



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

COUNCIL ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT

2021



I. MISSION STATEMENT

The Archives department keeps a record of all activities of the European Council and the Council of the EU; it acquires, appraises, describes, organises and preserves such records to make them accessible to the public.

Archives supports the institutions of the EU, other public bodies and researchers in accessing the historical records of the Council, and contributes to communicating the historical memory of the institution in ways that are adapted to the different needs of the public.

II. PREFACE

In 2021, despite the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, Archives continued to perform its activities of collecting, processing, preserving and promoting documents produced or received by the Council, and succeeded in transferring material to the European University Institute's Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU) in Florence, in accordance with Regulation 354/83.

As a result of COVID measures, some activities remained restricted (e.g. access to the reading room, and visits to the archives), while others little by little returned almost to normality (e.g. collecting of documents). In any case the business continuity of Archives was assured over the whole year.

Since the beginning of 2019, most of Archives' activities have been subject to review and discussion. This has contributed to streamlining and updating procedures for the current archives. This re-evaluation of activities and procedures was also supported by an internal audit carried out during the first half of 2019 and still ongoing in 2021.

The Archives department is not only updating its procedures, it is also modernising its IT tools, in particular through the installation of a new archive management system: ScopeArchiv.

III. BUDGET

In 2021 the budget allocated to Archives was used to cover recurrent expenses and to launch file organisation and description projects.

The budget initially allocated was € 385,000, with a reinforcement of €36,330.46 during the year.

This made a total of **€421,330.46**, which represents around 109% of the initial budget.

With regard to recurrent expenses, around half of the budget was used to cover the transfer of archives to the HAEU and to cover the cost of hosting two virtual galleries on SiteGround, a web hosting service.

Regarding non-recurrent projects, Archives used a framework contract managed by the European Parliament (EPRS/SER/ARCH/2016/013-LOT2 and LOT3) and a contract managed by the Commission (OIB/2021/OP/0016) to conclude contracts for the services of 3 external archivists.

Budget execution 2021	CA 2021
Contribution to the Historical Archives of the EU (Regulation 2015/496)	189.596,00
- EPRS/SER/ARCH/2016/013 - Lot2 and Lot3 - OIB/2021/OP/0016	231.270,00
Site Ground Digital Space (Credit card)	464,46
Total	421.330,46

IV. ACQUISITIONS AND ELIMINATION OF FILES

In 2021, Archives continued to receive transfers of documents from units or administrative entities of the Council and major work was also carried out on the elimination of documents without legal, administrative or historical value.

Transfers of documents	corresponding to
16	509 boxes or binders for a total of 44,3 linear meters
Eliminations (documented and approved)	corresponding to
25	165 linear meters

All archival transfers are registered in an inventory in an EXCEL document, in the form of detailed lists, organised in pivot tables. These can be consulted on the Archives SharePoint site.

V. PROCESSING OF FILES AND DOCUMENTS

In the Archives Department the main processing activities concern the **Liste rouge** collection, which consists of files with documents related to the legislative and political activities of the Council from 1976 to 1996.

Following the reorganisation of Archives, an important action for the improvement and modernisation of the rules for selection and processing was launched at the beginning of 2019 and continued into 2020 and 2021.

Thanks to the work of a stable and motivated team, significant progress was made on the processing of this collection in 2021. More than 10,000 files were handled, mainly concerning:

- the relations between the Council and the other EU institutions
- the relations between the Council and the EU Member States
- the relations between the Community and third countries
- the organisation of internal work, that is to say files concerning the management of staff, buildings, finances, the policy of production and distribution of documents, collaboration with Council presidencies
- the fourth EU enlargement

Number of files at 01/01/2021	13.231
Files processed in 2021	10.231
Remaining files at 31/12/2021	3.000

During 2021, Archives not only worked on the Liste rouge files, it also did the following:

- Worked on the organisation and description of more than 2,600 verbatim files, with physical preparation for long-term preservation, and storage in 340 new archival boxes. This project caught the attention of the Secretary-General who met the Director-General of COMM to be informed about it, among other subjects.
- Completed the organisation, description and digitisation of European Council meetings material from 1975 to 1990.
- Began the processing (selection, conditioning and ordering for permanent storage) of CM10, i.e. the first collection of the second part of the CECA files (1967–2002), which will be described entirely within the new archival structure created for CM1 and only in the new electronic archival management system (EAMS).

- Organised the Council's official mail for 2021 (incoming mail: 12,981 items, outgoing mail: 5,632 items).
- Organised the legal acts for the end of 2016 and 2017, comprising a total of 365 files contained in 100 archival boxes.
- Organised the files of Council sessions and written procedures, comprising 166 archival boxes for 24 linear meters.
- Received declassified files from the BIC Unit and processed them.
- Created lists of classified historical documents and collaborated with the Transparency Unit for the declassification of those documents, for the CM1 1966, 1967 and ADD collections, for the CM2 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 legal acts collections, for the CM2 1990 European Council collection and for the CM6 ACP Lomé II and Lomé III collections.

VI. PRESERVATION

To ensure long-term preservation and easy and secure communication, Archives digitised the files for transfer to the HAEU, while at an internal workshop a decision was taken to phase out the production of microfiches.

In 2021, all digitisation activities were performed internally; no digitisation was done by external contractors.

It is important to note that additional preparatory work (e.g. additional quality control, finalisation of archival folders, labelling of archival folder) was needed and executed on all collections throughout 2021, prior to starting the internal digitisation activities.

Microfilming

Files	Microfiches produced
CM1 ADD CM2/1975-1989 European Council meetings CM2/1988-1989 legal acts CM6/ACP Lomé II-III	4497

Digitisation

Types of files	Nr of scanned pages	Storage dimension	PDF/A
CM2/1975-1989 European Council meetings	40.298	337 GB	/
CM2/1988 Legal acts	/	/	637

CM2/1989-1992 Legal acts	255.272	2205 GB	2353
CM2/1990-1996 Coreper meetings	9110	80,5 GB	/
CM6/ACP Lomé II-III	71126	611 GB	454
Total	375.806	3.233,5 GB	3.444

Following the digitisation activities, both metadata and digital objects (PDF/A) of the CM1 1966, 1967 and ADD collections, and of the CM6 ACP Lomé II and Lomé III collections were made available on the Council website and the Archives search engine, CASE.

VII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

In 2021 the team responded to 295 requests for research and received 1 researcher as part of the oral history project (one day per week over six months). The electronic communication of documents was conducted smoothly as usual. Five colleagues participated in the rotation system for research assistance duties. A further group of 3 colleagues dealt with requests for staff files, to which specific confidentiality rules apply.

Requests of documents and information

Provenance	Number of requests	Percentage
Transparency Team	58	19%
Other services of the GSC	95	32%
Researchers	127	43%
Commission	4	1,5%
EP	4	1,5%
Other Institutions	7	3%
Total	295 requests (360 in 2020)	

Reading Room

The number of researchers amounted to 1, for a total of 28 days of presence.

Visits of the Archives

26.10.2021: trainees DG COMM

09.11.2021: trainees DG COMM (podcast)

23.11.2021: Irish Minister Thomas Byrne

25.11.2021: trainees DG COMM (podcast recording)

20.10.2021: Trainees from DG COMM Chambre forte

23.11.2021: Visit of Minister Byrne Chambre forte

Web pages consultation

Page	Visits	Page views	Bounce Rate	Time spent
Landing page	9.891	12.731	20%	1 min 09 secs
Search page	3.432	19.081	13,8%	5 min 11 secs
Collection and access page	726	941	21%	1 min 22 secs
Archival holdings page	195	254	49%	1min 55 secs
Oral History fond page	469	709	51,6%	3min 48 secs
Charles Elsen page	177-211	296-358	35% - 39%	2min 25 secs – 4min 48 secs

VIII. OUTREACH PROJECTS



1 Signing of the accession treaty for Ireland: Patrick Hillery, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Jack Lynch, Irish Prime Minister. © European Communities, 1972

In 2020 Archives focused on the oral history project and published some outreach products:
Revamping of the web pages on the Council's website

1. Oral history project:
 - a. publication on the Council's website of the first interview of the project
 - b. signature of memorandum of understanding with the Max Planck Institute
 - c. 10 people invited to interviews; 3 interviews already scheduled for 2022
2. Articles and posts:
 - a. article entitled "Archives transfer to Florence" (published on Domus)

- b. article on the oral history project and the first published interview, with Charles Elsen (published on Domus)
 - c. article on the visit of Irish Minister Thomas Byrne in the context of the 50th anniversary of the first accession treaty (published on Domus and Library blog)
 - d. portfolio on the Irish accession
3. Collaboration on exhibitions/publications:
 - a. "Greece in Europe" exhibition, held by EUI (providing documents)
 - b. exhibition on 40 years of Greece's accession, held by Hellenic Ministry of foreign affairs (providing documents)
 - c. "Institution building" exhibition, held by CIVA in Brussels (providing documents)
 - d. fixed exhibition in the Achilleion Palace in Corfu, Greece (providing pictures)
 - e. collaboration with Irish Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Irish accession (providing pictures and information)

IX. TRANSFER TO THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE EU

In accordance with Regulation 354/83, concerning the transfer of files dating back more 30 years to the HAEU, the Archives department carried out a single transfer, in conjunction with ORG.

1 transfer to the HAEU	494 archival boxes for a total of 61,5 linear meters
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The physical transfer of the files was followed by:

- the transfer of metadata for the description of the files, containing links to the COM and SEC documents and to the EUR-Lex database; and
- access to digital objects (digitised documents in PDF/A format).

X. ARCHIVAL SYSTEM: REPLACEMENT OF HICA/CASE DATABASE

In 2021, the project for the replacement of the HICA database completed the following steps:

- Training by Scope of the members of the Archives HICA/Scope Working Group with a view both to the test phase and later in-house training of all users ("train the trainers")
- Regular (weekly or twice weekly) technical progress (with DG SMART and Scope) and internal meetings
- Configuration and customisation of ScopeArchiv, including additional purchase orders for custom development of both ScopeArchiv and the Transfer Assistant help system
- Identifying and solving issues of Transfer Assistant speed of processing
- Continued intensive testing of ScopeArchiv and the Transfer Assistant, in particular with a view to the migration of legacy metadata from HICA
- Finalisation of a Council metadata model for use in ScopeArchiv that both respects the ISAD(G) international standard and permits integration of the HICA legacy metadata
- Finalisation of the HICA export routines to fit the Council metadata model in ScopeArchiv
- Adaptation of the ScopeQuery web interface to the Council graphic feel-and-look
- Finalisation of an in-house user manual for encoding Council archival descriptions in ScopeArchiv.

XI. INTERNAL AUDIT

Following the 2019 *Preservation of Archives* audit, 12 recommendations were issued with a view to improving the conditions in which documents and files produced or received by the Council are preserved.

Since this concerns both paper and electronic files, the Directorates-General ORG and SMART were also involved.

In 2021 Archives worked to meet the recommendations of the audit and fulfilled two of them.

XII. INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Archives actively participated in the IIAG (Inter-institutional Archives Group). Two meetings took place in 2021; the first held online by the Council on 17 June and the second held in Commission premises and online on 10 November.

An online meeting was also held by the Archives Department of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the European Union Diplomatic Archives Group (EUDiA).

XIII. HUMAN RESOURCES

As of 31 December 2021, the Archives team comprised:

Head of the Information Services Unit (Transparency, Library, Archives)

1 AD official

12 AST officials

1 Temporary agent

1 GF I technical agent

3 external archivists

1 trainee.