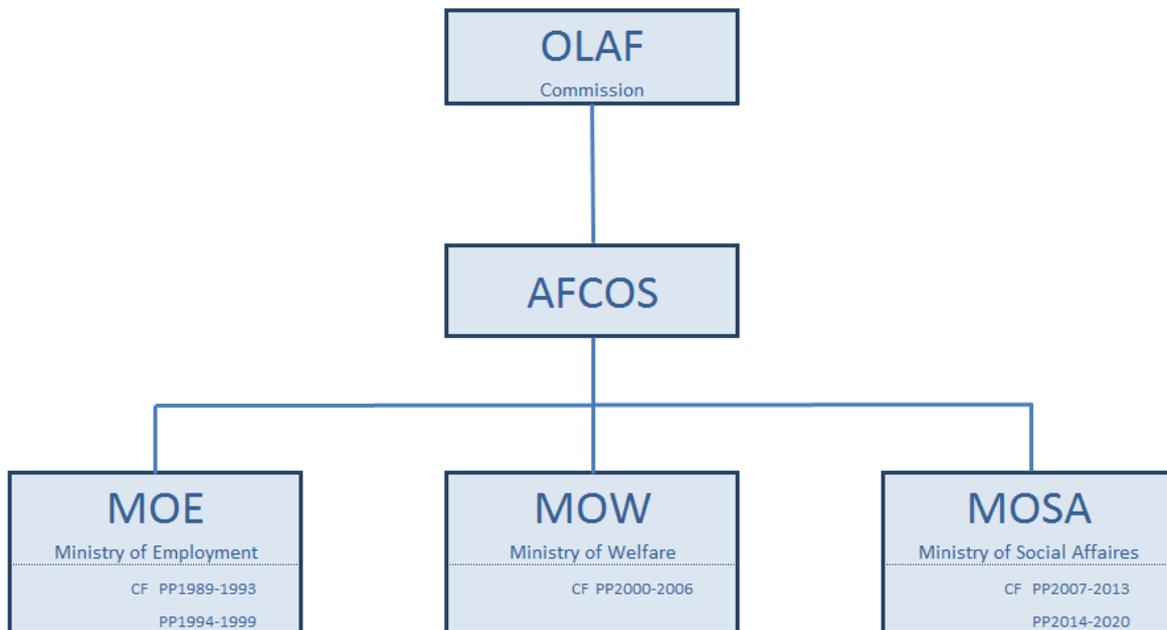
Virtual also implies that you can create a reporting authority which does not exist in reality. This can for instance be done if you want to create a centralised reporting structure, thus one reporting authority which submits all requests to the Commission despite the fact that two (or more) reporting authorities are competent.

Example 4:

In country X, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) is competent for the reporting of agricultural cases to the Commission while the Ministry of Fishery (MOFISH) is competent for the reporting of fishery cases to the Commission. To avoid a decentralised reporting structure, meaning that both Ministries are reporting directly to the Commission the reporting authority MOAFISH is created which gathers, creates and submits reports related to both competences. If wanted, it is also possible to keep the reporting authorities MOA and MOFISH.

The decentralised reporting structure is displayed in image 1 on the left hand side while the centralised reporting structure is displayed in image 2.

Competence	funds
Agriculture	EAGF, EAFRD, GUID
Asylum	AMIF, ISF
Cohesion	CF, EGF, ERDF, ESF, YEI
Fishery	EFF, EMFF, FIGG
Most-deprived	FEAD
Pre-accession	CARDS, CBC-IPA, HRD, IPARD, ISPA, PHARE, REGD, SAPARD, TAIB, TF, TIPAA
Neighbourhood	CBC-ENP



2.5 Competences

IMS is built on competences. The following competences are currently operational:

1. Agriculture
2. Asylum
3. Cohesion
4. Fisheries
5. Most deprived
6. Neighbourhood
7. Pre-Accession

The table on page 16 provides an overview of the competences and their funds. The competence agriculture has 3 funds: EAGF, EAFRD and GUID.

A reporting authority needs to have at least one competence. It can, of course, also have more than one but it needs to have at least one competence.

A competence represents a list of combinations of funds and programming periods. One competence can have one or more funds and one fund can have one or more programming periods.

In URT (User Registration Tool), the liaison-officer can assign one or more competences to a reporting authority. As soon as a liaison-officer has assigned a competence in URT, the corresponding funds and programming periods are shown in IMS.

In IMS, the country-officer can create the reporting structure, going to the level of fund or fund and programming period.

In the table on the left page, an overview is given of the different competences and their funds.

The image on the left page provides an example in which the competence for the Cohesion Fund (CF) is spread over three reporting authorities:

- | | | |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. MOE | programming periods | 1989-1993 and 1994-1999 |
| 2. MOW | programming period | 2000-2006 |
| 3. MOSA | programming periods | 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 |

Request

sent to the Commission

case

1. received
2. approved



2.6 Cases and requests

IMS is based on the concept "cases and requests". A case can consist out of many requests because each change, each modification, each amend and each update is done via a request.

IMS knows several types of requests. The name of the request describes the aim of the request:

1. request to create a case
2. request to create and close a case
3. request to update a case
4. request to cancel a case
5. request to close a case
6. request to reopen a case
7. request to amend a case
8. request to anonymise a case
9. zero notification

The request to create a case is the initial report as described in article 3(2) of the different implementing acts:

2. In the initial report Member States shall provide the following information:

All other requests concern follow-up reports as described in article 4 of the different implementing acts.

The content of a request becomes "case data" after the request has been sent to and approved by the European Commission.



At the moment a request to create a case (initial report) is received and approved by the Commission, the request becomes a "case". For all other requests counts that the "request-data" becomes "case-data" as soon as the request has been received and approved by the Commission.

IMS approves almost all requests automatically except:

- a request to close a case
 - a request to cancel a case
- concerning cohesion and pre-accession funds of programming periods before PP2007-2013.

IMS functions for these funds as an accounting system therefore the content of such requests needs to be checked manually before they are approved. The status of these requests will be "sent for OLAF approval".



Important to know is that OLAF acts as a European Commission service where it concerns the process of irregularity reporting thus "sent to OLAF" means "sent to the European Commission". The name OLAF is used to indicate where the IMS-database is situated (OLAF: secured environment).



2.7 Creation, review and approval (four-eyes-principle)

The four eyes principle means that (at least) two individuals approve the request before it is submitted to the next level.

In the IMS context, the four eyes required for approval are those of the IMS-creator and IMS-manager, who must both approve the request. The IMS-creator by finalising the request and the IMS-manager by sending it to the next level. Although neither individual might detect all errors, two readers are likely to miss different things so that, collaboratively, they will catch more mistakes.

Although the four eyes principle adds an element of security to any decision-making process, its effectiveness relies upon the ability, integrity and diligence of the individuals involved

The creator starts the process of irregularity reporting by preparing a request. The creator can save a request as draft or finalised. As long as a request has the status draft, the request can be edited, including deletion, by the creator.

By pushing the button FINALISE, the creator approves the request created implying that he has checked and approved the request created.



One of the core responsibilities of the manager is the approval of the requests which need to be submitted to the next level in the reporting chain. The manager needs to verify the request on reliability and completeness, including compliance with the reporting obligations, before approving it by pushing the button SEND. Only after approving the request, the manager can send it to the next level where this process is repeated. On each level in the reporting chain, the manager checks the request on reliability, completeness and compliance with the reporting obligations before it is submitted to the next level.

The manager needs to reject the request in case he disapproves it. The request will be sent back to the creator who can correct or delete the request.

IMS-manager and IMS-creator need to take into account the reporting obligations as stipulated in the applicable regulations. The "Handbook on Reporting of irregularities in shared management 2017" provides an in-depth explanation of the reporting obligations.

The "Handbook on Reporting of irregularities in shared management 2017" is a working document prepared by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) assisted by a group of Member States' experts under the Advisory Committee for Coordination of Fraud Prevention (COCOLAF) — Reporting and Analysis Group. It is intended to streamline Member States' obligation to report irregularities to the Commission under European Union (EU) law. It clarifies the obligations under EU law but does not change them. The document is without prejudice to the interpretation of the Court of Justice in relation to these obligations.

3. Support Team Contact Information

In case of problems, you should contact:

1. Your IMS-country-officer and/or IMS-liaison-officer
2. OLAF's IMS-team
3. OLAF-AFIS-IT-Help-Desk

IMS-team	Address: Rue Joseph II, 30/B-1049 Brussels
	Internet e-mail: OLAF-FBM-IMS@ec.europa.eu
	AMS mailbox: EC-OLAF-IMS

OLAF-AFIS-IT-Help-Desk	Address: Rue Joseph II, 30/B-1049 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 296 27 27	Internet e-mail: OLAF-AFIS-IT-HELP-DESK@ec.europa.eu
	AMS mailbox: EC-OLAF-IT

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