



**Good Practices for**

**Central Authorities and  
Transmitting Authorities  
under the**

**1980 Access to  
Justice Convention**

Recalling the framework of the 1980 Access to Justice Convention and the practical importance and impact of effective cross-border judicial and administrative cooperation, and reiterating that the spirit and letter of the Convention do not constitute an obstacle to the use of information technology (IT), the Working Group on the Good Practices has endorsed the following compilation of good practices applicable to those engaged in the preparation, transmission, and processing of applications for legal aid.

These good practices are aimed at enhancing the effective operation of the Convention, including by promoting the appropriate use of IT, and supporting timely and efficient communication between all parties involved. By streamlining procedures, these practices contribute to improving access to justice and ensuring more effective cross-border cooperation in legal aid matters.

This document is non-binding, and Contracting Parties retain discretion in the implementation of the practices set out below, in accordance with the respective applicable laws, including regulations relating to privacy and data protection.

\* Click [here](#) for a glossary of key terms used in this document.

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## I. Good practices relating to the general operation of Central Authorities and other designated Authorities

Good practices include:

1. Ensuring that the [Access to Justice Section](#)<sup>GL</sup> of the HCCH website contains the contact details for the Central Authorities<sup>GL</sup> and Transmitting Authorities<sup>GL</sup> designated under the Convention<sup>GL</sup>.
2. Communicating effectively with relevant authorities by electronic means, while taking into account data security and privacy considerations, as appropriate. To safeguard personal data and sensitive information, authorities may consider, where possible, the use of digital signatures<sup>GL</sup>, secure platforms with end-to-end encryption, encrypted e-mails, and password-protected documents. Care should be taken to ensure that only the data strictly necessary for processing the application<sup>GL</sup> is included.<sup>1</sup>

*(C&R No 10 of the 2024 SC)*

3. Promptly responding, preferably within 15 to 20 calendar days of receipt, to enquiries from Transmitting Authorities<sup>GL</sup> and interested parties about the presentation, transmission, receipt, and status of applications<sup>GL</sup>.
4. Publicising the [Access to Justice Section](#)<sup>GL</sup> of the HCCH website, in addition to the Conclusions & Recommendations<sup>GL</sup> of Special Commission<sup>GL</sup> meetings,<sup>2</sup> among users of the Convention<sup>GL</sup>, including judicial authorities and officers, practitioners, and other relevant authorities.

*(C&R Nos 7, 8 and 134 of the 2024 SC)*

5. Supporting regular training and the exchange of experience among relevant officials, as well as participation in meetings of and for Central Authorities<sup>GL</sup> operating under the Convention<sup>GL</sup>, to ensure familiarity with applicable methods and procedures, evolving practices, and the effective use of IT.

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<sup>1</sup> Some Contracting Parties may not have access to certain platforms or may be unable to open documents with specific protections. Accordingly, before using such methods, authorities are encouraged to consult the relevant authority in the requested State.

<sup>2</sup> The Conclusions & Recommendations (C&R) of Special Commissions (SC) are available on the HCCH website ([www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net)) under "Access to Justice" => "Special Commissions".

6. Ensuring, as far as practicable, that the Central and Transmitting Authorities<sup>GL</sup> are appropriately resourced to perform their functions under the Convention<sup>GL</sup>.

## II. Good practices relating to the preparation and transmission of Applications for legal aid

Good practices include:

1. Using and completing all parts of the Model Form<sup>GL</sup> when transmitting an Application for legal aid<sup>GL</sup>.<sup>3</sup>
2. Completing the Model Form<sup>GL</sup> electronically.
3. Providing sufficient contact information, including e-mail addresses, in the application<sup>GL</sup> to facilitate communication with Central Authorities<sup>GL</sup> and other relevant authorities.

*(C&R No 12 of the 2024 SC)*

4. Where possible or appropriate, transmitting the application<sup>GL</sup> and related documents by electronic means, while taking into account data security and privacy considerations. To safeguard personal data and sensitive information, Transmitting Authorities<sup>GL</sup> may consider, where possible, the use of digital signatures<sup>GL</sup>, secure platforms with end-to-end encryption, encrypted e-mails, and password-protected documents. Care should be taken to ensure that only the data strictly necessary for processing the application is included.<sup>4</sup>

*(C&R No 13 of the 2024 SC)*

5. Contacting the Central Authority<sup>GL</sup> of the requested State<sup>GL</sup>, preferably by electronic means, to enquire about the status of the application<sup>GL</sup> if no acknowledgement of receipt is received within 30 calendar days of sending the application.

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<sup>3</sup> Fillable versions of the Model Form are available on the HCCH website ([www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net)) under "Access to Justice" => "Mandatory Model Form".

<sup>4</sup> Some Contracting Parties may not have access to certain platforms or may be unable to open documents with specific protections. Accordingly, before using such methods, authorities are encouraged to consult the relevant authority in the requested State.

### III. Good practices relating to the receipt of Applications for legal aid

Good practices include:

1. Where possible, implementing procedures and structures to facilitate the acceptance of applications<sup>GL</sup> transmitted by electronic means.  
*(C&R No 13 of the 2024 SC)*
2. Promptly acknowledging receipt of the Application for legal aid<sup>GL</sup>, preferably within 30 calendar days of its receipt.
3. Tracking or recording incoming Applications for legal aid<sup>GL</sup> through electronic case registers or management systems.  
*(C&R No 14 of the 2024 SC)*
4. Promptly contacting the Transmitting Authority<sup>GL</sup>, preferably by electronic means, when the application<sup>GL</sup> cannot be processed due to inadequate information or document(s) forwarded, in order to secure the missing information or document(s).
5. Handling Applications for legal aid<sup>GL</sup> with special caution and urgency, especially in cases involving sensitive matters such as those concerning children.

## Glossary

The following key terms are used in this Good Practices document (for the 1980 Access to Justice Convention):

### **1980 Access to Justice Convention (or the Convention)**

An international treaty developed and adopted under the auspices of the HCCH, the full title of which is the *Convention of 25 October 1980 on International Access to Justice*. The full text of the Convention is available on the [Access to Justice Section](#) of the HCCH website.

### **Access to Justice Section**

A section of the HCCH website dedicated to the 1980 Access to Justice Convention. The Access to Justice Section can be accessed via a link on the home page of the HCCH website ([www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net)).

### **Application for Legal Aid (or application)**

For the purposes of Chapter I, a device used to seek legal aid in another Contracting Party to the 1980 Access to Justice Convention. Applications for legal aid shall conform with the [Model Form](#) annexed to the Convention.

### **Central Authority**

The authority designated by a Contracting Party pursuant to Article 3(1) to receive and process Applications for legal aid. Information about Central Authorities designated by Contracting Parties is available on the [Access to Justice Section](#) of the HCCH website.

### **Conclusions & Recommendations (C&R)**

The form in which outcomes of meetings of the Special Commission (SC) are developed, reflected and adopted. Under the [HCCH Rules of Procedure](#), Special Commission meetings adopt Conclusions & Recommendations. References to the Conclusions & Recommendations are made throughout this document together with the year of the relevant meeting (e.g., C&R of the 2024 SC refers to the Conclusions & Recommendations adopted by the 2024 meeting of the Special Commission). Conclusions & Recommendations are submitted to the governing body of the HCCH, the Council on General Affairs and Policy, for approval.

### **Digital signature**

A name, initial, mark, or symbol that is affixed to, or logically associated with, a document in electronic form and authenticated using a digital certificate.

### **Model Form**

The [Model Form](#) is annexed to the 1980 Access to Justice Convention and shall be used for Applications for legal aid.

### **Requested State**

The Contracting Party to which the Application for legal aid is, or will be, submitted.

### **Special Commission**

A Special Commission is a body established under Article 8 of the [HCCH Statute](#) and convened by announcement of the Secretary General to develop and negotiate new HCCH Conventions (or other Instruments) or to review the practical operation of existing HCCH Conventions. In this document, Special Commission refers to the Special Commission that meets periodically to review the practical operation of the 1980 Access to Justice Convention.

### **Transmitting Authority**

The authority(ies) designated by a Contracting Party pursuant to Article 4(1) to forward Applications for legal aid to the appropriate Central Authority in the requested State. Information about Transmitting Authority(ies) designated by Contracting Parties is available on the [Access to Justice Section](#) of the HCCH website.

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