
Archives of the European Parliament

Annual report for 2021



Office of the Secretary-General

Archives Unit

January 2022

Archives Unit
Office of the Secretary-General

*Cover: Inaugural address by Louise Weiss before the European Parliament
17 July 1979, Strasbourg, European Parliament*

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Summary

Each European Union (EU) institution, including the European Parliament, has the legal obligation to identify, acquire and maintain an archive of its official documents. Parliament's Archives, carrying out this obligation, have existed since the launch of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952, and its *fonds*¹ now numbers around five million items.

Parliament's Archives are keepers of the institution'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, including the papers of individual Members who choose to submit them. 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 2021. Looking at the figures below will give you a quick overview of the unit's work, which is described in greater detail in the report and is summarised in the table below:

Archives:	
- Transfers received (submission to archives):	27
- Submissions of administrative and legislative archives:	9.45 linear metres (lm)
- Submissions of digital files:	7 093 gigabytes (GB)
- Items from the official mail archives:	8 lm
- Transfers to the Historical Archives of the EU:	95 lm (773 archive boxes)
- Archives processed (paper):	25.5 lm and 28 325 photos
- Archives processed (electronic):	7 GB
- Number of items checked:	112 521
Searches:	
- Number of requests for documents:	281 requests
- Number of study visitors (researchers) received:	4 study visitors
Outreach:	
Events and exhibitions:	2
Views on social media/online unique visitors:	92 589 / 63 482
Websites maintained:	2
Posts:	12 on the internet, 12 on My House Of European History

¹ 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.

Part I - Objectives and progress in 2021

1) Background

This is the 18th Annual Report of Parliament's Archives. 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).

The regulation lays down a legal obligation for the 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 Parliament's Archives is submitted to fulfil this obligation.

The Archives Unit, within Parliament's administration, 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 Members and to the administration, and externally to organisations and citizens, in particular researchers and historians, through 'tools that facilitate online access to information'. It assists researchers in their study of 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.

Located in Luxembourg, the Archives Unit is attached to the Office of the Secretary-General. The unit also carries out research, as well as dissemination and communication activities aimed at promoting knowledge of Parliament's history.

2) Objectives

The objectives of the Archives Unit comprise:

- i) the acquisition of materials of historical value from Parliament, their orderly organisation for future access and their preservation; and,
- ii) ensuring access to these materials and their use in order to promote understanding of Parliament's history and of European integration more widely.

In greater detail, these objectives imply the following:

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 into European integration and the European Parliament;
2. To continue contributing to the definition and implementation of Parliament's document management policy and the rules governing the transfer of archival and library materials for permanent preservation from the Directorates-General and services (with a particular focus on archival materials);
3. To streamline the acquisition of the institutional archives and namely:
 - a) to diversify the variety of services guiding the transfer to the archives of documents and publications in order to meet the services' specific needs;
 - b) to continue streamlining the processes of electronic data transfer into the unit's collections and databases;
 - c) to contribute broadening 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, i.e.:
 - a) to implement the measures needed to ensure reliable digital preservation and to guarantee integrity and legibility over time, namely by preparing for the long-term preservation of digital content in collaboration with other institutions and the HAEU, 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, reveal and connect information on archival funds and, in particular, to ensure efficient transfers from business applications to the archives' database;
5. To ensure the internal and external accessibility of the archives, i.e.:
 - a) to further strengthen a client-oriented historical research service by ensuring timely and adequate response to historical requests from Members and Parliament staff submitted by email;
 - b) to prepare online archives, specifically by creating web pages for historical information about former delegates and Members, and making the historical archives database available on the internet;
6. To make a meaningful contribution to promoting understanding of the history of EU integration and of the European Parliament, i.e.:
 - a) to design and pursue an overall communications strategy, in cooperation with the relevant services, to promote the archives, thereby ensuring a strong online presence;
 - b) to support research into, and the 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 interinstitutional and professional cooperation, in particular with the Interinstitutional 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).

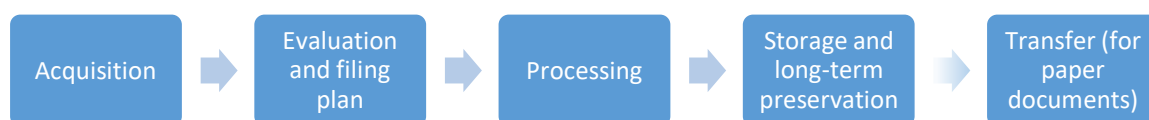
Progress towards achieving these objectives is ensured by:

- i) the daily work of the unit, which meets Parliament's legal obligation and raises awareness of its history;
- ii) specific projects needed in order to adapt to technological progress and to embed piloted innovation and good practice into the unit's daily work.

3) Progress in 2021

This section sets out the archiving processes and the qualitative progress made in the services provided by the Archives Unit in greater detail. 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 metadata² (i.e. data reflecting their organisation and their place within it).

The main steps in the archiving process are explained below:



Acquisition and filing plan

These are activities that require logistics management and specialist knowledge about archiving. In order to carry out acquisitions, storage and transfer, the Archives Unit:

- collects and registers Parliament's official archives (which are 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 the relevant stocks and storage spaces.

The Archives Unit currently stores 3 247 lm of material, comprising both legislative and administrative collections, some of which are still being processed.

The COVID-19 crisis meant that, between 13 March 2020 and 1 November 2021, staff had very limited access to Parliament's premises. In spite of these constraints, 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 the specific needs of offices and administrative services;

² Metadata is 'data about data': a standardised set of data describing where each item is stored and what it is about.

- continuing efforts to streamline the electronic acquisitions of data into the unit's collections and databases;
- contributing to the broadening of sources of Parliament's history, specifically by providing integrated access to documents.

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

In 2021, 27 acquisitions were completed. A total of 9.45 lm of paper files and 7 083 GB of digital files were acquired by the Archives Unit. The following graphic illustrates the impact of the pandemic from 2020 onwards, during which most staff were teleworking since March. This has meant that they have not been acquiring physical files as they only have very limited access to Parliament's premises. The acquisition of physical files has been permitted again since July 2021.

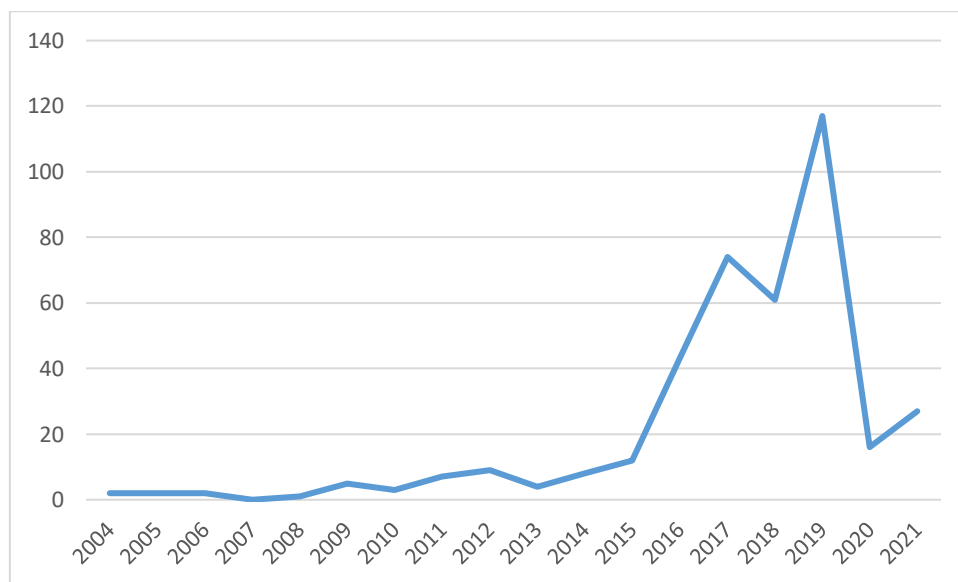


Figure 1: Number of transfers per year

The Archives Unit has maintained the quality of its acquisition procedure by requesting a detailed inventory based on the filing plan that has to be provided with each acquisition. Regular reminders of several improvements were issued to the Document Management Officers (RADs) of each Directorate-General. The goal of such a detailed inventory is to facilitate the cataloguing 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*. The graph below illustrates the impact that these reminders have had on the number of detailed inventories provided, compared with the number of acquisitions. For the first time since 2003, each acquisition carried out in 2021 was accompanied by a detailed inventory.

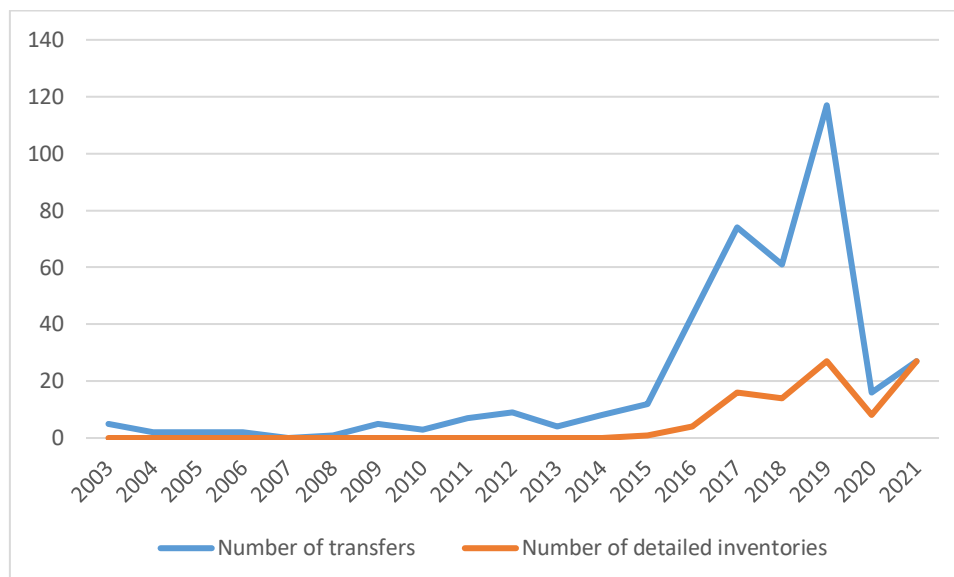


Figure 2: Number of detailed inventories compared to the number of transfers per year

The main acquisitions in 2021 included documents from:

- Members (2.5 lm);
- Office of the President (0.1 lm);
- Office of the Secretary-General (1 lm);
- Directorate for the Plenary (2.35 lm);
- Directorate for Legislative Acts (0.4 lm and 6.98 GB);
- Directorate for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs (3 lm);
- Directorate for Legislative and Committee Coordination (103 MB);
- Directorate for Democracy Support (0.1 lm).

The Archives Unit welcomes and invites individual Members and former Members of the European Parliament to submit documents to the archives (private archives). In 2021, the remaining boxes from former Member Jackson's archives held at the University of Kent (Great Britain) were shipped to the historical archives. This acquisition could not be completed in 2020 as a result of the pandemic.

The Former Members' Association actively supports awareness-raising activities encouraging the submission of private archives, which are to comprise 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 will 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 arrangements for 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 later on. 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, and, outside the Archives, for legislative documents between 1952 and 1979 through the Archive's website.

The archival processing methodology was updated in 2016, comprising a revision of the methods of processing and description, the enhancement of controlled authorities and thesaurus⁴, the quality control of descriptive data, and enforcing the rules concerning access to public archives. The tender for processing, which was based on this methodology, resulted in the signing, in 2017, of a contract for processing archives. This contract ensured the provision of specialised archivists for the processing of paper archives until 22 May 2021, which was then replaced by another contract under the lead of the European Commission as of 28 July 2021.

The teleworking situation allowed for systematic quality control to be launched on the AMS, which examined over 112 521 items, and for a retrospective analysis to be carried out of the *fonds* processed. This enabled anomalies to be corrected and greatly increased the quality of the digital versions of the archived documents. Examples of these anomalies include inconsistent dates for documents and series, missing digital documents and illegible documents. Quality control was carried out on documents from the European Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament prior to direct elections (1957-1979) and from the directly elected European Parliament's first parliamentary term. 20 % of anomalies were corrected for the above-mentioned documents.

The processed archives were:

- former Member Gianluca Buonanno: 5.04 GB of electronic documents;
- Legal Service: 14.5 lm and 0.4 GB of electronic documents;
- Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union – Unit for Asia, Australia and New Zealand: 1 lm and 0.5 GB of electronic documents;
- Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union – Directorate for Democracy Support: 0.6 GB;
- Administrative *fonds* – Status Committee: 10 lm.

Iconographic *fonds* were also processed. In 2021, 28 325 photographs of Members were reviewed; 6 297 were selected for permanent preservation. In total, the treatment of the iconographic *fonds* comprised 42 544 photos of 1 057 Members, of which 8 382 are being kept for permanent preservation.

The processing of archival records includes preparing them for digitisation (if they are not digital born) and their long-term preservation. Parliament maintains a full digital copy of all its paper

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 (metadata) is based on a well-defined set of keywords grouped in a thesaurus.

archives, including the documents submitted to the HAEU, so that 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 throughout the world: electronic documents may become illegible after just a few years, owing 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. As a result of the pandemic and the low level of presence on the premises of colleagues from the Editing Directorate, digitisation has not yet been relaunched. We expect digitisation to be resumed as of 2022.

Long-term preservation

Our collaboration with several technical teams was extended in order to transfer the digital-born files that had already been collected. The documents contained in the Parliamentary Questions system were analysed in order to import the questions automatically into the AMS. The efficient uploading of these documents will be carried out on an annual basis once the new version of the AMS enables the mass uploading and automatic creation of documents and folders, which is expected in March 2022.

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. 95 lm of archive documents (773 archive boxes) were transferred to the HAEU on 28 November 2021. The transfer was made up of the following *fonds*:

- Presidents' Offices (PE2):
 - Office of the President Pierre Pflimlin
 - Office of the President Lord Plumb
- Fourth parliamentary term (PE4), documents from the meetings of parliamentary committees (1994-1999):
 - Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy – ECON
 - Committee on Employment and Social Affairs – EMPL
 - Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy – ENER
 - Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection – ENVI
 - Committee on Women's Rights – FEMM
 - Committee on Institutional Affairs – INST
 - Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media – JEUN
 - Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights – JURI
 - Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs – LIBE
 - Committee on Fisheries – PECH
 - Committee on Petitions – PETI
 - Committee on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy – POLI
 - Committee on Regional Policy – REGI
 - Committee on the Rules of Procedure, the Verification of Credentials and Immunities – REGL
 - Committee on External Economic Relations – RELA

- Committee on Transport and Tourism – TRAN
- Temporary Committee of Inquiry into BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) – BSE
- Temporary Committee of Inquiry into the Community Transit System – CT
- Fifth parliamentary term (PE5), documents from the meetings of parliamentary committees (1999-2004):
 - Committee on Constitutional Affairs – AFCE
 - Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy – AFET
 - Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development – AGRI
 - Committee on Budgets – BUDG
 - Committee on Budgetary Control – CONT
 - Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport – CULT
 - Committee on Development and Cooperation – DEVE
 - Temporary Committee on the Echelon Interception System – ECHE
 - Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs – ECON
 - Committee on Employment and Social Affairs – EMPL
 - Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy – ENVI
 - Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities – FEMM
 - Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy – ITRE
 - Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market – JURI
 - Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs – LIBE
 - Committee on Fisheries – PECH
 - Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism – RETT
 - Temporary Committee on Foot and Mouth Disease – FIAP
 - Temporary Committee on Human Genetics and Other New Technologies in Modern Medicine – GENE
 - Temporary Committee on Improving Safety at Sea – MARE

In order to maximise the quality of the transfer, a full quality control of each document was carried out prior to the transfer. This included verifying the completeness of the files, consistency with the description in the AMS and the packaging in pH-neutral archival folders and boxes.

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 maintains relations with the Council for International Archives (CIA), the European Union Diplomatic Archives (EUDiA) and hosts (to the extent possible in view of the pandemic) trainees and visitors undertaking research on relevant topics .

In 2021, the unit hosted four study visitors:

- 19-23 October, Rachel Carson Center/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (Germany);
- 3-11 November, University of Roma 'La Sapienza' (Italy);
- 6-10 November, University of Turin (Italy);
- 13-17 December, European University Institute - University of Utrecht (Netherlands).

Publications and outreach

The Archives Unit organised two exhibitions in 2021. These exhibitions were made possible by the support of Parliament's services, and they were put online in close collaboration with Europeana⁵. The organisational success of these exhibitions resulted from the matrix linking the many services involved, which meant that additional external services were not needed to ensure that the exhibitions went live. The two online exhibitions were viewed by 93 870 unique visitors and obtained 92 589 views on social media⁶.

Since the first exhibition was held in May 2020, the five online exhibitions have been viewed by 149 179 unique visitors and obtained 6 142 134 views on social media.

1- The Sakharov Prize, the European Parliament and human rights worldwide

For many years the European Parliament has championed human rights and democracy, with Members of the European Parliament expressing their concerns about human rights abuses in the world, regardless of borders or regime. And this goes far beyond mere sentiment: inspired by Andrei Sakharov's constant campaigning for freedom of thought, the European Parliament has put this commitment into practice, founding the annual Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 1988. The Prize endeavours to embody Sakharov's extraordinary work and to carry his message forward to future generations. If possible, the President of the European Parliament presents it to the winner in person at a ceremony held during a plenary sitting.

As the highest honour bestowed by the EU for actions promoting human rights, the prize is not merely a symbolic gesture. As well as the EUR 50 000 endowment, the media coverage surrounding the event is an opportunity to name and shame countries violating human rights and democratic principles. In many cases, the awarding of the prize is also a way to protect its winners against possible reprisals by their own countries. Both the prize and its community allow the European Parliament to assist the winners, supporting and empowering them in their work. As an instrument of parliamentary diplomacy, the Sakharov Prize has established itself over time as a powerful testament to Parliament's commitment to standing up to dictatorships and to safeguarding human rights around the world.

⁵ 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 its own website, are operated by a consortium led by the Europeana Foundation under a service contract with the European Commission.

⁶ The views were calculated from the official European Parliament and Europeana channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Figure 3: Jean Monnet House, Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, France



Figure 4: European Parliament, Louise Weiss Building, Strasbourg, Entry Hall

The exhibition⁷ is dedicated to the Sakharov Prize. As a result of the pandemic, this exhibition was only produced in a digital format, with the exception of an introduction panel containing a QR code linking to the digital content. The success of the exhibition was made possible by support from the campaigns on social media and the quality of its multimedia content. On its opening, the exhibition was viewed 53 638 times. Likewise, the creation of this online exhibition is in line with Parliament'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 led to the production of various types of content, such as subtitled videos and podcasts⁸. Their availability on the Multimedia Centre facilitates their dissemination to the press and stakeholders. The videos with subtitles in 24 languages were an undeniable success. Booklets in A4 format were provided in three languages (at the stakeholders' request). The digital exhibition and booklets were updated for the award ceremony of the 2021 edition.



Figure 5: Panel of the visual expo

⁷ <https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/sakharov-prize>

⁸ https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/package/exhibition-on-the-sakharov-prize-european-parliament-and-human-rights-worldwide_18804

2- Louise Weiss: a committed European

A lifelong progressive and a steadfast witness to many of the 20th century's great upheavals, Louise Weiss (1893-1983) has left an indelible mark on today's Europe. As both a determined intellectual and a tireless activist, she was a pioneer of the European ideal. She was born on 25 January 1893 into a liberal, upper middle-class family from Alsace. After obtaining a prestigious qualification (*agrégation de lettres féminine*) in 1914, she became a journalist, and from the 1920s onwards was involved in efforts to build peace and unity throughout the continent.

A passionate campaigner for women's rights, she organised suffragette demonstrations in the 1930s to demand the right to vote and equal civil and political rights for women. After the war, she travelled the world making ethnographic documentaries and became a well-known conference speaker, writer and memorialist, working alongside some of the greatest politicians and thinkers of her age.

In 1979, she was elected to the European Parliament at the first European elections held by direct universal suffrage. As the oldest Member of the European Parliament, she chaired the constitutive session of Parliament and delivered its first inaugural address. Louise Weiss died in 1983. In 1999, the building containing the Chamber of the European Parliament in Strasbourg was named in her honour. The exhibition⁹ is dedicated to the contribution of the Louise Weiss as a European activist. The exhibition was produced with panels and an online exhibition.



Figure 6: Musée Louise Weiss, Saverne, France



Figure 7: Musée Louise Weiss, Saverne, France



Figure 8: European Parliament, Louise Weiss Building, Strasbourg, Entry Hall



Figure 9: European Parliament, Schuman Building, Luxembourg, Entry Hall

⁹ <https://www.europeana.eu/en/exhibitions/louise-weiss-a-committed-european>

This exhibition was organised in close cooperation with the Louise Weiss Museum in Saverne. The museum contributed many illustrations and photographs related to Louise Weiss prior to her election as a Member.

The number of views of this digital exhibition was 10 572 and it obtained 22 589 social media views. The printed physical panel was shipped to four places. The exhibition was opened on 18 November 2021.

The subtitles of the videos were produced in 24 languages. Social media trailers were also produced. Podcasts in 24 languages were produced and linked to the multimedia package¹⁰. Booklets were provided in three languages (on the request of the partners). Postcards, booklets and bookmarks were produced to support the opening of the exhibition.

This exhibition was promoted by additional partners, the institutions of the IIAG and the national archives which are members of the EUDiA. Historical documents related to the online exhibition were made available on the Archives of the European Parliament's website¹¹.



Figure 10: First panel of the visual expo

Launched in 2020, the client satisfaction survey on the exhibition process showed an increase from a score of 3.3 to 4.28 out of 5 in 2021 (62.5 % 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 Parliament staff¹². A softbot (a software conversational agent dubbed Archibot) answers questions about the Archives. The softbot provides quick access to the documents related to the Common Assembly (1952-1957), the Ad Hoc Assembly (1952-1953), the European Parliament Assembly and the European Parliament prior to direct elections (1958-1979) if the end user has enough information to uniquely identify a document. Since its deployment on 28 October 2021, Archibot has managed 2 610 conversations.

¹⁰ https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/package/exhibition-on-louise-weiss-committed-european_20203

¹¹ <https://historicalarchives.europarl.europa.eu/home/cultural-heritage-collections/exhibitions/louise-weiss.html>

¹² <https://epintranet.in.ep.europa.eu/home/browse-as/communication/document-management/tools-and-procedures.html>

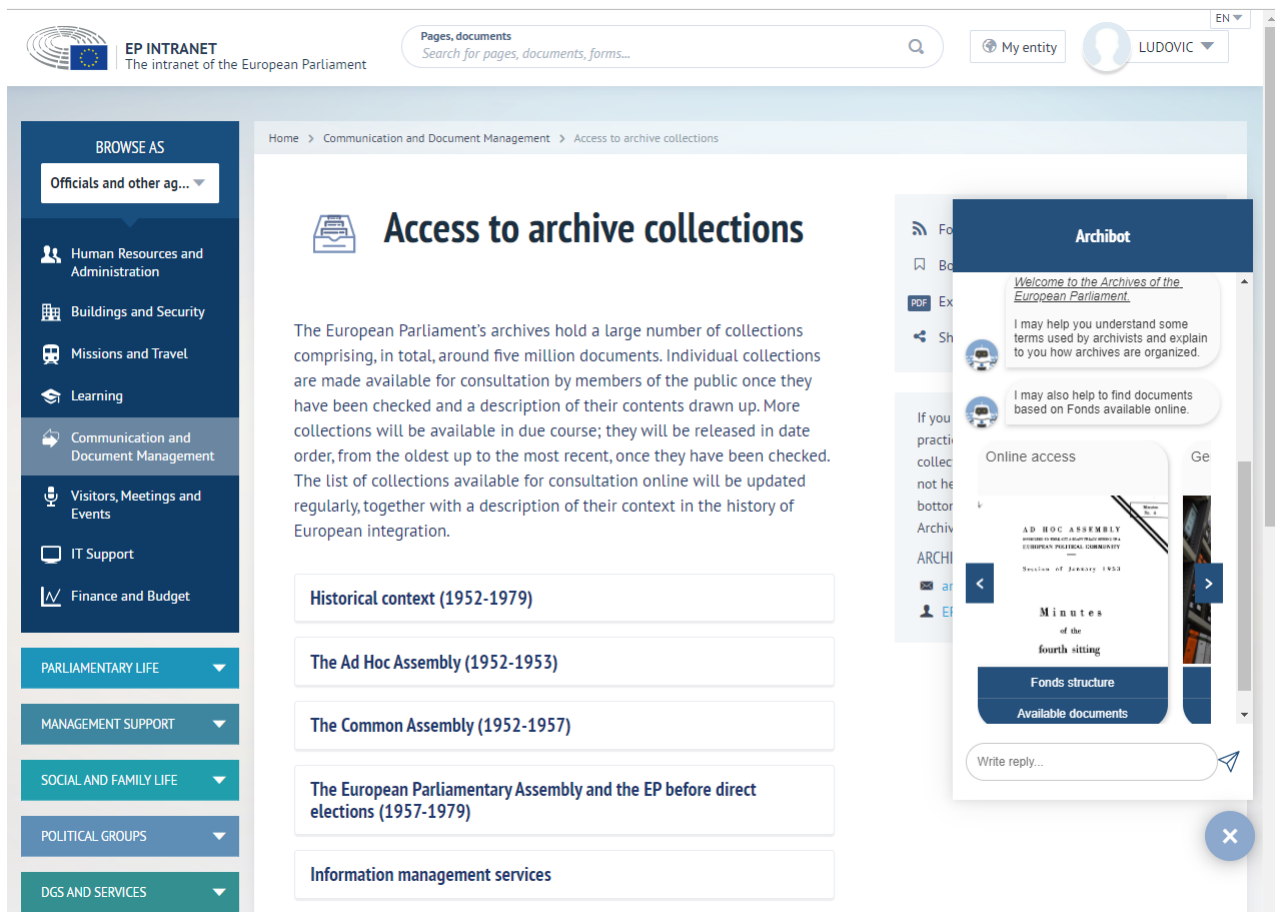


Figure 11: Welcome screen from the archive pages on the Intranet

If the end user would like a summary of the document to get an overview of its content, a summarising tool is available. It condenses text in any of the EU's official languages, based on conditions set by the user. This tool is provided in the 'Information management service' section.

The summariser uses the extractive summarisation technique, which extracts and groups together the most important words and/or sentences to produce a summary. The words and/or sentences used in the summary come from the text itself. No data is retained after the summary has been generated. The system summarises text based on the expression dynamic it contains originally, which means that formatting, spacing, paragraphs, numbering and punctuation are pivotal to obtaining excellent results. The model used in the summariser has been trained and subsequently optimised to work with the EU's official languages.

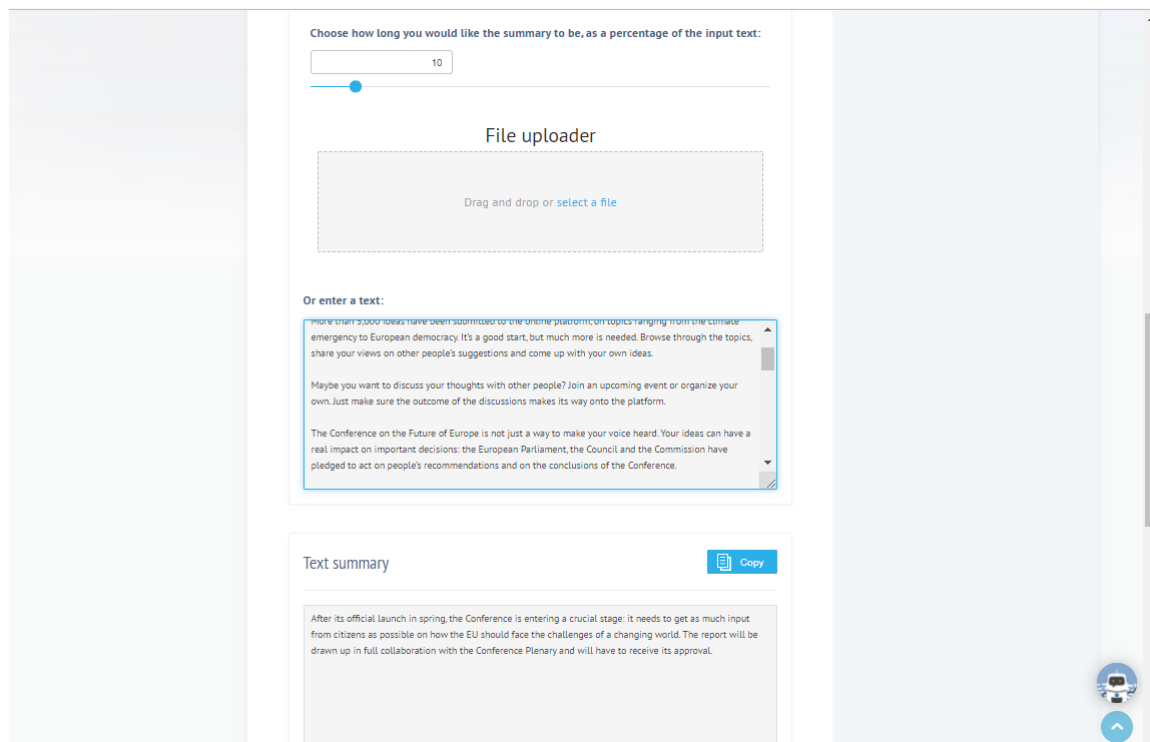


Figure 12: summarisation of a text to 10 % of its initial size

Presentations about the summariser and the softbot were given during the following events:

- 'Conversational AI: Engaging in the European Parliament Archives', Ludovic Delépine, World e-Parliament Conference, 17 June 2021, Zurich (Switzerland)¹³
- 'Archives in the digital age', Ludovic Delépine, International Day for Democracy, 15 September 2021, Bussola Tech (Brazil)¹⁴
- 'Delving into the European Parliament's Historical Archives', Ludovic Delépine, Presentation to the Chamber of Deputies (Brazil), 17 November 2021
- 'Engaging in AI transformation', Ludovic Delépine, Presentation to the House of Commons (Canada), 24 November 2021

Since its deployment on 5 October 2021, the summariser has been used 152 times.

Internet pages

The historical archives' website¹⁵ gives the Archives Unit the opportunity to better communicate and promote our holdings, services and publications to the outside world. The new site was launched on 22 December 2021 and presents the exhibitions organised by the Archives Unit in a newly created Cultural Heritage Collection section, which will be constantly updated.

The site was completely refreshed in 2021, in terms of both its design and content. The drivers underpinning this transformation were:

- Improving the accessibility of information for visitors: new design, better navigation and additional information and resources. The aim is to improve users' experience of the site and provide a better resource for external visitors (i.e. citizens and researchers);

¹³ <https://www.ipu.org/event/virtual-world-e-parliament-conference>

¹⁴ <https://bussola-tech.co/legistechfordemocracy/>

¹⁵ <https://historicalarchives.euoparl.europa.eu/home.html>

- Up-to-date information: created with the input of the Unit's archivists, with a review by the Directorate for the Library and Knowledge Services, the information is the most current snapshot of the content of the archives and has great potential for future updates;
- Significant online presence: the website provides Parliament's Archives with its multimedia digital presence and promotes our digitalisation initiatives, such as the interactive dashboard for accessing all archived documents from 1952 to 1979 (around 330 000 documents);
- New technical platform: this site was migrated to the latest platform provided by the Directorate-General for Communication to reinforce the site's alignment with the corporate design for online presence.



Figure 13: New home page

A description of the *fonds* was drawn up. This section was structured to provide a:

- detailed description of all former Presidents and their contributions to Parliament's archives;
- description of the 33 former Members who deposited part, or all, of their private archives in Parliament;
- detailed description of all former Secretaries-General and their contributions to Parliament's archives;
- detailed description of the holdings related to members of senior management, interinstitutional cooperation and parliamentary activities.

In addition, the site provides a direct link to 330 000 archived documents dating from 1952 to 1979 through an interactive dashboard. These documents can be retrieved graphically, through the use of graphics components with filters, or a hierarchical approach. 524 sessions using the dashboard were registered.

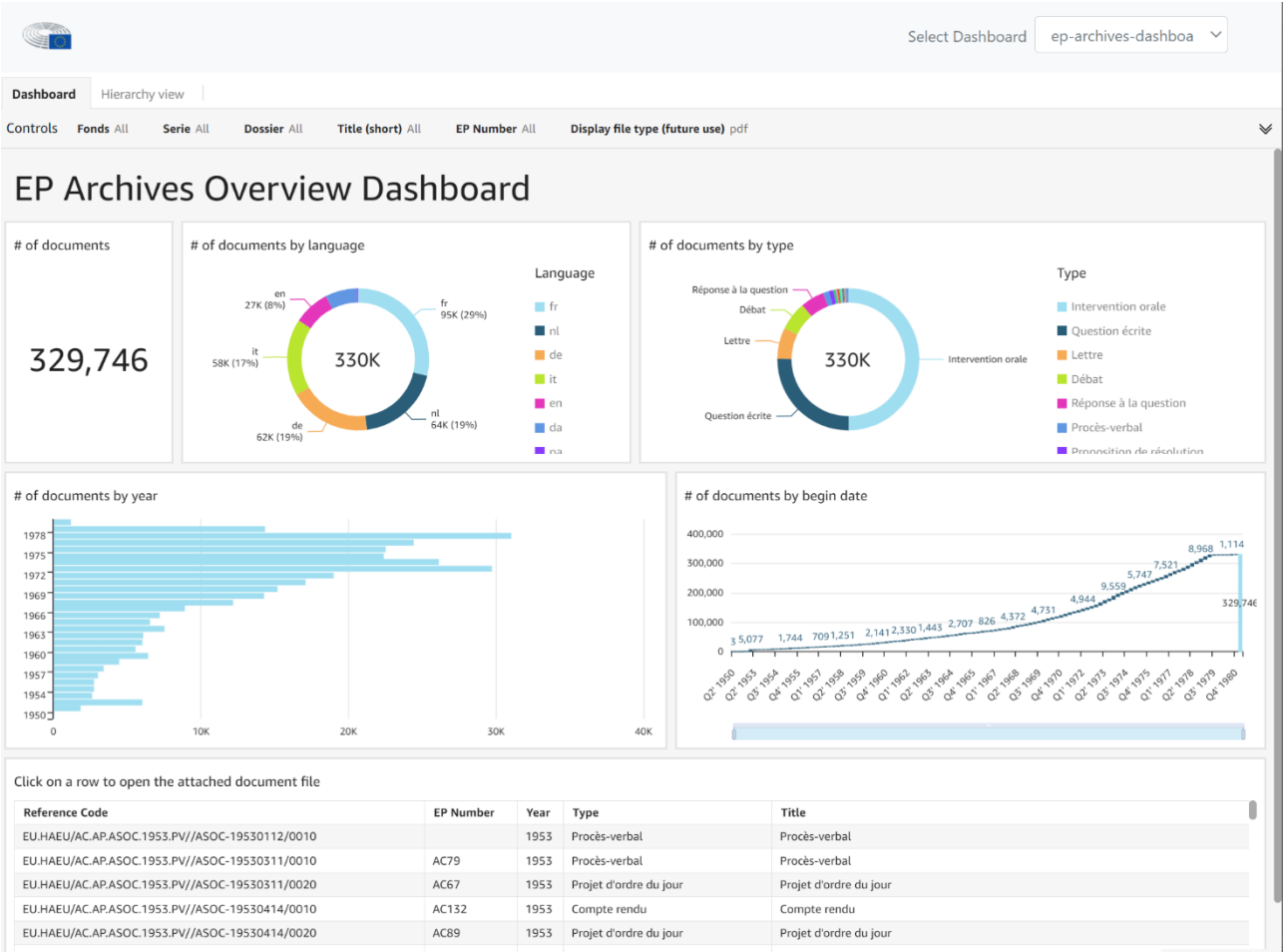


Figure 14: Interactive dashboard to access archived documents (1952-1979) by clicking on the document file line

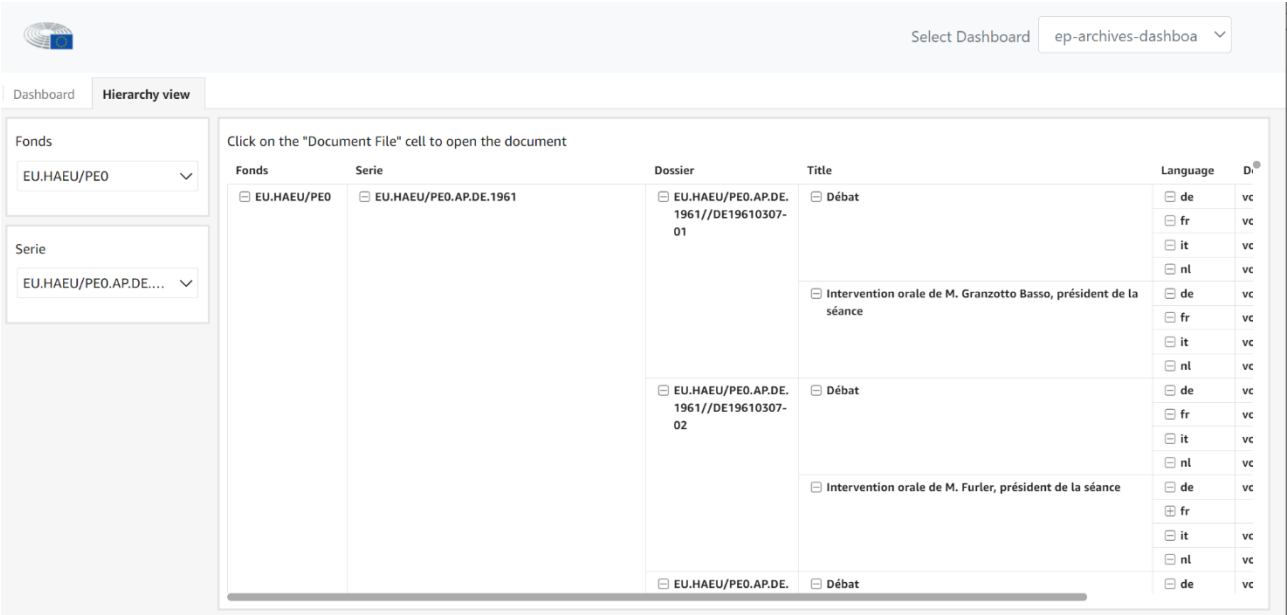


Figure 15: Access to documents via the hierarchical view

The summariser technical service has been integrated as a service to be requested on the fly when consulting a document. It has been proposed as a proof of concept for oral interventions (1958-1959) from the European Parliament Assembly and the European Parliament prior to direct elections.

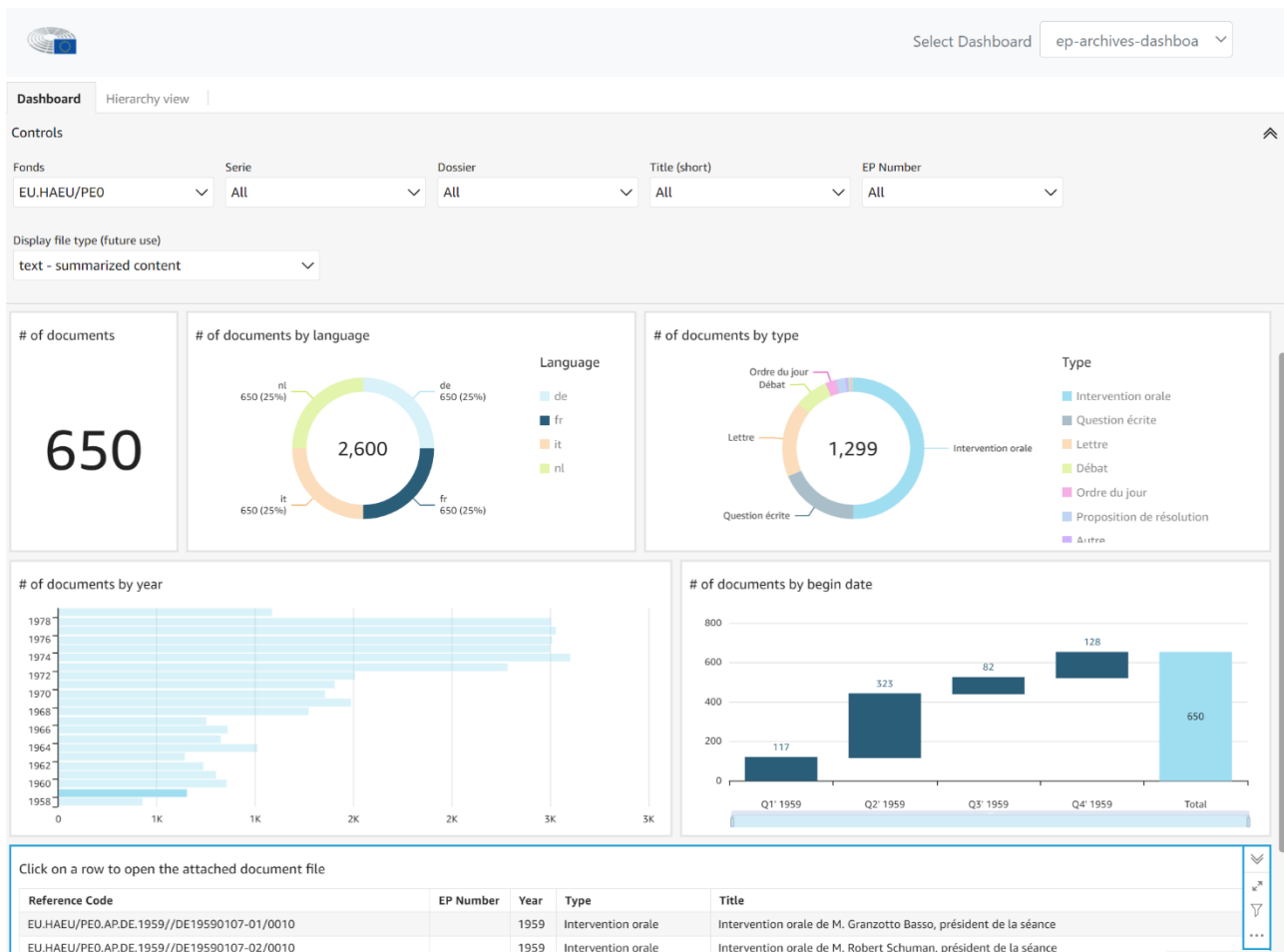


Figure 16: Selection of an oral intervention with an automatically generated summary

The previous version of the website was viewed by 6 207 unique visitors in 2021.

The unit also provided historical articles and blog posts to other online platforms, and took part in the publication of monthly stories on the 'My House of European History' website¹⁶.

Historical research

In 2021, the Archives Unit answered 281 requests. Most of the questions were about documents related to legislative domains (20 %), activities of Members (15 %) and reports (accounting for 13 % of all questions received).

¹⁶ <https://my-european-history.ep.eu/myhouse/timeline>

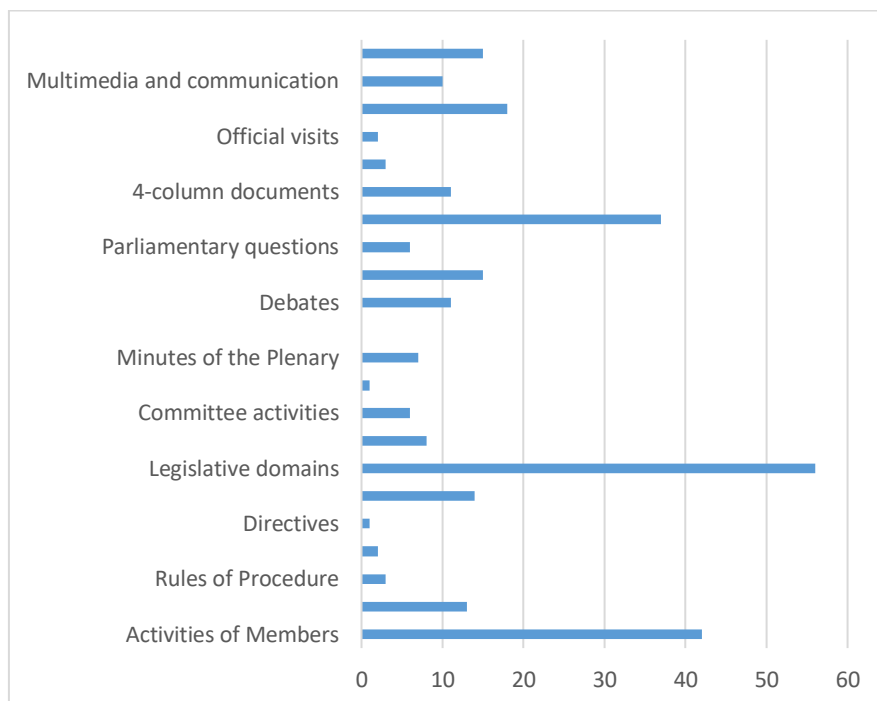


Figure 17: Number of requests per type of document requested

It is worth noting that 30 % of the questions were pertained to the availability of a single type of document (e.g. minutes of the Plenary, adopted texts, debates, resolutions, parliamentary questions, reports and four-column documents).

Most of the searches were about the following types of document:

- Activities of Members: speeches;
- Rules of Procedure: versions of the Rules of Procedure;
- Legislative procedures: ordinary legislative procedure

Questions were received through requests; a single request might contain several questions. The origin of the requests were as follows:

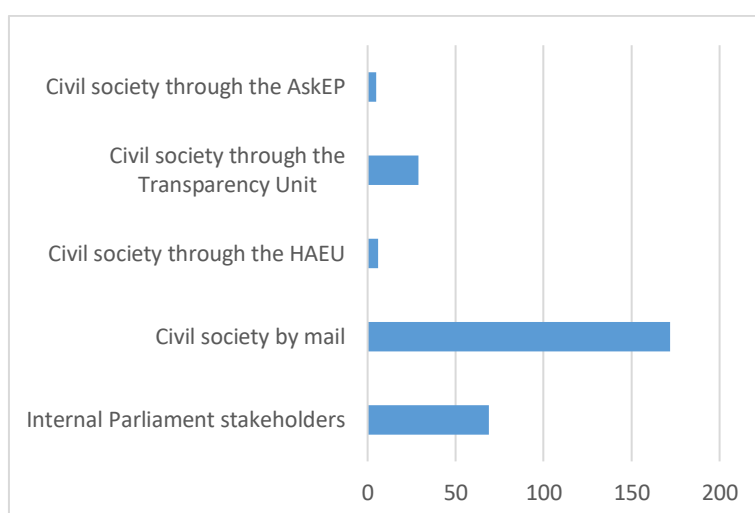


Figure 18: Number of requests per type of requester

In 2021, the client satisfaction rating related to the search process rose from 4.25 to 4.61 out of 5 (43.51 % response rate). 5 146 documents were transferred to respond to the requests. In addition, 233 documents were retrieved through the softbot.

Oral history project

An oral history project to provide access to testimonies from former Members and staff is currently being drawn up. The aim is to provide access to these testimonies on the new website in 2022.

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 space for archives that consist of paper documents and uses them for promotional activities. The HAEU holds around 1 600 lm of physical archives from Parliament.

Part II - Administration of the Archives

1) Budget

In 2021, the Archives Unit managed its appropriations under the following European Parliament budget line:

Budget Line	2021 approved budget
3210-07	EUR 1 800 000

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

In 2021, the European Parliament contributed its quota of EUR 405 470 to the budget of the HAEU.

Investment in electronic archives: actions to ensure long-term preservation and accessibility

Limited IT-related funds were used in 2021, which were mainly related to the maintenance of the archive management system (EUR 18 000).

Processing of the archives

The main item of expenditure in 2021 involved the sorting, organising and processing of paper documents (the processing of electronic documents was partially automated, and, in the case of unstructured archives, was carried out mainly by staff, owing primarily to the complexity of organising unstructured materials).

In 2021, the processing of paper archives cost EUR 1 208 480. The processing of the archives was mainly related to the quality control of archive items (EUR 872 650). Other processes were launched and will continue in future. These are focused on the processing of *fonds* from Members' and Former Members' private archives, and from parliamentary activities (EUR 335 830).

The amounts reflect the very substantial volume of work involved in processing individual paper files, preparing them for digitisation, adding indexing and metadata, and uploading them into the database. The preparation of processing, consisting of drawing up an inventory, evaluation, structuring the files and incorporating metadata, and preparing 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 opted for an in-house approach for processing due to the unique and sometimes confidential nature of the archives we process and external staff for the quality control of the digital archives in the AMS.

The maximum number of external staff employed in a year varies, depending on the number of projects launched and completed within the year. A maximum of 11 external staff has been working on processing archives throughout 2021.

Technical feasibility study for a software infrastructure related to natural language processing (NLP) applied to public documents on the AWS Document Understanding Solution

The Archives Unit has published some *fonds* which are communicable to citizens. Following this first step, it will be adding new functionalities to the current infrastructure aimed at supporting the archive and dissemination management systems. These new functionalities are:

- extraction of text content from archived documents in raster format;
- analysis of, and search through, the archived documents, including those stored in rasterised format (content indexation, entity-named recognition and automatic classification);
- use of NLP on the content of existing European Parliament public documents in order to carry out automatic summarisation.

The main objectives are to develop:

- a feasibility study of the services provided by AWS Document Understanding Solution (DUS) with a focus on AWS Textract, to extract meaningful content from scanned documents, and of NLP services, delivered by AWS Comprehend, for entity-named recognition and automatic classification;
- a feasibility study to integrate an automatic summarisation feature delivered as a web service from an AWS virtual machine and then via a native AWS DUS feature through a new lambda function.

Launched in July 2021, this activity will provide its deliverables in April 2022. EUR 148 510 have been set aside for this purpose.

2) Staff

Establishment plan

On 31 December 2021, the establishment plan of the Archives Unit stood at 18 officials, of whom one is a temporary agent and four are contract agents. Two Schuman trainees joined the Archives Unit for the period from October 2020 to March 2021 and October 2021 to March 2022.

3) Cooperation within Parliament's administration

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

- *Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services*

The Archives Unit in Luxembourg works closely with the Directorate for the Library and Knowledge Services, mainly in the context of exhibitions. The editor for the exhibitions held in 2021 was a member of staff from the Archives Unit, while the curator was a colleague from the directorate.

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

The Archives Unit also regularly works with other Directorates-General and services:

- Directorate-General for the Presidency

The Archives Unit organises and archives, in paper and digital formats (the latter searchable online), all outgoing and incoming official mail of the European Parliament (8 lm in 2021), which is transferred on a regular basis from the Official Mail Unit.

The Archives Unit cooperates with the Transparency Unit, in particular when requests are made for access to documents under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, involving more extensive searches with historical profiles. In 2021, 29 extensive searches were carried out.

- Directorates-General for Internal Policies and for External Policies

The Archives Unit cooperates with both Directorates-General, in order to acquire the archives of the parliamentary committees and to add them to its existing holdings. Since 2017, a systematic transfer plan has been in place to ensure the comprehensive acquisition of all such materials for the archives.

- Directorate-General for Communication

The Archives Unit works closely with the House of European History, the Events and Exhibitions 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 online exhibitions, the Archives Unit works very closely with the Directorate for Campaigns in implementing exhibition work plans, the graphic design of digital assets and their production (communications for social media, visual expo and booklets). In the context of the storage of multimedia products, the Archives Unit works closely with the Audiovisual Unit and the Photobooking team in particular.

- Directorate-General for Translation

Digital products such as podcasts, audio content and the subtitling of educational videos in 24 languages are possible thanks to our cooperation with the Directorate for Citizens' Language. All texts displayed online are verified for the original language by the Clear Language and Editing Unit in the Directorate for Citizens' Language and translated into 23 languages by the Directorate for Translation.

- Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support

The Archives Unit works closely with the Directorate for Publishing, Innovation and Data Management. These activities are very closely related to the online exhibitions developed by the Unit and make full use of the printing facilities on various type of supports (booklet A4/A5, visual expo). The Unit also works with the Directorate-General on the use of AI in the context of NLP tools.

- Other Directorates-General and services

In the context of events and exhibitions, the Archives Unit works extremely closely with several units from the Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences (the Conference Technicians Unit's team in particular), the Directorate-General for Security and Safety, the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (for catering and cleaning during events and for booking exhibition spaces), the Protocol Service in the Directorate-General for the Presidency and the Former Members' Association. This cooperation was centred on the two official visits:

- 19 October 2021: visit from the delegation of the Secretary-General of the National Assembly of South Korea
- 14 December 2021: visit from the delegation of the Vice-President of the National Assembly of South Korea

The Archives Unit works with various other DGs and services to explain and apply retention schedules, and works in particular within the framework of GIDOC¹⁷, to establish filing plans and common conservation lists for the institution as a whole.

4) Premises

- Stocktaking and preventive conservation

The Unit consistently works on archive preservation and storage management. It maintains the general inventory of storage spaces and archives to ensure:

- the identification and description of all storage spaces;
- the assignment of location identifiers to each storage location;
- the verification of the presence, or failing this, the 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 the condition of the archives and their containers;
- the rationalisation of the containers for better conservation and reconditioning, if necessary;
- the classification of each file holding unit in association with a location in the storage areas.

This stocktaking 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 monitor the material kept by the Archives. It was therefore possible for us to establish a more rational programming of processing and to avoid successive treatments of scattered parts of the same group of archives, thereby ensuring greater consistency and coherence of descriptions.

¹⁷ 'The Inter-departmental group of document management officers (GIDOC) was created 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 give secretarial support to GIDOC.' (source: Intranet)

- 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 'vinegar syndrome'. Our assessment confirmed a slight change in most of the oldest microfilms, which were made from acetate film. A prevention programme was undertaken in 2017 and the microforms are now held in a controlled preservation environment (in an air-conditioned *microthèque* where the temperature and humidity are regulated). Checks in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 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. This zone is still under construction (expected completion in 2024) and the initial plans will be revised in cooperation with the Directorate for Building Projects, following an initial contribution made in 2016-2017.

In the meantime, a storage room (545 lm) was moved in September 2021 from the old part of the Adenauer Building to make room for the new building. The contents of the old storage room were moved to the new storage room provisionally allocated in the new Adenauer Building in 2020.

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 Parliament's 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, for example ISAG(D). 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 of 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. Since 2019, the major activities performed have been to ensure the smooth running and the availability of the platform.

After conducting an assessment of the documents contained in CLARA and ELEURA, they will be migrated to the new AMS, CLAVIS, in 2022. To perform this content migration, it will be necessary to make use of the new mass loading module to be deployed in the new AMS (March 2022), after which the CLARA and ELEURA applications 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 documents has been automated using the new Electronic Records Management System (ERMS), which was launched at the end of 2020 and is still under consolidation. Once it has been fully deployed, an integration study will be carried out with a view to ensuring the interoperability of the AMS and the ERMS.