European Parliament
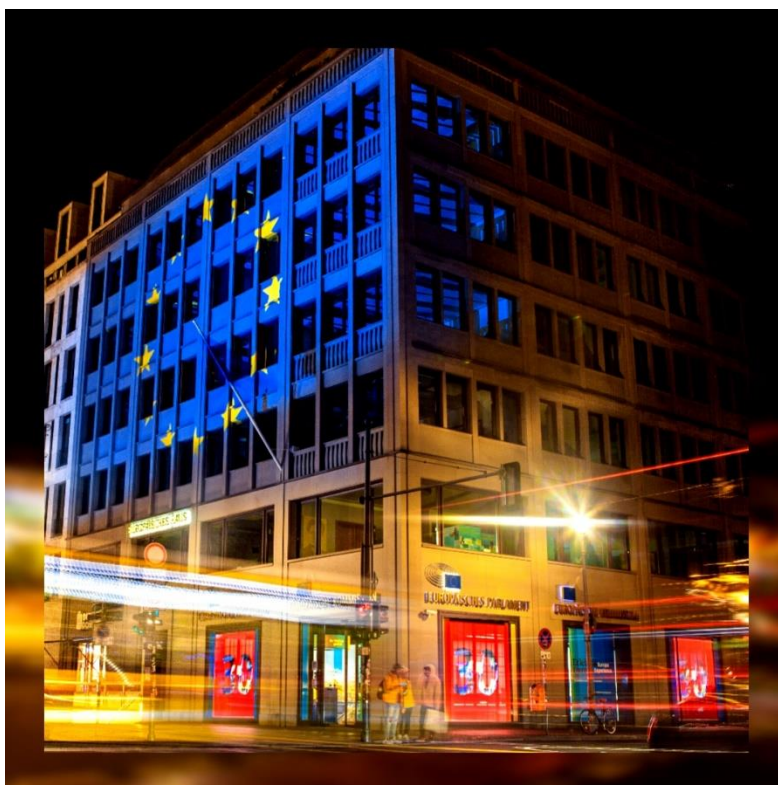
Archives of the European Parliament

Annual report for 2020

Office of the Secretary-General

Archives Unit

January 2021

EN

Archives Unit
Office of the Secretary-General

Cover: Entry in the 'Berlin leuchtet' Festival under the slogan 'unity'. The video highlights on LED screens the exhibition 'It was 30 years ago. The European Parliament, the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification' organised by the Archives Unit
25 September 2020, European Parliament Liaison Office, Berlin, Germany

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Summary

Each European Union (EU) institution, including the European Parliament (EP), has the legal obligation to identify, acquire, and maintain an archive of its official documents. The Archives of the EP exist since the launch of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 and its *fonds* now numbers around five million items.

The EP Archives are keepers of Parliament's 'memory' and should with their holdings and services reflect Parliament's history and development as accurately as possible, particularly when it comes to European integration. In order to achieve this, the work of the Archives Unit consists in the management and preservation of Parliament's official documents and other archival material. The Unit supports Members and the administration in accessing the historical records they need for their work. It makes the archives publicly accessible, assists academic researchers in retrieving them for their use, and carries out promotional activities such as events and exhibitions.

The work of the Archives Unit is set out in this report covering its activities for the year 2020.

Archives:

- Transfers received (submission to archives):	22 (of which 15 have been completed)
- Submissions of administrative and legislative archives:	28.5 linear metres (lm)
- Submissions of digital files:	16.9 GB
- Items from the official mail archives:	8 lm
- Transfers to the Historical Archives of the EU:	no transfer
- Archives processed (paper):	53.6 lm and 12 919 photos
- Archives processed (electronic):	no processing
- Number of items checked:	75 271

Search:

- Number of requests for documents:	281 requests
- Number of study visitors (researchers) received:	2 study visitors

Outreach:

Events and exhibitions:	5
Views on social media/online unique visitors:	6 109 625 / 49 084
Websites maintained:	3
Posts:	18 on the internet, 13 on My House Of European History

Since 13 March 2020, the Archives Unit staff applied a strict teleworking regime in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The processing of physical files received in 2019 has been therefore suspended, since no physical files can be processed outside the premises for reasons related to conservation.

Part I - Objectives and progress in 2020

1) Background

The activity of the Archives is regulated by Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom) No 354/1983 of 1 February 1983 (amended by Council Regulation (EU) No 2015/496 of 17 March 2015) on the opening to the public of the historical archives of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC).

This regulation lays down a legal obligation for EU institutions to maintain archives and, after a period of time, to deposit those already 'opened to the public' in the common Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), which are located at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence. Article 9(2) of the regulation stipulates that 'each institution shall publish information annually on its historical archiving activities'. The Annual Report on the Archives of the EP is submitted to fulfil this obligation.

The EP Archives Unit manages and preserves Parliament's official documents and other archival material dating back to 1952, including the deposited documents of individual Members. Formally, as requested by the decision of Parliament's Bureau of 2 July 2012 on document management, the unit is responsible for the acquisition, storage, processing, and accessibility of the official documents of the institution. It provides these documents, both internally to the Members and administration, and externally to organisations and citizens, notably researchers and historians, through 'tools that facilitate online access to information'. It assists researchers on the history of Parliament and of European integration, and publishes historical studies based on the archives, using 'any means of documentary or academic dissemination or publishing'. It works closely with the HAEU, in promoting use of the archives and the study of Parliament's history.

2) Objectives

The on-going objectives of the Archives Unit comprise:

i) the acquisition of materials of historical value of the EP, their orderly organisation for future access, and their preservation; and,

ii) ensuring access to these materials and their use for the promotion of the understanding of the history of the EP and of European integration more widely.
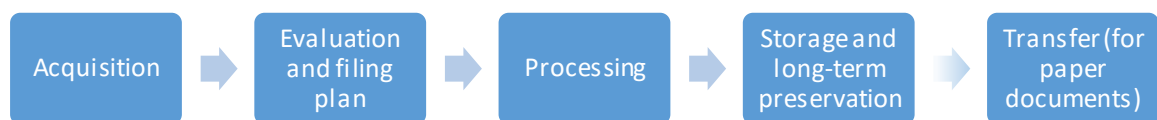
These objectives are described in greater detail in the table below.

1. To pursue a long-term strategy for the Archives Unit – and the Directorate in which it is located – to address the challenges posed by the digital revolution, so as to become a centre of excellence and reference for historical research on European integration and the European Parliament;

2. To continue to contribute to the definition and implementation of Parliament's document management policy and rules governing the transfer of archival and library materials for permanent preservation from the directorates-general and services, (with particular focus on archival materials);

3. To streamline the acquisition of the institutional archives:
   a) to diversify the variety of services guiding the transfer to the archives of documents and publications in order to meet and satisfy the specific needs from services,
   b) to continue to streamline the processes of electronic data transfer into the unit's collections and databases,
   c) to contribute to broaden the sources of European Parliament history, specifically by expanding oral archives with testimonials from former Presidents, Secretaries-General, and Members;

4. To plan and implement a strategy for the long-term preservation of the archives' material:
   a) to implement the measures needed to ensure reliable digital preservation and to guarantee integrity and legibility over time, namely by preparing for long-term preservation of digital content in collaboration with other institutions and the Historical Archives of the EU and by developing and integrating tools for processing digitally born documents and data, and
   b) to revise the archives' metadata policy, in order to create, expose and connect information on archival funds and, in particular, to ensure efficient transfer from business applications to the archives' database;

5. To ensure internal and external accessibility of the archives:
   a) to further strengthen a client-oriented historical research service by ensuring a timely and adequate response to historical requests from Members and EP staff by email,
   b) to prepare online archives, specifically by creating webpages for historical information about former delegates and Members and making the historical archives database available on the internet;

6. To contribute meaningfully to the promotion of understanding of the history of EU integration and of the European Parliament:
   a) to design and follow an overall communication strategy, in cooperation with the services responsible, to promote the archives, thus ensuring a strong online presence,
   b) to support the research and publication of studies on the history of the European Parliament,
   c) to participate in the management of the dedicated websites and contribute to Parliament's research and history-related websites,
   d) to foster inter-institutional and professional cooperation, in particular with the Inter-institutional Archives Group (IIAG) and by being involved in expert groups and professional organisations so as to develop projects of common interest (digitisation, unification of metadata and controlled authorities).

3) Progress in 2020

This section sets out the processes of archiving and the qualitative progress made in the services provided by the Archives Unit. Archiving means ensuring both order and preservation. The processing of archives is the orderly organisation of *fonds* on the basis of their evaluation and subsequent filing plan. The items archived are assigned metadata[1] (i.e. data reflecting their organisation and their place in it).

The main steps in the archiving process are explained below:

Acquisition → Evaluation and filing plan → Processing → Storage and long-term preservation → Transfer (for paper documents)

Acquisition and filing plan

These are activities that require logistics management as well as specialist knowledge on archiving. In order to carry out acquisitions, storage and transfer, the Archives Unit:
- collects and registers Parliament's official archives (both legislative and administrative in nature);
- receives, organises, and manages the private archives of Members;
- receives, organises, and manages the archives of Parliament's official mail;
- ensures the restoration and preventive conservation of archived materials;
- prepares and manages transfers to the HAEU;
- manages relevant stocks and storage spaces.

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, the main activities in relation to acquisitions were:
- continuing to diversify the variety of services guiding the acquisition of documents and publications in order to meet and satisfy the particular needs from offices and administrative services;

- continuing efforts to streamline the electronic acquisitions of data into the unit's collections and databases;

- contributing to the broadening of sources of EP history, specifically by providing integrated access to documents.

As its core mission, the Archives Unit manages and preserves the EP's official public documents and other archival material dating back to 1952, comprising around five million items to date.

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[1] Metadata is 'data about data': a standardised set of data describing where each item is stored and what it is about.

In 2020, 15 acquisitions were completed and 7 initiated. A total of 28.5 lm of paper files and 16.9 GB of digital files were acquired by the Archives Unit. The following graphic illustrates the impact of the pandemic situation in 2020, during which most of the staff was teleworking since March, thus not performing the acquisition of physical files having a very limited access to inside premises. The huge number of acquisitions noticed in 2019 can be explained by the fact that the 8th Parliamentary term was coming to an end and that an information campaign had been launched, which invited Parliament's Secretariat to submit archives to the Archives Unit.
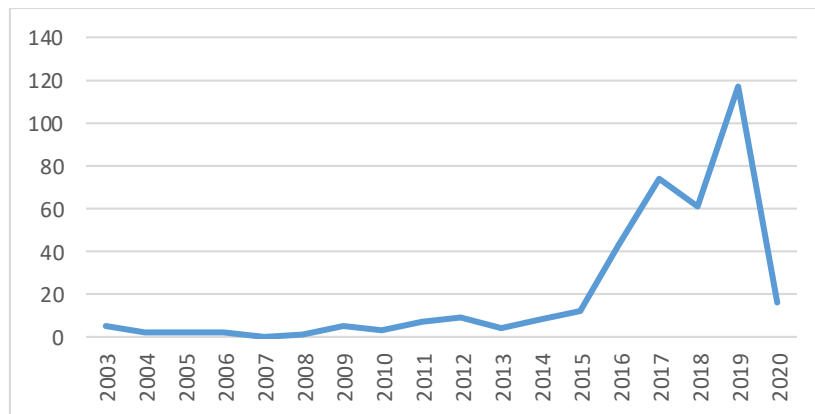

Figure 1: Number of transfers per year

The Archives Unit has improved its acquisition procedure by requesting a detailed inventory that is to be based on the filing plan that must be provided with each acquisition. A communication related to several improvements was issued to the Document Management Officers (RAD) of each Directorate-General. The goal of such a detailed inventory is to facilitate the inventory of the acquired documents at the end of their retention schedule and to make it easier to search for them when requested, depending on the processing of the corresponding *fonds*[2]. The following graph illustrates the impact that this communication had on the number of detailed inventories provided, compared against the number of acquisitions.

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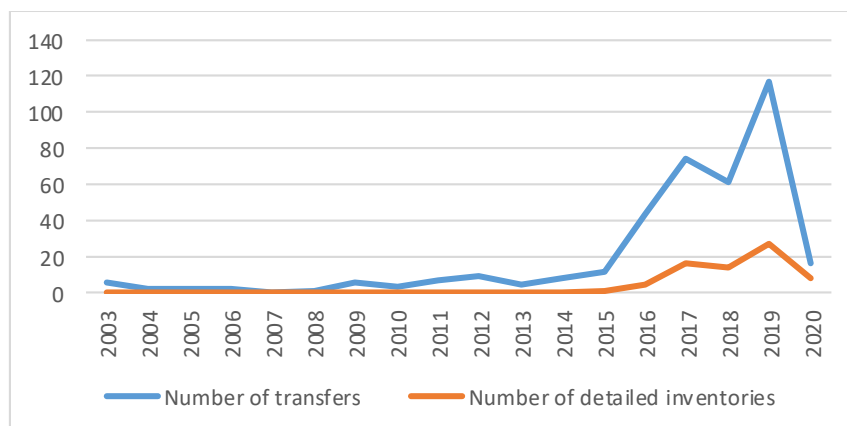
[2] In archival science, a *fonds* is a group of records that share the same origin and that have occurred naturally as an outgrowth of the daily workings of an agency, individual, or organisation. 'Records are not the sediment of activities. They are the atoms and the evidence of activities, and very often the only few remains of the activities.' (Peter Horsman, Netherlands Archives School, 1998). It is with this in mind that archivists organise archival materials into *fonds*.

The main 2020 acquisitions included documents from:
- Legislative acts (3 lm and 14 GB);
- Office of the Secretary-General (11.4 lm);
- Strasbourg Conference and Visitor Services Unit (8 lm).

The Archives Unit welcomes and invites individual Members and former Members of the EP to submit documents to the archives (private archives). In 2020, no transfers were completed, mainly due to the pandemic and how difficult it was to ship boxes between countries.

The Former Members' Association is actively supporting awareness-raising activities for the submission of private archives, which are to cover Members' parliamentary work in Brussels or Strasbourg, or their domestic or European political work. The private archives are of great historical value, since they illustrate the wide variety of work carried out by Members, and would be of great use for future generations.

Processing

In relation to the processing of the Parliament's archives, the Archives Unit:
- defines the policy, strategy and practical modalities of archival processing;
- plans and manages archival processing and digitisation projects;
- manages the outsourced processing of archives and digitisation;
- coordinates internal and external archival processing projects;
- carries out the quality control of processing and of metadata (descriptive data).

Once the files have been received, their content is identified and organised according to their source, so as to protect their original context. This is important in order to ensure that documents can be easily identified at a later stage. A hierarchical description (hierarchical layers of metadata) is then undertaken, in accordance with the ISAD(G)[3] archiving standard (series and files) and in compliance with a wide range of criteria, and is entered directly into the database. Each document, whether 'paper-born' or 'digitally-born', will have a similar description and be kept electronically in the Archive Management System (AMS).

The electronic archives (AMS) contain more than five million items. They are currently only available for consultation (of publicly accessible documents only) in the reading room of the historical library in Luxembourg and in the reading room of the library in Brussels, but not outside the Archives, for technical reasons.

The archival processing methodology was updated in 2016, comprising a revision of the methods of processing and description, the enhancement of controlled authorities and thesaurus[4], the quality control of descriptive data, and enforcing the rules concerning access to public archives. The tender

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[3] General International Standard Archival Description - standard developed by the International Council on Archives to provide general guidance for the preparation of archival descriptions
https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/CBPS_2000_Guidelines_ISAD%28G%29_Second-edition_EN.pdf
[4] The description of archives (meta-data) is based on a well-defined set of keywords grouped in a thesaurus.

for processing, which was based on this methodology, resulted in the signing, in 2017, of a contract for processing archives. The contract that entered into force in 2020 ensured the provision of specialised archivists for the processing of paper archives until 22 May 2021.

The teleworking situation allowed for a systematic quality control to be launched on the AMS, which examined over 75 271 items and a retrospective analysis of the *fonds* processed to be conducted. This enabled anomalies to be corrected and greatly increased the quality of the digital versions of the archived documents archived. Examples of these anomalies include inconsistent dates for documents and series, missing digital documents and unreadable documents. Quality control was performed on documents from the Common Assembly (1952-1957), the Ad Hoc Assembly (1952-1953) and part of the European Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament before direct elections were introduced (1957-1979). 16 % of anomalies were corrected for the abovementioned documents.

The processed archives were:
- Catherine Bearder - 3.5 lm
- Jerzy Buzek - 5.1 lm
- Christopher Jackson - 25 lm
- Alain Lamassoure - 5 lm
- Barbara Lochbihler - 5 lm
- Elisabeth Morin-Chartier - 10 lm

Iconographic *fonds* were also processed. 12 919 photos of 282 Members were reviewed; 2 085 have been selected for permanent preservation.

The processing of archival records includes preparing them for digitisation (if they are not born-digital) and long-term preservation. Parliament maintains a full digital copy of all its paper archives, including the documents submitted to the HAEU, so they can be consulted by the public. Data related to archived information are available in the AMS, which are hosted inside Parliament's premises to ensure their safe processing. The AMS is compatible with the standards related to the long-term preservation strategy of digital archives. Long-term preservation refers to digital archives and is a challenge for all archives all over the world: electronic documents may become illegible after just a few years, due to obsolete software, hardware and media, or because of their sheer size. The digitisation process was suspended in 2019 due to a pending interinstitutional contract. In 2020, an internal agreement with the Editing Directorate was concluded, which set out that the paper documents transferred to the archives were to be digitised.

Long-term preservation

The collaboration of the Archives Unit with several technical teams was extended in order to transfer the digital-born files that had already been collected. The knowledge management systems used were *Knowledge Management*, to improve access to parliamentary information and knowledge across the organisation during the last legislatures, and *Hermes*, to improve access to documents produced by the administration. Although priority was given to an open data project from the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support and the deployment of the document management system proved to be more complex than expected, our collaboration with these teams will deliver benefits in 2021.

The work to harmonise and gather more information on 'controlled authorities'[5] is a continuous activity, particularly with regard to information on former Members and towns. The list of Members since the Common Assembly has been verified and updated in the central data referential system. This includes verifying names, surnames and related Codict keys from 4 795 members, observers and orators.

Transfers to the Historical Archives of the EU

Systematic quality control continued to be undertaken for the transfer of archives to the HAEU, in accordance with the transfer procedure established in 2014. In 2020, quality control was mainly applied on two *fonds* related to the European Parliament – second legislature (Cabinet of the President Pierre Pflimlin, Cabinet of the President Lord Plumb) and the European Parliament – fourth legislature – Parliamentary activity – Minutes of the Parliamentary Commissions meetings.

In 2020, this including verifying the completeness of the files, consistency with the description in the archive management system and the packaging in pH neutral archival folders and boxes. Due to the pandemic, the transfer that had initially been planned for November 2020 was postponed, and will be performed as soon as conditions allow in 2021.

4) Services to researchers and other users

The Archives Unit provides access to Parliament's historical documents and publications for researchers wishing to explore the history of the institution and of European integration more widely. The Unit has been proactive in developing relations with the Council for International Archives (CIA), the European Union Diplomatic Archives (EUDiA) and has continued to host trainees and visitors undertaking research on relevant topics (as much as possible, given the pandemic).

Publications and outreach

The Archives Unit organised three exhibitions in 2020. These exhibitions were entirely produced thanks to the support of existing services of the EP and they were put online in close collaboration with Europeana[6]. The organisational success of this exhibition was due to the matrix linking these numerous services, meaning that additional external services were not needed to ensure that the exhibitions went live. The three online exhibitions were viewed by 49 084 unique visitors and obtained 6 059 545 views on social media[7].

1- 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. 9 May 1950

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[5] *Authority control* is a term used in cataloguing, meaning the use of a single authorised heading for all records having the same authority; for example, authors of documents (e.g. MEPs) are *authorities*: authority control ensures the name is always written the same way, there are no spelling mistakes, there is consistent use of the middle name or initial, there is disambiguation when several authors have the same name, etc.

[6] Europeana is an initiative of the European Union, financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility and European Union Member States. The Europeana services, including this website, are operated by a consortium led by the Europeana Foundation under a service contract with the European Commission.

[7] The views calculated from the official EP and Europeana channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

On 9 May 1950, against the backdrop of the Cold War, Robert Schuman issued a declaration that marked the beginning of the process of building the European Community. The aim the French Foreign Minister had set himself was to establish a new supranational organisation with a view to creating a common coal and steel market between France and Germany that was also open to other European countries. It became the European Coal and Steel Community, or ECSC as it was known, and since 1985, Europe Day has been celebrated on 9 May every year. The exhibition[8] is dedicated to the Schuman Declaration. Both a fully digital exhibition and a physical exhibition were available. Panels were shipped to 12 European cities for 9 May 2020.

Figure 3: EP Liaison Office, Vilnius, Lithuania

Figure 4: EP, Strasbourg, France

Figure 5: Jean Monnet House, Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, France

Figure 6: EP Liaison Office, Roma, Italy

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[8] https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/70th-anniversary-of-the-schuman-declaration

The Archives Unit had initially planned a physical exhibition, but it then decided to hold it online due to the COVID-19 crisis. The success of the exhibition was rooted in the possibility of integrating multilingual content designed for visuals into a content management system associated with stakeholder responsiveness: on Europe Day, the exhibition was viewed 37 679 times. Promoting the event on social media proved to be very advantageous – with around 6 000 000 media views). Likewise, the creation of this online exhibition is in line with the EP's carbon footprint reduction policy (as set out by EMAS), compared to printing visuals that highlight the cultural heritage of the institution.

Multimedia coverage in 24 languages in a particularly short time frame led to the production of various types of content, such as subtitled videos and podcasts[9]. Their availability on the Multimedia Centre facilitated their dissemination to the press and stakeholders. The videos with subtitles in 24 languages were an undeniable success, as witnessed during the screening in the hemicycle for Europe Day. Another example of the reuse of the multimedia content is the video in Polish that was used in an educational context by teachers in Wroclaw (Poland). Commemorative books for the Members of the Bureau were provided in 15 languages and booklets in 5 languages (at the stakeholder request).
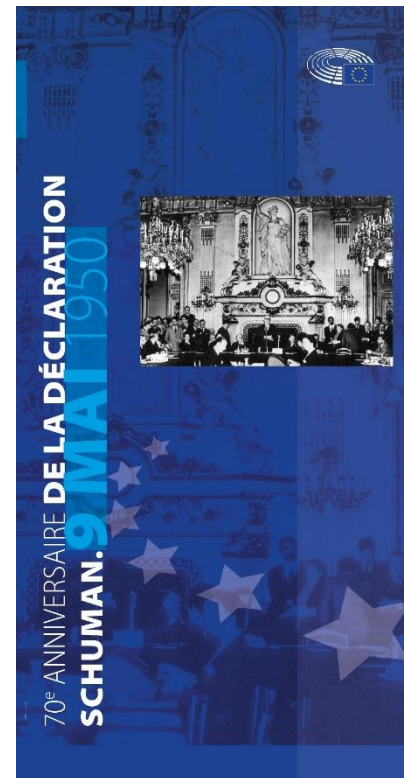

Figure 7: First panel of the visual expo

2- It was 30 years ago: the European Parliament, the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification

In the night between 9 and 10 November 1989, with absolutely no warning, the Berlin Wall opened at the same time as the communist government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) collapsed. The Cold War was coming to an end and a momentous page was being turned in Europe's history. A month later, the Brandenburg Gate officially opened, definitively restoring free movement between the two Germanys. On 3 October 1990, German unification was achieved, effectively transforming the future of European integration.

Despite the speed of events, the EP played its role to the full, stepping up its efforts in response to these political developments. For several months, it provided a forum for the European leaders tasked with preparing the reunification of Germany. Concerned with the political, economic and institutional implications of this historic moment for the European Community, the Members of the EP supported German reunification, increasingly calling for democratisation and respect for human rights in Central and Eastern Europe. The exhibition[10] is dedicated to the role of the EP in the context of German reunification. The exhibition was mainly online and only one visual panel to invite citizens to access the online exhibition was provided.

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[9] https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/exhibition-for-70th-anniversary-of-schuman-declaration_15501_pk
[10] https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/30-years-ago-the-european-parliament-and-german-reunification
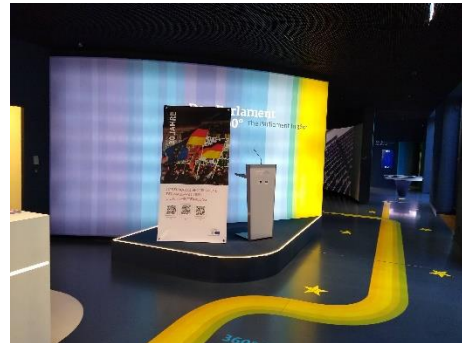
Figure 8: City Library, Munich, Germany

Figure 9: EP Liaison Office, Berlin, Germany

Figure 10: EP, Strasbourg, France

Figure 11: Jean Monnet House, Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, France

The main improvement made for this exhibition was the link between physical exposure and digital exposure. Due to the COVID-19 crisis and the constraints of access to public places, the choice was made to focus mainly on a digital exhibition. Thus a single panel was produced with a photograph, the exhibition title and QR codes to display the digital exhibition in a given language. The function of this panel is a 'call for action', which then provides a link to the digital exhibition published on Europeana. The number of views of this digital exhibition was 8 040. The combination of digital exposure and promotion on social media has always proven to be an indispensable asset (achieving 123 836 media views). A single printed physical panel was shipped to 7 places. The exhibition was inaugurated on 3 October 2020.

The subtitles of the videos were produced in 24 languages. In addition, social media trailers and a video that was screened on the LED screens of the Berlin EPLO were produced. Podcasts in 24 languages were produced and linked to the multimedia package[11]. Booklets were provided in four languages (upon request of the partners).

Figure 12: First panel of the visual expo

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[11] https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/exhibition-for-30th-anniversary-of-german-reunification_16502_pk

This exhibition was promoted by additional partners, the Institutions of the Inter-Institutional Archive Group (IIAG) and the national archives members of the European Diplomatic Archives (EUDiA). Historical documents related to the online exhibition were made available on the Archives of the EP's website[12].

3- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union turns 20!

Solemnly proclaimed on 7 December 2000 at the Nice European Council, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is now 20 years old. The European Parliament had been pushing for a document like this for a long time. In fact, Members felt it was important that every citizen should be able to find out about the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to them in the European Union and its Member States, and that a system of redress should be available to raise possible violations. The Charter was designed to be a fundamental benchmark and is the result of an entirely novel drafting method. The result is a single compilation of all the civil, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by European citizens and everyone living in European Union territory.

The human rights set out in the Charter are pivotal and inalienable. Its mission is to enhance protection as society evolves, accompanying social progress and scientific and technological developments. The rights are grouped according to several essential principles: human dignity, fundamental freedoms, equality among people, solidarity, citizenship and justice. The Charter also aims to create an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe so they can share a future based on common values. Since 2009, fundamental rights have been elevated to treaty level, as the Treaty of Lisbon makes reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It is annexed to the treaties and is now applied by the European Union courts. The exhibition[13] is dedicated to way in which the Charter of Fundamental Rights was established.
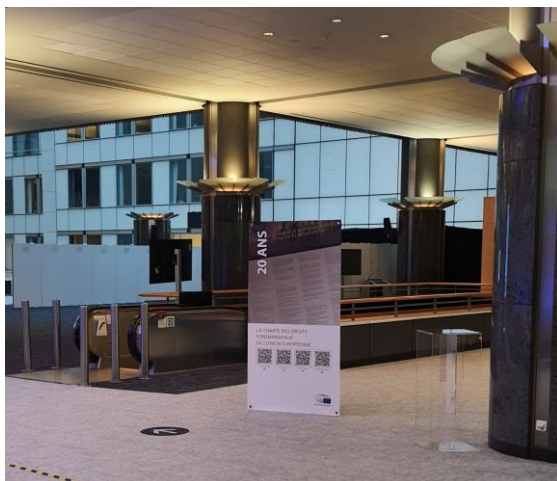

Figure 13: EP, Brussels, Belgium

Figure 14: Jean Monnet House, Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, France

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[12] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/historicalarchives/en/multimedia-gallery/cultural-heritage-collection.html
[13] https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/the-charter-of-fundamental-rights-of-the-european-union-turns-20

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, the exhibition was held almost exclusively online. The exhibition was viewed by 3 365 unique visitors online. It had 57 791 media views. Booklets were provided in four languages (at stakeholder request).

The coverage of the multimedia aspect in 24 languages was achieved through podcasts and audiograms[14]. They were made available as multimedia sources on the Multimedia Centre. The videos could not be subtitled in all 24 languages because of the restrictions in place, meaning that the premises infrastructure could not be accessed. However, even though the main event was in December 2020, in order to follow up from the educative videos on European integration that were used in the first two exhibitions, a video will be produced in January 2021 and made available on the Multimedia Centre.
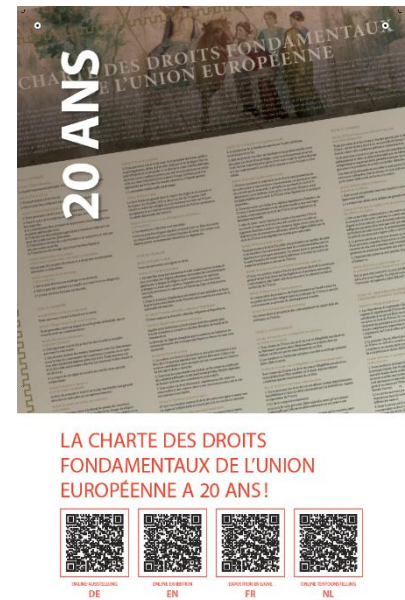
The exhibition was inaugurated on 7 December 2020.

Figure 15: First panel of the visual expo

Initiated in 2020, the client satisfaction survey on the exhibition process showed an increase from a score of 3 to 3.3 out of 5 (21.43 % response rate).

Intranet pages

The Archives Unit's intranet pages are divided into several sections that offer information on the Archives and the unit's objectives, and information on services provided to Members, assistants and EP staff[15].

A softbot (software conversational agent) has been trained to provide answers to questions asked in English about the archives (two training sessions have been performed with 20 different users). This softbot, named Archibot, is currently only deployed on the Intranet.

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[14]https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/exhibition-on-the-charter-of-fundamental-rights-of-european-union-turns-20_16901_pk

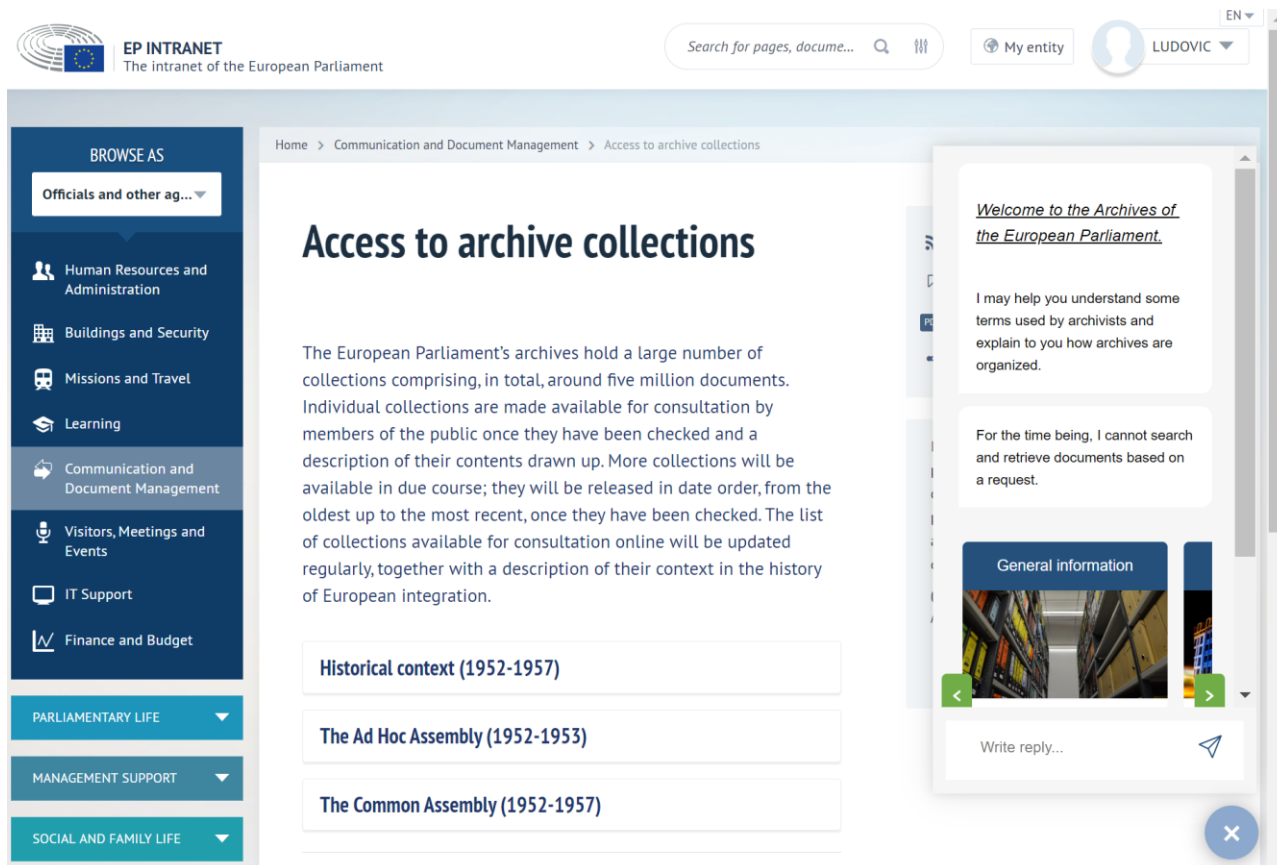[15]https://epintranet.in.ep.europa.eu/home/browse-as/communication/document-management/tools-and-procedures.html

Figure 16: Welcome screen from Archibot on the Intranet

Internet pages

The historical archives' website[16] gives the Archives Unit the possibility to better communicate and promote their holdings, services and publications to the outside world. The site presents the archives, their history and structure. They also contain a wide range of video interviews with former presidents and two Secretary-Generals, which are organised by subject and showcase the highlights of their periods in office. All the exhibitions organised by the Archives Unit in 2020 are advertised in a newly created Cultural Heritage collection, which will be constantly updated. The Archives Unit has the goal of renewing its online presence in 2021 (with a target of 6 548 unique visitors in 2021) in close cooperation with the Directorate-General for Communication.

The Unit also provided historical articles and blog posts to other online platforms, and took part in the publication of stories on the 'My House of European History' website[17].

Historical research

In 2020, the Archives Unit answered 306 questions from 281 requests. Most of the questions were related to reports (accounting for 21 % of all questions received), documents related to legislative domains (13 %), and a question asking for a summary of a legislative domain (11 %).

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[16] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/historicalarchives/en/home.html
[17] https://my-european-history.ep.eu/myhouse/timeline
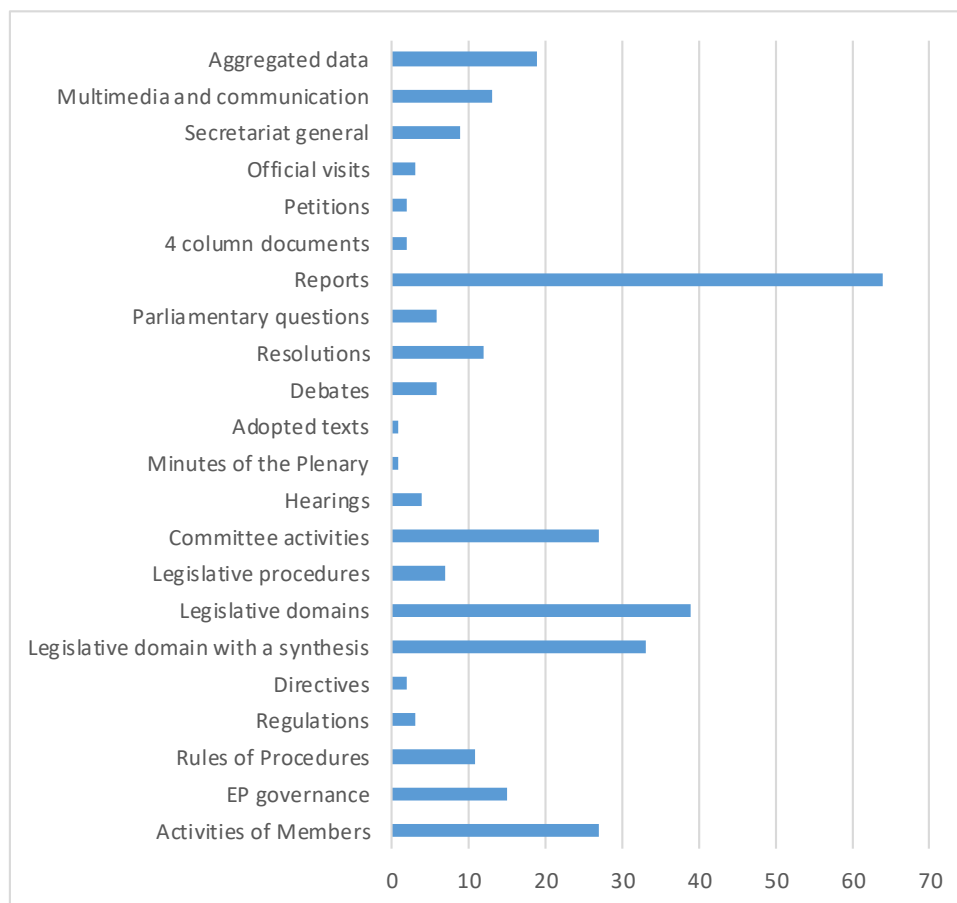
Figure 17: Number of requests per type of document requested

Most of the searches related to the following documents:
- Activities of Members: speeches;
- EP governance: Members' pension schemes;
- Rules of Procedure: versions of the Rules of Procedure;
- Legislative procedures: ordinary legislative procedure

Questions were received through requests; one request may contain several questions. The origin of the requests were as follows:

Initiated in 2020, the client satisfaction rating related to the search process rose from 3 to 4.25 out of 5 (42.86 % response rate).

Oral history project

An oral history campaign to collect testimonies from former Members and staff from the Parliament's Secretariat on the establishment of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is currently being drawn up. The aim is to collect a meaningful number of personal accounts.

5) Relations with other EU institutions and international bodies

The Archives Unit actively participates in the twice-yearly interinstitutional meeting of the IIAG, where the HAEU report is also scrutinised by the financing institutions (Parliament contributes funds on an annual basis). In exchange, the HAEU provides the storage for archives that consist of paper documents and uses them for promotional activities.

According to the annual report provided by the HAEU:
- EP *fonds* are the second most consulted EU *fonds* online, accounting for 22,5 % of all searches (please see table 9 of the Annual Activity Report[18]).
- EP files represent 39 % of the physical files consulted in the AHUE reading room (table 14 of the Annual Activity Report).

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[18] Historical Archives of the European Union, Annual Activity Report 2020, March 1, 2021

Part II - Administration of the Archives

1) Budget

In 2020, the Archives Unit managed its appropriations under the following EP budget line:

Budget Line	2020 approved budget
3210-07	EUR 1 800 000

Contribution to the annual budget of Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU)

In 2020, the European Parliament contributed with a quota of EUR 397 995 to the budget of the HAEU.

Investment in electronic archives: efforts for long-term preservation and accessibility

Limited IT-related funds were used in 2020, which were mainly related to the maintenance of the archive management system archival system (EUR 18 000).

Processing of the archives

The main item of expenditure in 2020 involved the sorting, organising and processing of paper documents (the processing of electronic documents was partly automatic, and in the case of unstructured archives, was carried out mainly by staff, in particular due to the complexity of organising unstructured materials).

In 2020, the processing of paper archives costed EUR 1 106 437.10. The processing of the archives was mainly related to the quality control of archive items (EUR 932 720.40). Other processes were initiated and will continue, which are focused on technical assistance (EUR 55 014.20 EUR) and on the processing of Members and Former Members private archives (EUR 118 702.50).

The amounts reflect the very substantial work of processing individual paper files, preparing for digitisation, adding indexing and meta-data, and uploading into the database. The preparation of processing, consisting in inventory, evaluation, file structure plus metadata, and preparation of batches for processing is carried out by the unit's staff.

The Archives Unit relies on the provision of services through framework contracts with specialised companies for processing work. The tasks assigned to the external company are organised into projects, which are benchmarked and monitored. Each project concerns well-defined submissions, so that the indexing and assignment of metadata is consistent across the project. All tasks relating to the responsibility and management of each project are carried out by the unit's staff. The Archives Unit chose *intra-muros* processing due to the unique and sometimes confidential nature of the archives processed.

The maximum number of external staff recorded in a year varies, depending on the number of projects launched and completed within the year. At most, the Archives Unit had 12 external staff working on processing archives in 2020.

Software infrastructure for PDF content extract and natural language processing (NLP)

The Archives Unit intends to publish some *fonds* to be consulted by citizens. This objective, which was registered in the Parliamentary Project Portfolio 'EP Archives for the Digital Age' intends to make certain documents available and to add new functionalities to the current infrastructure supporting the AMS. These new functionalities are:
- Extraction of text content from archived documents in raster format;
- Analysis and search of the archived documents including those stored in rasterised format;
- Use of NLP on the content of existing archived documents.

The deliveries related to these activities are:
- Evaluating and testing software products in the domain of office automation;
- Making prototypes and proofs of concept (advanced optical character recognition (OCR) to extract meaningful content and testing of different AI technologies and solutions;
- Supporting technological watch (identification of trends in NLP solutions and technologies).

Initiated in November 2020, this activity will provide its deliverables in May 2021. EUR 149 999.70 have been invested for this purpose.

2) Staff

Establishment plan

On 31 December 2020, the establishment plan of the Archives Unit stood at twelve officials, two AST vacant posts, and three contract agents.

3) Cooperation within the EP administration

The Archives Unit works closely both with other administrative units from the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services and with other Directorate-Generals and services within Parliament's administration more widely. For example:

- Within the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services

The Archives Unit in Luxembourg works closely with the Directorate for Library and knowledge services, mainly in the context of exhibitions. The editor for the exhibitions held in 2020 was a member of staff from the Archives Unit, while the curator was s a colleague from this directorate.

The Citizens' Enquiries Unit (AskEP) passes on to the Archives Unit all information requests they receive for historical documents from members of the public. The Archives Unit also works with units from the Members' Research Service, notably when it comes to researching documents.

The Archives Unit also regularly works with other Directorate-Generals and services:

- Within the Directorate-General for the Presidency

The Archives Unit organises and archives, in paper and digital forms (the latter searchable online), all the outgoing and incoming official mail of the European Parliament (8 lm in 2020), which is transferred on a regular basis from the Official Mail Unit.

The Archives Unit cooperates with the Transparency Unit, in particular in cases of requests for access to documents under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 involving more extensive searches with historical profiles. In 2020, 29 extensive searches were carried out.

- Within the Directorates-General for Internal Policies and for External Policies

The Archives Unit cooperates with both Directorate-Generals, in order to acquire the archives of the parliamentary committees and to add them to its existing holdings. A systematic transfer plan has been set up and followed, since 2017, to ensure the comprehensive acquisition of all such materials for the archives.

- Within the Directorate-General for Communication

The Archives Unit works closely with the House of European History, the Civil Society and Outreach Unit, and the EPLOs in the Member States, both on acquisitions and the organisation of events and exhibitions.

In addition and in the context of the online exhibitions, the Archives Unit works very closely with the Directorate for Campaigns in terms of exhibition work plan implementation, graphical design of digital assets and their production (communication for social media, visual expo and booklets). In the context storage of multimedia products, the Archives Unit works closely with the Audio-visual Unit, and the Photobooking team in particular.

- Within the Directorate-General for Translation

The move to online exhibitions has changed the nature of products produced for these ones. New digital products such as podcasts, audiograms and subtitling of educational videos in 24 languages are possible thanks to our cooperation with the Directorate for Citizens' language. All the texts displayed online are verified for the original language and translated into 23 languages by the Directorate for Translation.

- Within the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support

The Archives Unit works closely with the Directorate for Publishing, Innovation and Data Management. These activities are heavily related to the online exhibitions set up by the Unit and make full use of the printing facilities on various type of supports (booklet A4/A5, visual expo). The Archives Unit also works with them on the shipping of the different products when needed and the design of visual graphics.

The Archives Unit also works with this directorate-general on the use of AI in the context of NLP tools (such as softbots) and dynamic dashboards in order to make documents accessible.

- Within other Directorates-General and services

In the context of events and exhibitions, the Archives Unit is working extremely closely with several units from the Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conference (Conference Technicians team in particular), the Directorate-General for Security and Safety, the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (for catering and cleaning during events and booking exhibition spaces), the Protocol Service in the Directorate-General for Presidency and the Former Members Association.

The Archives Unit works with various other DGs and services to explain and apply retention schedules, and works notably in the framework of GIDOC[19], to establish filing plans and common conservation lists for the whole institution.

4) Premises

- Stock-taking and preventive conservation

The Archives Unit consistently makes an effort when it comes to archive preservation and storage management. The Archives Unit maintains the general inventory of storage spaces and archives to ensure:
- identification and description of all storage spaces;
- assigning of location identifiers to each storage location;
- verification of the presence, or failing this, identification of each set of archives kept by the Archives Unit (i.e. acquisitions, archives processed, digitisation lots, microfilms, posters and audio cassettes);
- quality control, or failing this, the establishment of associated research instruments (i.e. transfer and digitisation forms);
- checking of the condition of the archives and their containers;
- rationalisation of the containers for better conservation and reconditioning, if necessary;
- classification of each file holding unit in association with a location in the storage areas.

This stock-taking operation made it possible for us to identify the documents that had been stored without an associated research instrument, sometimes for several years, thus enabling us to better control the material kept by the Archives. It was therefore possible for us to establish a more rational programming of processing and to avoid the successive treatments of scattered parts of the same group of archives, thus ensuring greater consistency and coherence of descriptions.

- Microforms

A specific assessment of the condition of the microforms in the Archives was carried out in 2016 in order to evaluate their exposure to the 'vinegar syndrome'. Our assessment confirmed a slight

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[19] 'The Inter-departmental group of document management officers (GIDOC) was created within the European Parliament Secretariat by the Bureau decision of 2 July 2012 to ensure the implementation and monitor the development of the document management system created pursuant to that decision and its implementing measures. Each directorate-general and equivalent administrative body is represented in the group by a document management officer. The Directorate-General for the Presidency and the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (Historical Archives Unit) give secretarial support to GIDOC.' (source: Intranet)

change in most of the oldest microfilms, which were made out of acetate film. A prevention programme was undertaken in 2017 and the microforms are now held in a controlled preservation environment (they are held in an air-conditioned *microthèque* where the temperature and humidity are regulated). Checks in 2018, 2019 and 2020 showed a stabilised chemical process.

- New Adenauer Building

As requested by the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics, the Archives Unit contributed to the definition of the site plans for the location of the Archives in the new Adenauer Building, which was partly delivered on 1 November 2020. The zone related to the archives is still under construction (expected in 2023) and the initial plans will be revised in cooperation with the Directorate for Building Projects, following a first contribution made in 2016-2017.

In the meantime, a storage room (300 lm) has been moved in October 2020 from the old part of the Adenauer Building to make room for the new building. The old storage room was removed. A new storage room has been allocated in the new Adenauer Building in order to compensate for this loss and to house the physical archives.

5) Computerisation

- Maintaining the archive management software (CLAVIS)

Since 2000, the Archives Unit has been using an AMS known as CLARA as its main archival tool. This system has also been used for consulting purposes by the Bureau Secretariat, the Secretary-General's Office, the Transparency Unit and the EP Library in Brussels (the ARCDOC database). In 2014, a call for tender was launched to purchase a new, more up-to-date archival and document management software, known as CLAVIS, keeping the functionalities of CLARA, while adding new ones, such as compliance with modern archival standards like ISAD(G). In July 2015, a contract was signed with the winner of the relevant tendering process. In November 2015, the process of requirements analysis, application customisation and development started, and this work continued in 2016. In parallel, an analysis was carried out on the new system's interoperability with Parliament's applications. In addition, the business workflow with the new application was documented and analysed. The project was carried out throughout 2017, and delivered the new archive management software (CLAVIS) in 2018. In 2019, the major activities performed were to ensure the smooth running and the availability of the platform.

In 2020, the major activities were related to minor bug-fixing in the search function, transforming the *fonds* from being a work in progress to the production of a digital zone improving the platform to make sure that it complies with the cybersecurity assessment performed by the ICT Security Unit, and improving the management of roles within the application. A first study to rationalise software used in the Archives Unit is ongoing. After conducting an assessment of the documents contained in AMS and ELEURA, they will be migrated in 2021 to the main AMS, CLAVIS, and then the application will be decommissioned.

- Intermediary archives

A decision by the Secretary-General in October 2008 marked the launch of a project to set up 'retention schedules', in order to establish uniform procedures for the retention of the current and

intermediate archives held by Parliament's Directorates-General and services. Each Directorate-General was required to draw up such a schedule, in cooperation with the Archives Unit.

A Bureau decision of 2 July 2012 (Article 6) stipulated that all retention schedules should be adopted by the end of January 2013. It established the inter-departmental group of document management officers (GIDOC) to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the development of the document management system, pursuant to that decision and its implementing measures.

Work on the retention schedules, which was initiated and promoted by the Archives Unit, and since 2012, by GIDOC and the Document Management Officers in each Directorate-General, is fully underway. The retention schedules are applied by the services themselves, thus resulting in a systematic and orderly submission of materials to the Archives.

The process related to digital document is automated by the new Electronic Records Management System (ERMS), which was launched at the end of 2020 and is still under deployment by some Directorate-Generals. Once it is fully deployed, an integration study will be performed with a view to ensuring the interoperability of the AMS and the ERMS.