
Archives of the European Parliament

2023 annual report



Directorate for Innovation and Central Services
attached to the Secretary-General

Archives Unit

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Cover: Event marking the donation to the archives of the original version of the Proposal of a Manifesto for a Federal Europe: Sovereign, Social and Ecological. L-R: Ludovic Delépine, Head of the Archives Unit of the European Parliament, MEP Domènec Ruiz Devesa, President of the Union of European Federalists, and President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola. 11 October 2023, Brussels, European Parliament.

All images: © European Union

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Summary

Each EU institution, including the European Parliament, has the legal obligation to identify, acquire and maintain an archive of its official documents. Parliament's Archives, which fulfil this obligation, have existed since the launch of the European Coal and Steel Community 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 as regards European integration. In order to achieve this, the Archives Unit works to manage and preserve 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 necessary files 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, which covers its activities for the year 2023. The figures below provide a quick overview of the unit's work, which is described in greater detail in the report.

Archives:	
- Transfers received (submission to archives):	44
- Submissions of administrative and legislative archives:	59.4 linear metres (lm)
- Submissions of digital files:	3.5 gigabytes (GB)
- Items from the official mail archives:	8 lm
- Transfers to the Historical Archives of the EU:	66 lm (547 archive boxes)
- Archives processed (paper):	42.5 lm
- Archives processed (electronic):	18.8 GB
- Number of items checked:	102 667
- Number of pages digitised:	659 103
Searches:	
- Number of requests for documents:	259 requests
- Number of sessions on the public dashboard:	6 374 sessions
- Number of study visitors (researchers) received:	5 study visitors
Outreach:	
Events and exhibitions:	5
Views on Europeana/website:	94 002 / 4 525
Websites maintained:	1
Posts:	236 pages on the website

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 2023

1) Background

This is the 20th annual report of Parliament's Archives. The activity of Parliament's 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) concerning the opening to the public of the historical archives of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

The regulation establishes 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 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 institution's official documents. It makes these documents available, 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 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.

The Archives Unit is located in Luxembourg. In 2023, it was attached to the Directorate for Innovation and Central Services in the Office of the Secretary-General. In addition to managing Parliament's Archives, the unit carries out research, as well as dissemination and communication activities aimed at promoting awareness of Parliament's history.

2) Objectives

The overarching objectives of the Archives Unit are:

- to acquire material of historical value from Parliament, organise it in an orderly manner for future access and preserve it; and
- to ensure access to this materials and use it to promote understanding of Parliament's history and of European integration more broadly.

These can be broken down into the following more detailed objectives:

1. To pursue a long-term strategy enabling 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 helping to shape and implement Parliament's document management policy and the rules governing the transfer of archival and library material from the Directorates-General and services for permanent preservation (with a particular focus on archival material);
3. To streamline the acquisition of institutional archives, and more specifically:
 - a) to diversify the variety of services guiding the transfer of documents and publications to the Archives in order to meet the specific needs of the European Parliament's Directorates-General and services;
 - b) to continue streamlining the processes for transferring electronic data to the Archives Unit's collections and databases;
 - c) to contribute to broadening the sources covering the European Parliament's history, specifically by expanding the oral archives with accounts from former Presidents, Secretaries-General and Members;
4. To plan and implement a strategy for the long-term preservation of the material contained in the Archives, 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 'born-digital' documents and data; and
 - b) to revise the Archives' metadata policy in order to create, reveal and connect information on archival *fonds* 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 the client-oriented historical research service provided by the Archives Unit by ensuring a timely and adequate response to emailed requests from Members and Parliament staff for historical information;
 - b) to prepare online archives, specifically by creating web pages for historical information about former delegates and Members and by 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 a comprehensive 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 managing the dedicated websites and contribute to Parliament's research- and history-related websites;
 - d) to foster interinstitutional and professional cooperation, particularly by taking part in the Interinstitutional Archives Group 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).

The Archives Unit ensures that it makes progress towards achieving these objectives through:

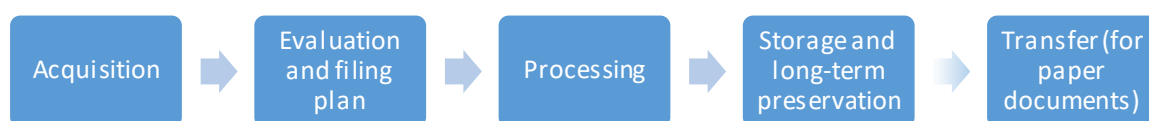
- its day-to-day work, which meets Parliament’s legal obligation and raises awareness about Parliament’s history;
- the specific projects needed to adapt to new technologies and embed piloted innovations and good practices into its day-to-day work.

3) Progress in 2023

This section provides more detail about the archiving processes and the qualitative progress made in the services provided by the Archives Unit.

Archiving means ensuring both order and preservation. Processing of archives refers to 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 the archives).

The main steps in the archiving process are explained below:



Acquisition, evaluation and filing plan

These activities 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 material;
- prepares and manages transfers to the HAEU;
- manages the relevant stocks and storage spaces.

In 2023, an additional effort was required to update the inventory of all the storage rooms after more than 1 500 lm of documents were moved from the Schuman building to the Adenauer building in 2022. The Archives Unit currently manages five storage rooms (four rooms containing physical documents and one temperature-controlled room for microfiches). The unit currently has 3 282 lm of documents, including both legislative and administrative collections, some of which are still being processed.

In 2023, staff were once again able to access the European Parliament’s premises throughout the year, as the restrictions that had been in place during the COVID-19 crisis had been lifted. The Archives Unit’s main activities in relation to acquisitions were as follows:

² Metadata is ‘data about data’, namely a standardised set of data describing where each item is stored and what it is about.

- continuing to diversify the variety of services guiding the acquisition of documents and publications in order to meet the specific needs of various offices and administrative services;
- continuing its efforts to streamline electronic acquisitions of data into the unit's collections and databases;
- contributing to broadening the sources covering Parliament's history, specifically by providing integrated access to documents.

The core task of the Archives Unit is to manage and preserve Parliament's official public documents and other archival material dating back to 1952, comprising around five million items to date.

In 2023, 44 acquisitions were completed, with the Archives Unit acquiring a total of 59.4 lm of paper files and 3.5 GB of digital files. The graph below illustrates the impact of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, during which most staff were teleworking. This meant that they did not acquire physical files, as they only had very limited access to Parliament's premises. The acquisition of physical files has been permitted again since July 2021.

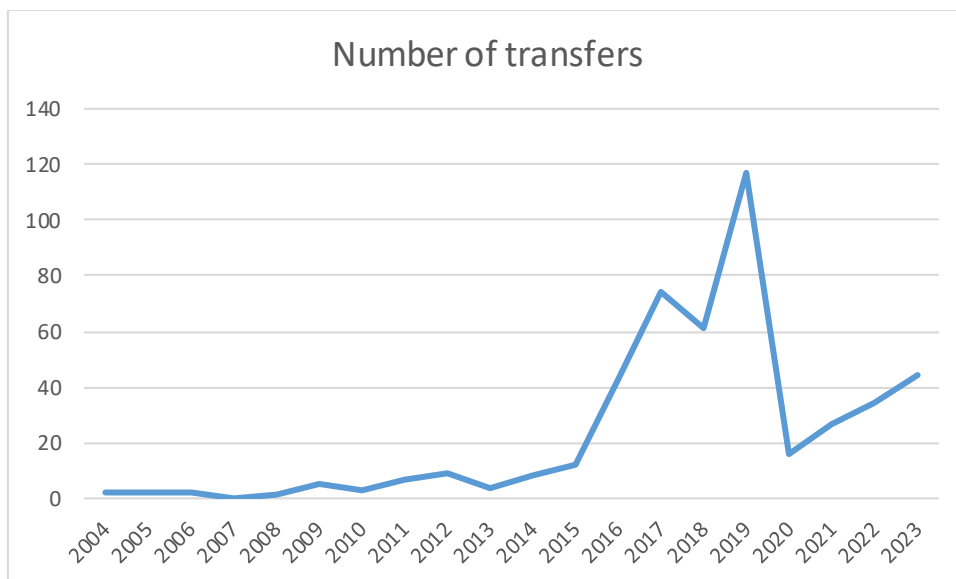


Figure 1: Number of transfers per year

The Archives Unit has maintained the quality of its acquisition procedure by requesting a detailed inventory based on the filing plan that must be provided with each acquisition. Regular reminders about various improvements were issued to the document management officers of each Directorate-General. The detailed inventory serves two purposes: it eases the process of cataloguing the acquired documents at the end of their retention schedule and makes it easier to search for the documents when requested, depending on the processing of the corresponding *fonds*. The graph below shows the impact that these reminders have had on the number of detailed inventories provided, compared with the number of acquisitions. Each acquisition carried out from 2022 onwards was accompanied by a detailed inventory, matching the quality level achieved in 2021.

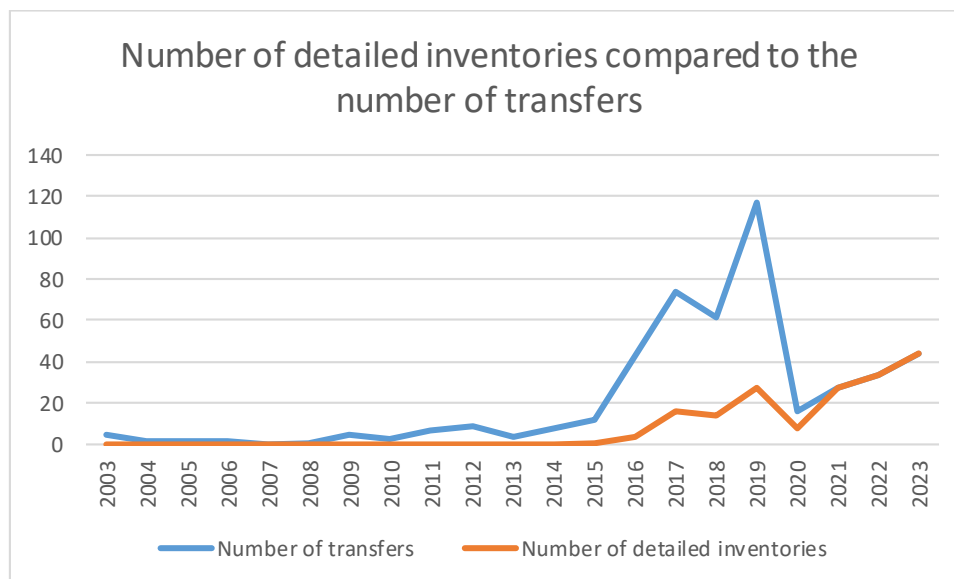


Figure 2: Number of detailed inventories compared to the number of transfers per year

The main acquisitions in 2023 included documents from:

- Members (5 Im);
- the Office of the Secretary-General (11 Im);
- the Directorate-General for the Presidency (10.5 Im);
- the Directorate-General for Internal Policies (3.4 GB/0.10 Im);
- the Directorate-General for Communication (1.39 GB);
- the Directorate-General for Finance (14 Im);
- the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (15.5 Im);
- the Legal Service (1.45 GB/2 Im).

The Archives Unit invites individual Members and former Members of the European Parliament to submit documents to the Archives and welcomes such submissions (private archives).

The Former Members' Association actively supports awareness-raising activities encouraging the submission of private archives, which can be linked to Members' parliamentary work in Brussels or Strasbourg, or to 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 to future generations.

Processing

The Archives Unit performs the following tasks in relation to the processing of Parliament's Archives:

- defining the policy, strategy and practical arrangements for archival processing;
- planning and managing archival processing and digitisation projects;
- managing the outsourced processing of archives and digitisation;
- coordinating internal and external archival processing projects;
- carrying out quality control on processing and on metadata (descriptive data).

When files are received, their contents are identified and organised according to their source, so as to protect their original context. This is important, as it ensures that documents can be identified easily later on. A hierarchical description (based on hierarchical layers of metadata) is then prepared

for each document and entered directly into the database. These descriptions comply with the ISAD(G)³ archiving standard (series and files) and meet a wide range of criteria. Each document, whether it was 'born' on paper or digitally, will have a similar description and will be stored electronically in the Archive Management System (AMS).

The electronic archives (AMS) contain more than five million items. They are currently only available for consultation at the Archives' premises in Luxembourg (publicly accessible documents only), although legislative documents from between 1952 and 1979 can be viewed through the Archives' website.

The archival processing methodology was updated in 2016. This involved revising the processing and description methods, enhancing controlled authorities and the controlled thesaurus⁴, carrying out quality control on descriptive data and enforcing the rules concerning access to public archives. A tender for processing was launched on the basis of this methodology and resulted in the signing, in 2017, of a contract for processing archives. This contract ensured the provision of specialised archivists to process paper archives until 22 May 2021. It was then replaced by another contract, under the lead of the European Commission, which began on 28 July 2021 and is still in force now.

The fact that staff are able to work remotely has made it possible to launch systematic quality control in the AMS, enabling staff to examine 102 677 items in 2023. It has also allowed a retrospective analysis to be carried out on the *fonds* that had already been 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 Parliament's first and second terms as a directly elected body. 14 % of anomalies were corrected for the above-mentioned documents.

The archives processed in 2023 were as follows:

- Former Member Mechthild von Alemann: 1.5 Im;
- Former Member Alain Lamassoure: 2 Im;
- Former Member Alain Lamassoure: 7.2 GB;
- Office of the Deputy Secretary-General – Francesca Ratti: 11 Im;
- Office of the Deputy Secretary-General – Enrico Vinci: 6 Im;
- Office of the Deputy Secretary-General – Julian Priestley: 22 Im;
- Office of the Deputy Secretary-General – Francesca Ratti: 0.06 GB;
- DG IPOL – Legislative Coordination: 9.42 GB;
- DG IPOL – Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies: 1.15 GB;
- DG EPRS – Science and Technology Options Assessment: 1.01 GB.

The Archives Unit also implemented an important process of selecting digital files for treatment. The aim here was to analyse the practical and historical value of documents that had been transferred bulk in the past. As a result, 257 854 folders and files were checked and organised so that they could be retrieved and processed easily in the future.

³ [General International Standard Archival Description](#), a standard developed by the International Council on Archives to provide general guidance for the preparation of archival descriptions.

⁴ The description of archives (metadata) is based on a well-defined set of keywords grouped in a thesaurus.

Long-term preservation

The processing of archival records includes preparing them for digitisation (if they are not digitally born) and long-term preservation. Parliament maintains a full digital copy of all its paper archives, including the documents submitted to the HAEU, so that they can be consulted by the public. Data related to archived information is available in the AMS and is hosted inside Parliament's premises to ensure its safe processing. The AMS complies with the relevant standards on the long-term preservation strategy for digital archives. The long-term preservation of digital archives is a challenge for all archives throughout the world: electronic documents may become illegible after just a few years owing to obsolete software, hardware or media, or because of their sheer size. The digitisation process was suspended in 2019 due to a pending interinstitutional contract. In 2023, 659 103 pages of archived documents were digitised, making use of the contract for which the European Commission was the lead and providing access to archive-processing services.

The Archives Unit prolonged its collaboration with several technical teams in order to transfer the digitally born files that had already been collected. The documents contained in the Parliamentary Questions system, the e-Petitions system and the knowledge management system were analysed so that they could be imported automatically into the AMS. These documents will be uploaded on an annual basis. The new version of the AMS, which was approved in November 2022, allows the mass uploading and automatic creation of documents and folders. The analysis and technical specification stages required for document uploads took place in 2023 and covered debates from Parliament's plenary sessions. The first mass upload is set to take place in the first quarter of 2024.

Transfers to the Historical Archives of the EU

The Archives Unit continued to carry out systematic quality control for the transfer of archives to the HAEU, in accordance with the transfer procedure established in 2014. 66 Im of archive documents (547 archive boxes) were transferred to the HAEU on 28 November 2023. The transfer was made up of the following *fonds*:

Sixth parliamentary term (PE6) – reports from the meetings of parliamentary committees (2004-2009):

- Committee on Constitutional Affairs – AFCO;
- Committee on Foreign Affairs – AFET;
- Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development – AGRI;
- Committee on Budgets – BUDG;
- Temporary committee on climate change – CLIM;
- Committee on Budgetary Control – CONT;
- Committee on Culture and Education – CULT;
- Committee on Development – DEVE;
- Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs – ECON;
- Committee on Employment and Social Affairs – EMPL;
- Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety – ENVI;
- Committee of Inquiry into the crisis of the Equitable Life Assurance Society – EQUI;
- Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality – FEMM;
- Temporary committee on the policy challenges and budgetary means of the enlarged Union 2007-2013 – FINP;
- Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection – IMCO;

- Committee on International Trade – INTA;
- Committee on Industry, Research and Energy – ITRE;
- Committee on Legal Affairs – JURI;
- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs – LIBE;
- Committee on Fisheries – PECH;
- Committee on Petitions – PETI;
- Committee on Regional Development – REGI;
- Temporary committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners – TDIP;
- Committee on Transport and Tourism – TRAN;
- The European Parliament delegation to the Conciliation Committee – DELE.

A full quality check was carried out on each document (25 045 items) prior to transfer to ensure that the quality of the transfer was as high as possible. This included checking that all the files (of which there were 2 291) were complete, ensuring that they matched the descriptions in the AMS and packaging them 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 who wish to explore the history of the institution and of European integration more broadly. The unit maintains relations with the Council for International Archives and the EU Diplomatic Archives and hosts trainees and visitors undertaking research on relevant topics.

In 2023, the unit hosted five study visitors:

- 9 January to 9 March: Institute of Political Studies, University of Strasbourg (France);
- 31 July to 29 September: University of Siena (Italy);
- 2 October to 2 December: University of Málaga (Spain);
- 13 November: University of Lorraine (France);
- 13 November to 13 December: History Service of the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (trainee).

Publications and outreach

The Archives Unit organised one exhibition in 2023, entitled ‘The European Parliament: 70 years of European democracy in action’. This exhibition was made possible by the support of Parliament’s services and was made available online in close collaboration with Europeana. The organisational success of this exhibition was the result of the close links between the internal services involved, which meant that additional external services were not needed to ensure that the exhibition went online. The Archives Unit’s online exhibitions collectively obtained 94 002 views on Europeana in 2023.

In 2023, 80 000 booklets related to the seven exhibitions organised by the Archives Unit since 2020 were printed and distributed by the Strasbourg visitor centre, while the physical exhibitions were seen by 316 000 visitors. Since the first exhibition was held in May 2020, the seven online exhibitions have received 271 838 views.

The European Parliament: 70 years of European democracy in action

On 10 September 1952, the first ever session of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community opened in Strasbourg. It was the starting point of today's European Parliament. In the 70 years since, the Assembly has grown in strength, becoming a true institution embracing European democracy and the expression of European public opinion. It is now the only directly elected, multilingual, multi-party transnational parliament in the world.

The exhibition 'The European Parliament: 70 years of European democracy in action' traces the history of the institution, highlights the role of EU citizens in Parliament's history and showcases the milestones in its development over 70 years. It was inaugurated on 12 June 2023 at an event attended by the Mayor of Strasbourg Jeanne Barseghian, European Parliament Vice-President Dita Charanzová and Quaestor Anne Sander.



Figure 3 and 4: Visitors to the exhibition at the European Youth Event, June 2023

The exhibition is currently on display beside the Louise Weiss building in Strasbourg, between the tram stops *Parlement européen* and *Droits de l'homme*. In addition to this, the online exhibition is

available on Europeana in 24 languages and has been promoted with a set of panels (featuring a QR code and a historical timeline) at Parliament's visitor centre in Strasbourg, the European Parliament Library in Brussels and the European Parliament building in Luxembourg. The exhibition was promoted as part of the *Midis culturels européens* in Strasbourg and was part of the guided visits managed by Parliament's visitor centre in Strasbourg.

In-house workshops and events

The Archives Unit hosted three workshops in 2023. 'Managing Archives in the European Parliament' was first held in Luxembourg in March 2023 and brought together archive and document management professionals from national and European public institutions to learn about the Archives Unit's approach to managing a public archive and exchange best practices. Following the workshop's initial success, it was held again, in Brussels this time, in June 2023.



Figure 5: 'Managing Archives in the European Parliament' workshop, June 2023

In November 2023, the workshop 'AI in Archives' brought together 106 university researchers and official staff from public institutions around Europe to discuss how AI technologies could be used in archiving, historical studies and document management. The event featured keynote speeches from Parliament's Director for Innovation and Central Services, Susanne Altenberg, and the Head of the Archives Unit, Ludovic Delépine. During the event, the Valorisation Team produced a promotional video featuring interviews with several speakers⁵.

For the first time, the Archives Unit organised an event to mark a transfer to the archives. The handover of the Proposal of a Manifesto for a Federal Europe: Sovereign, Social and Ecological by the cross-party Spinelli Group was commemorated with an event at the European Parliament Library in Brussels. The Valorisation Team produced a video for the event, in cooperation with Parliament's Audiovisual Services. It traces the history of European federalism, from Altiero Spinelli's wartime Ventotene Manifesto to the contemporary Spinelli Group⁶.

⁵ <https://historicalarchives.europarl.europa.eu/sites/historicalarchive/home/cultural-heritage-collections/news/ai-in-archives.html>.

⁶ <https://historicalarchives.europarl.europa.eu/home/fonds/donations.html>.



Figure 6: L-R: Ludovic Delépine, Head of the Archives Unit, MEP Domènec Ruiz Devesa, President of the Union of European Federalists, and Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament

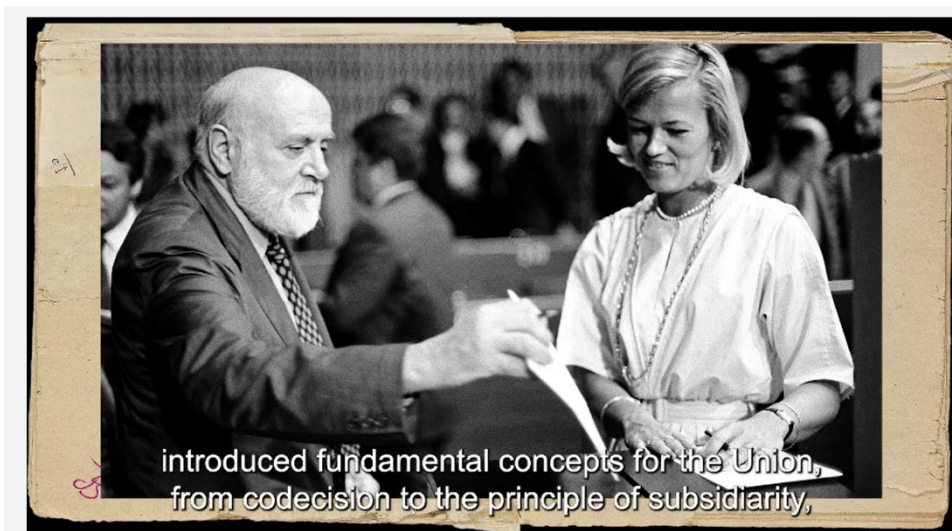


Figure 7: Screenshot from the video The Ventotene Manifesto

External events

The Archives Unit partnered with Europe Direct at the University of Luxembourg and the City of Esch-sur-Alzette to organise the public history event ‘Robert Schuman and his Declaration for Europe (May 9, 1950): History, current events and perspectives’ at Esch-sur-Alzette Town Hall. The Valorisation Team produced a short video⁷ for the event: it highlights the role of the European Parliament’s Archives in preserving and shaping the EU’s collective memory and includes recordings made at the Robert Schuman House.

Intranet pages

The Archives Unit’s intranet pages are divided into several sections that provide information about the Archives and the unit’s objectives, and about services provided to Members, assistants and Parliament staff⁸. A softbot (a software conversational agent dubbed Archibot) answers questions

⁷ https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/video/clip-collective-memory_EP153074.

⁸ <https://epintranet.in.ep.europa.eu/home/browse-as/communication/document-management/tools-and-procedures.html>.

about the Archives. Archibot can also provide quick access to 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 launch on 28 October 2021, Archibot has managed 2 689 conversations.

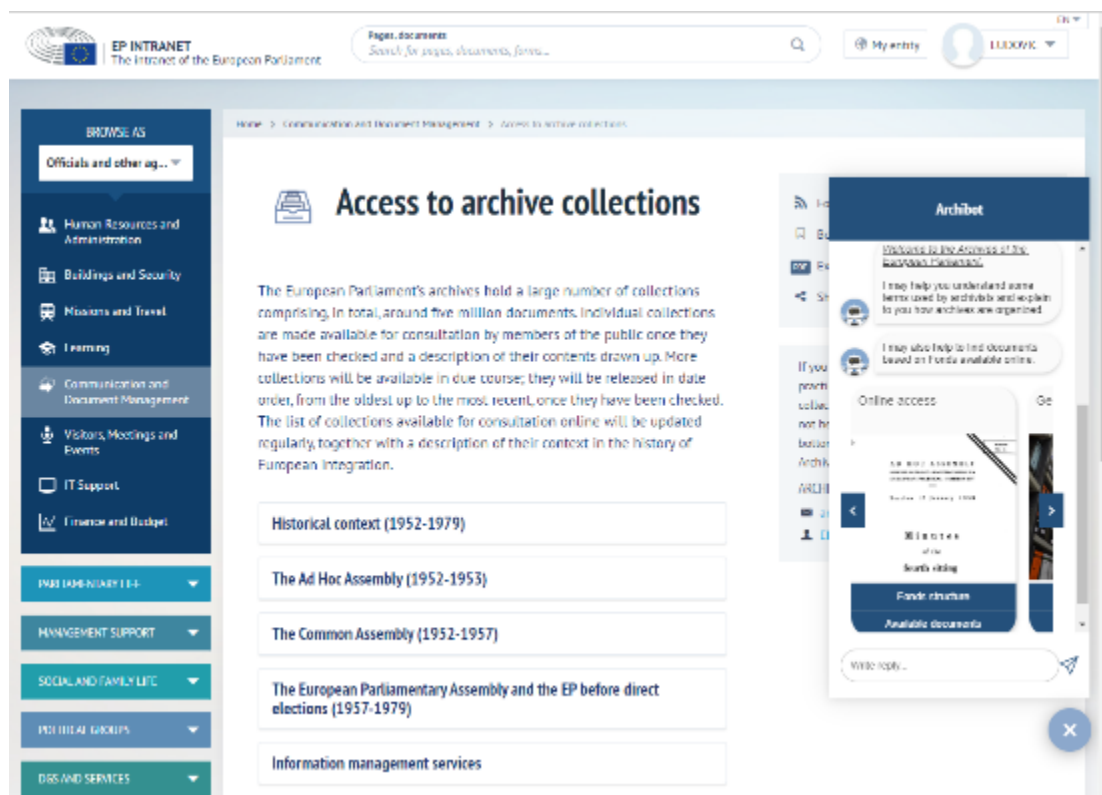


Figure 8: Welcome screen from the Archives' pages on Parliament's intranet

A summarising tool is provided under 'Information management services' to enable end users to produce summaries of documents and gain an overview of their contents. The tool condenses text in any of the EU's official languages, based on conditions set by the user. In 2023, the summariser was used 134 times.

In autumn 2023, the development team introduced a new classification tool grounded in the Eurovoc thesaurus. The content analysis dashboard now features a word cloud derived from Eurovoc terms, providing users with a more refined and standardised approach to document searches. Additionally, the Eurovoc tagger is now accessible for tagging documents within the local file system.

In the past year, a significant stride toward natural language search was achieved with the launch of the innovative 'Advanced content search' feature. It harnesses AI natural language processing technology, enabling users to search for documents using everyday, natural language rather than keywords.



Figure 9: Users can now input questions using natural language

Presentations about the AI tools used at the Archives Unit were given during the following events:

- ‘AWS PublicSector Symposium: the case of the archives of the European Parliament’ – AWS Symposium, 28 March 2023, Brussels (Belgium);
- ‘LegisTech: AI in Parliaments’ – talks and debates, 6 July 2023, Bussola Tech (Brazil)
- ‘BussolaTech: Enhancing Parliamentary Processes with Effective Workflows’ – webinar, 16 August 2023, Bussola Tech (Brazil);
- ‘How to develop the historical memory to support a democratic project?’ – webinar, 11 September 2023, Bussola Tech (Brazil);
- ‘Applicable Improvements of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Legislative Archives’ – webinar, 12 September 2023, Bussola Tech (Brazil);
- ‘Requests Management: Transforming Parliamentary Operations’ – webinar, 14 September 2023, Bussola Tech (Brazil);
- ‘Transforming Parliaments: Digital services for members of parliament’ – webinar, 18 September 2023, Inter-Parliamentary Union (Centre for Innovation in Parliaments);
- ‘AI in archives’ – peer-to-peer support, 18 October 2023, Assemblée nationale de France (France);
- ‘AI in archives’ – peer-to-peer support, 13 November 2023, Parliament of Suriname (Suriname);
- ‘L’IA dans les archives du Parlement européen’ – keynote at Cloud Expo Europe 2022, 15 November 2023, Paris (France).

Internet pages

The historical archives’ website⁹ gives the Archives Unit the opportunity to better communicate and promote its 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.

⁹ <https://historicalarchives.europarl.europa.eu/home.html>.

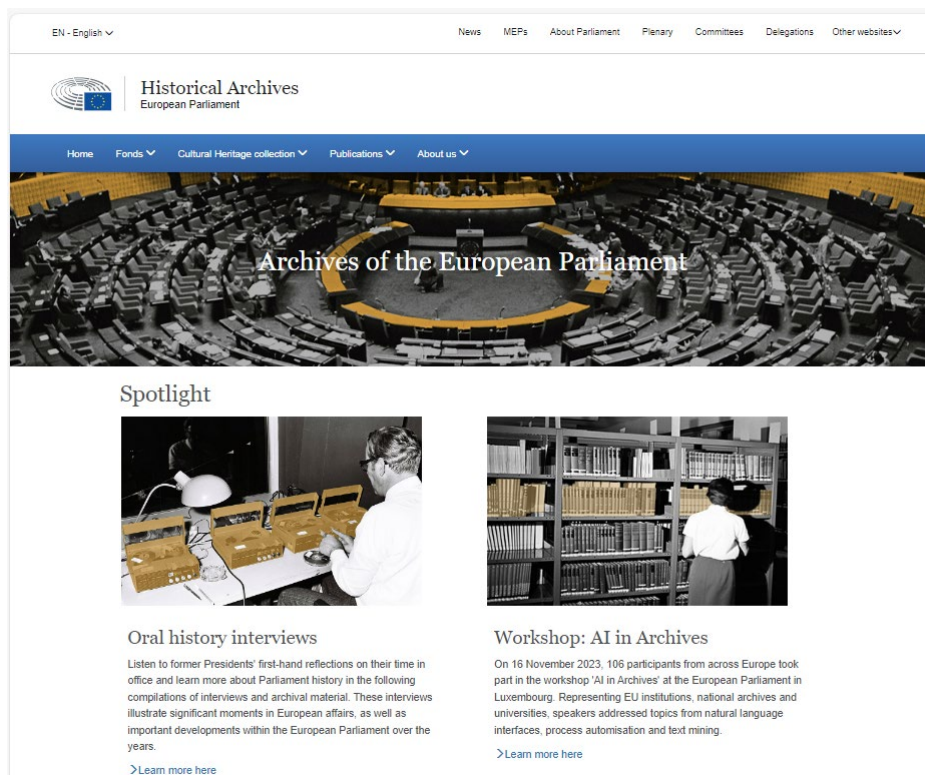


Figure 10: Home page

The site features a description of the *fonds*. The relevant section is structured to provide details of:

- all former Presidents and their contributions to Parliament's archives;
- the 33 former Members who have given part or all of their private archives to Parliament, including some recordings of speeches made in plenary;
- all of Parliament's former Secretaries-General and their contributions to Parliament's Archives;
- the holdings relating to members of senior management, interinstitutional cooperation and parliamentary activities.

In 2023, additional effort was made to ensure that the site is available in German, English and French. Moreover, specific editorial work was done to improve the site's accessibility. As a result, Parliament's Accessibility Taskforce recognised that the home page met all the criteria to be rated AA under the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.

In addition, the site provides a direct link to more than 1.5 million archived documents dating from between 1952 and 1989 through an interactive dashboard¹⁰. These documents can be retrieved graphically, through the use of graphics components with filters, or with a hierarchical approach. A video on the home page explains how to use the dashboard. 6 374 sessions using the dashboard were registered in 2023.

¹⁰ <https://archidash.europarl.europa.eu/ep-archives-anonymous-dashboard>.

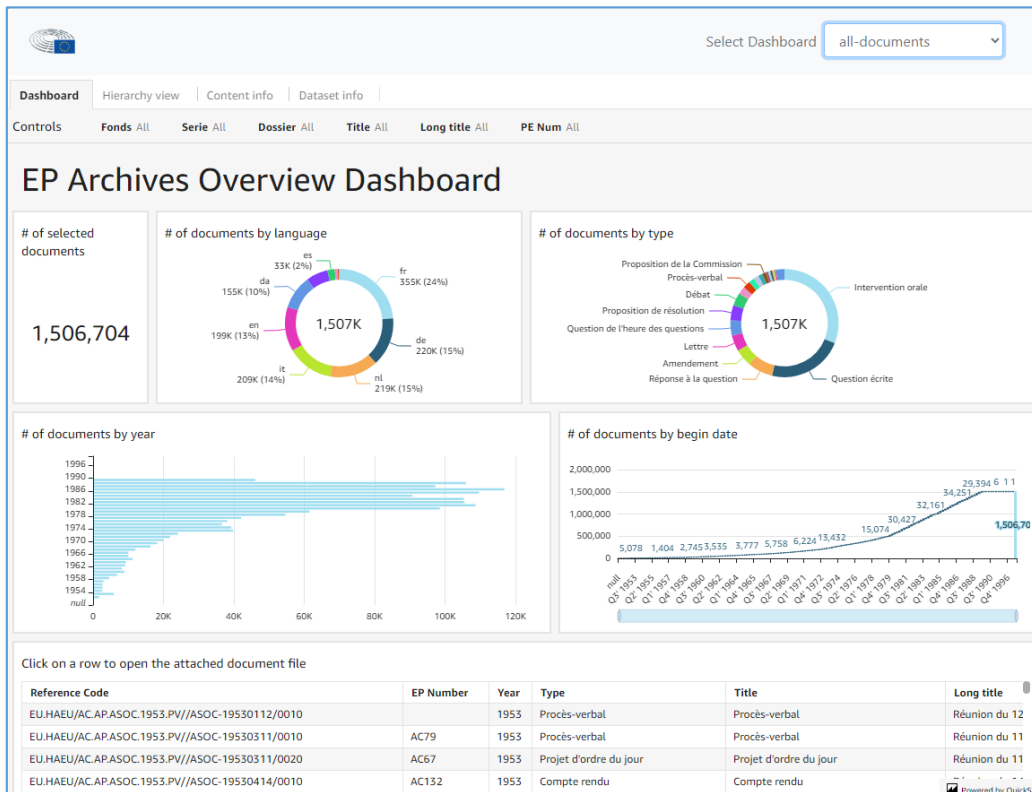


Figure 11: Interactive dashboard enabling users to access archived documents (1952-1989) by clicking on line corresponding to the document file

Users can access the text summariser and ‘search by similarity’ technical services when they are consulting documents. The ‘search by similarity’ feature can be used to search for parliamentary questions and answers or proposals for resolutions.

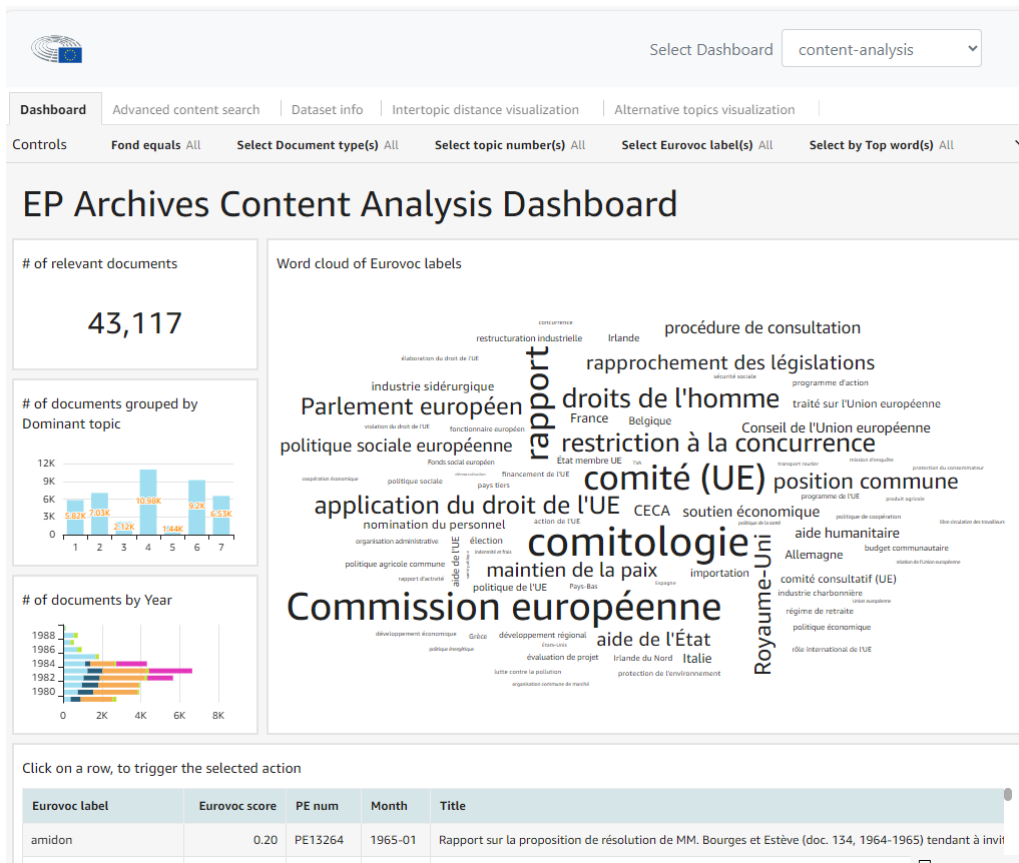


Figure 12: Parliamentary questions with an automatically generated summary, search by similarity and Eurovoc multi labelling

Parliamentary questions, answers to parliamentary questions, and resolution proposals have been classified using unsupervised techniques, enabling documents to be grouped based on the end user's search intention. Documents relating to Parliament's second term (1984-1989) were released for access in the course of 2023.

The 'Dataset info' tab contains a document that provides a detailed explanation of document pre-processing, the AI algorithms used and the visualisation tools proposed (inter-topic distance and topic frequency).

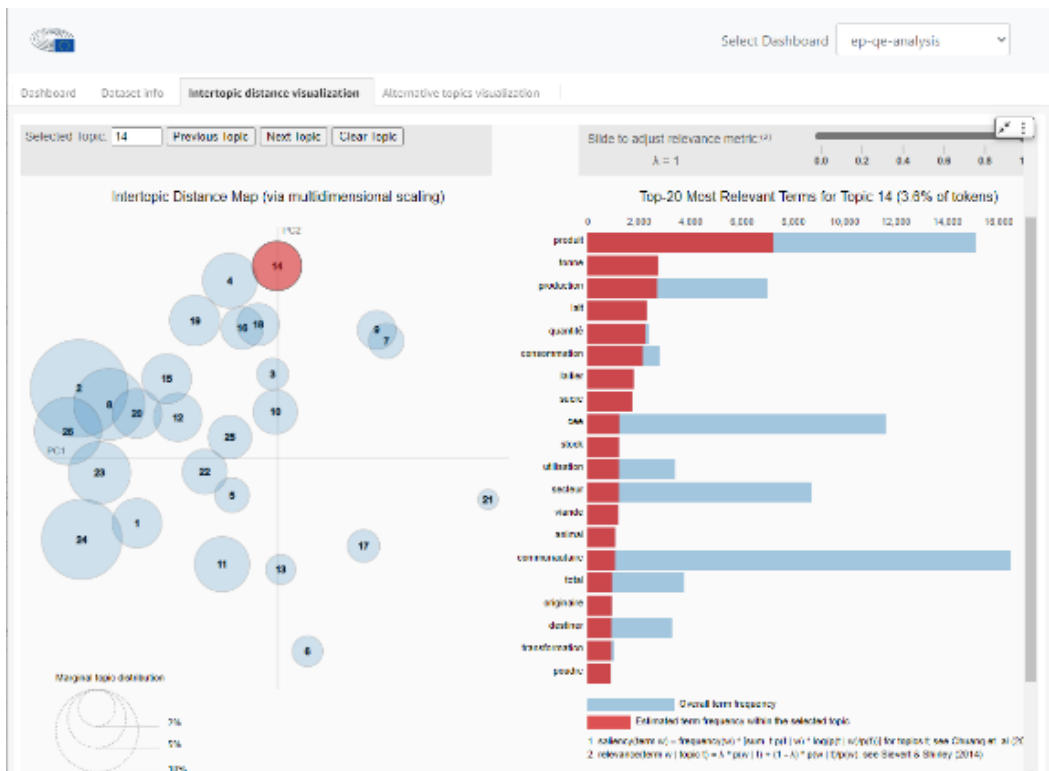


Figure 13: Parliamentary questions inter-topic distance visualisation

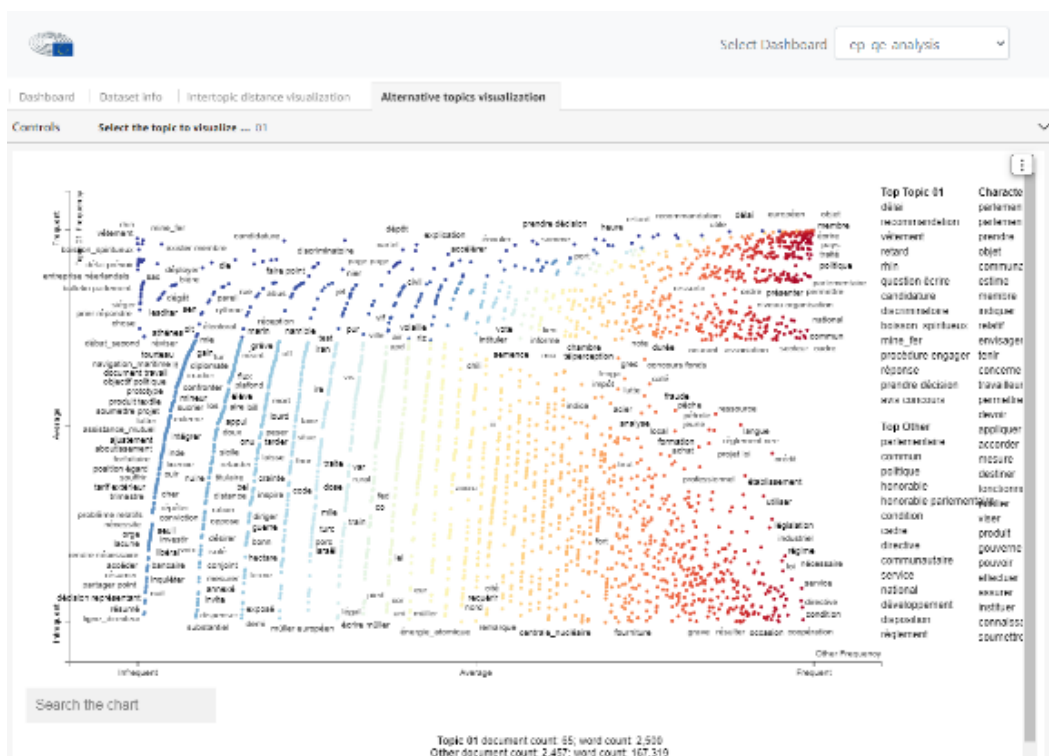


Figure 14: Parliamentary questions based on topic frequency per cluster

The website was viewed by 2 604 unique visitors in 2023, in addition to visitors who accessed the dashboard directly. The bounce rate was 39.3 %¹¹ and the time spent per page was 00:01:30.

Historical research

In 2023, the Archives Unit responded to 259 requests. Most of the queries were about documents related to reports (20.1 %), European Parliament governance (11.2 %) and Members' activities (10.81 %).

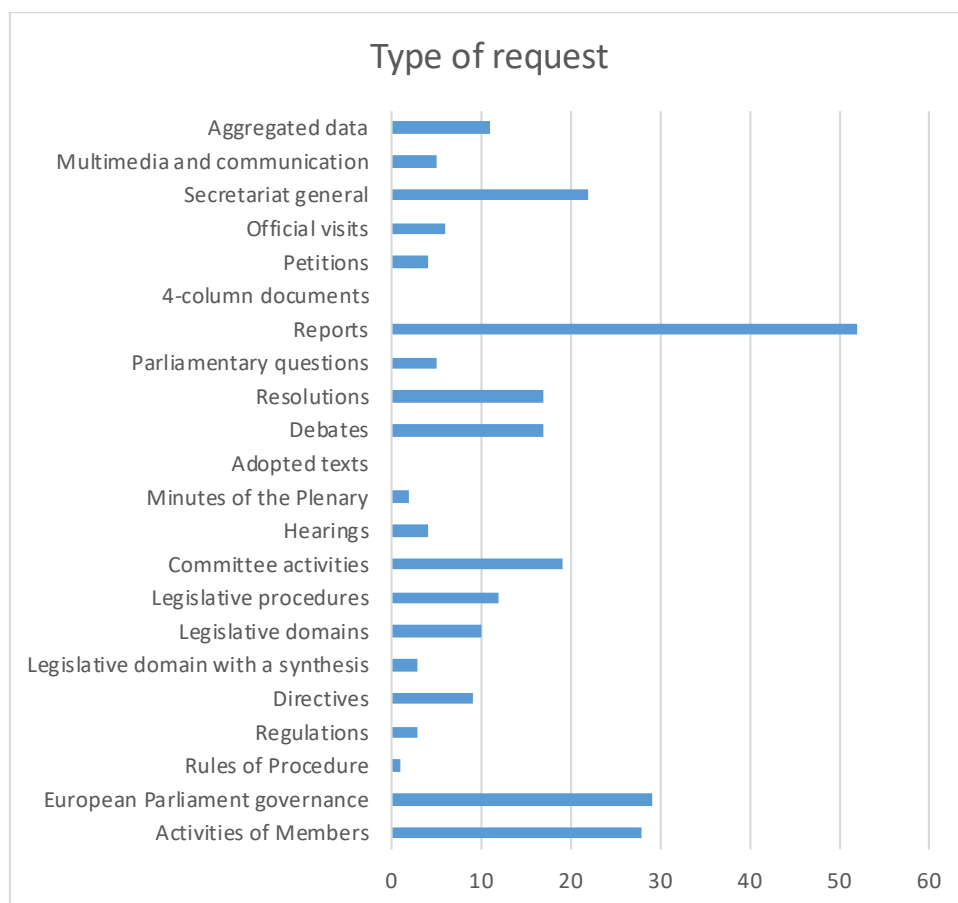


Figure 15: Number of requests per document type

It is worth noting that 36 % of the questions concerned the availability of a single type of document (e.g. minutes of the plenary session, adopted texts, debates, resolutions, parliamentary questions, reports and four-column documents).

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

- Members' activities: speeches;
- European Parliament governance: mostly documents related to the activities of the Bureau and the Quaestors.

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

¹¹ The bounce rate is a variable in digital analytics. It refers to the percentage of visits to a website that do not go beyond one page.

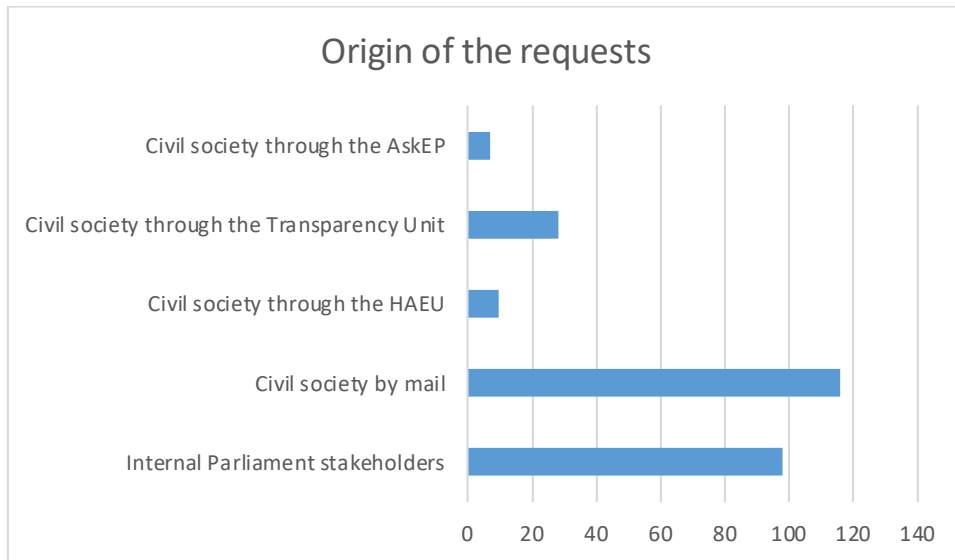


Figure 16: Number of requests per type of requester

In 2023, the client satisfaction rating related to the search process was 4.77 out of 5 (44.94 % response rate). 3 094 documents were transferred in response to the requests. In addition, 6 374 sessions using the dashboard enabled citizens to access publicly archived documents and to download them without requesting direct help from the Archives' staff. This represents an increase of 35 % for the number of sessions using the dashboard between 2022 and 2023.

A dashboard showing the origin of the requests received since 2020 can be accessed from the website.

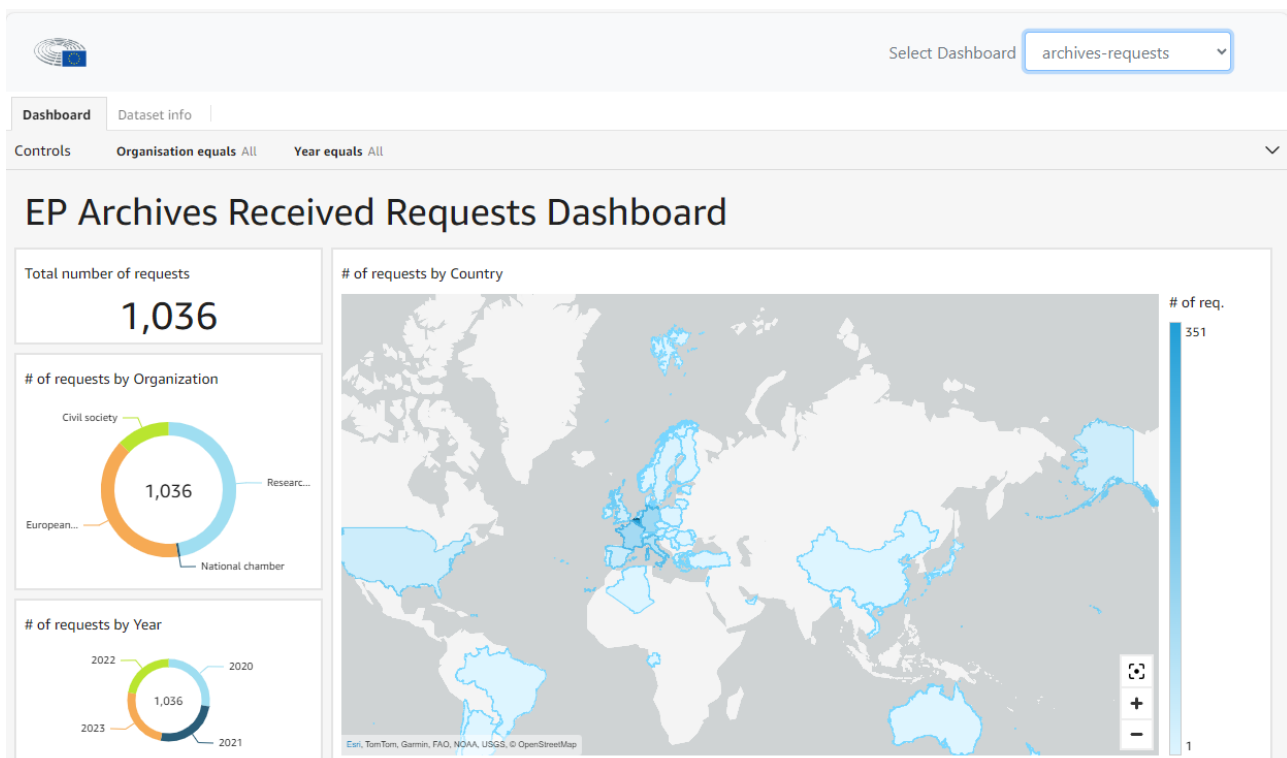


Figure 17: Number of requests per organisation and location

Oral history project

The Archives Unit's oral history project, which was revived in 2022, continued in 2023. It aims to provide access to oral accounts by former Members and staff.

New interviews with former Presidents Hans-Gert Pöttering and Klaus Hänsch and former MEP Astrid Lulling were conducted in 2023. These interviews, some of which were held over two or three sessions, and some of which were joint interviews between Presidents and close collaborators, promise to be a valuable resource providing a wealth of information about the history of European integration. They will go into post-production in 2024.

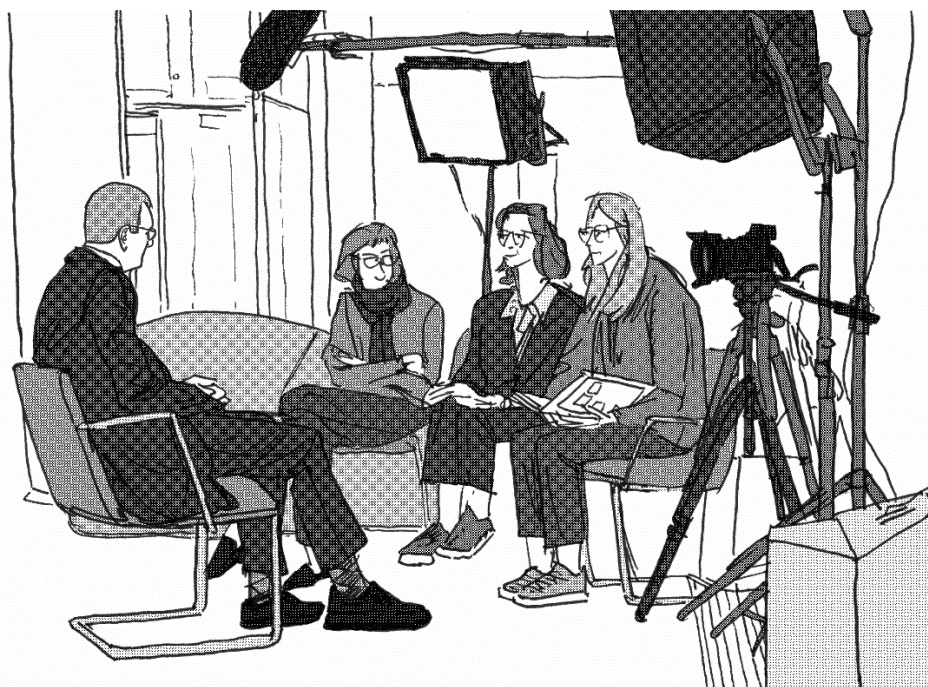


Figure 18: Sketch of an interview with President Hans-Gert Pöttering, May 2023

Further interviews from the Archives Unit's first oral history project (2009-2014) were published online in 2023. The interviewees were former Presidents Enrique Barón Crespo and Egon A. Klepsch. As per the framework design established in 2022, the interviews are supplemented with transcripts, additional interviews, contextual information and archival documents and are divided into thematic sections¹².

The remaining interviews from the first oral history project have now been subtitled in English, French and German and will be published on the Archives Unit's website in 2024.

5) Relations with other EU institutions and international bodies

The Archives Unit actively participates in the twice-yearly interinstitutional meeting of the Interinstitutional Archives Group. During this meeting, the HAEU report is scrutinised by the institutions that finance the HAEU (including Parliament, which contributes funds on an annual basis). In exchange for the funding, the HAEU provides the storage space for archives that consist of paper documents and uses them for promotional activities. The HAEU holds around 1 700 lm of physical archives from Parliament.

¹² <https://historicalarchives.europarl.europa.eu/home/cultural-heritage-collections/news/oral-history.html>.

Part II - Administration of the Archives

1) Budget

In 2023, the Archives Unit managed its appropriations under the following European Parliament budget line:

Budget line	Approved budget for 2023
3210-07	EUR 1 800 000

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

In 2023, the European Parliament contributed its quota of EUR 430 114 to the budget of the HAEU.

Investment in electronic archives

A limited amount of IT-related funds were used in 2023. These were allocated to maintaining the archive management system (EUR 18 000).

Processing of the archives

The main items of expenditure in 2023 related to 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, mostly because organising unstructured material is a complex task).

In 2023, the processing of paper archives cost EUR 1 321 539. The processing of the archives was related to the processing of *fonds* from Members' and former Members' private archives and from parliamentary activities (EUR 1 107 776). The digitisation of archives involved scanning documents that had already prepared by the archivists and storing them in the central AMS (EUR 213 763).

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 to the database. Preparation for processing—drawing up an inventory and evaluation, structuring the files, incorporating metadata and preparing batches for processing—is carried out by the unit's staff.

The Archives Unit has 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 indexing and the assignment of metadata is consistent across the project. The unit's staff perform all tasks relating to responsibility for each project, as well as managing the projects. The Archives Unit opted to have in-house staff handle processing, given the unique and sometimes confidential nature of the archives it processes, while external staff carried out quality control on 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. In 2023, a maximum of 10 external staff worked on processing archives and two external staff worked on digitisation.

Valorisation

The main item of expenditure in 2023 (EUR 26 599) related to the creation of the outdoor exhibition 'The European Parliament: 70 years of democracy in action' in Strasbourg, at the request of the President's Office. The exhibition consisted of 18 information panels and supporting structures. The panels had to be reprinted in December after being vandalised, and the exhibition was moved indoors.

2) Staff establishment plan

On 31 December 2023, the staff establishment plan of the Archives Unit stood at 20 officials' posts, with three temporary agents and four contract agents. A first Schuman trainee joined the Archives Unit from October 2022 to March 2023, followed by a second from March 2023 to October 2023 and a third from October 2023 to February 2024.

3) Cooperation within Parliament's administration

The Archives Unit works closely with administrative units in the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services and, more broadly, with other Directorates-General and services within Parliament's administration.

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 2023 exhibitions was a member of staff from the Archives Unit, while the curator was a colleague from the Directorate for the Library and Knowledge Services. More specifically, since summer 2023, the Archives Unit has contributed an introductory text to the exhibition 'Le Parlement européen et les relations extérieures de l'UE' and composed a short text on the 2023 Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Citizens' Enquiries Unit (AskEP) passes all the requests it receives from members of the public regarding historical documents on to the Archives Unit. The Archives Unit also works with units from the Members' Research Service and the European Parliament History Service, in particular when researching documents.

Directorate-General for the Presidency

The Archives Unit organises and archives all outgoing and incoming official mail of the European Parliament (81m in 2023), which is transferred from the Official Mail Unit on a regular basis. It archives the mail in both paper and digital format, and the digital archives can be searched online.

The Archives Unit also works with the Transparency Unit, in particular when requests for access to documents under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 involve more extensive searches with historical profiles. In 2023, 28 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 European Parliament Liaison Offices in the Member States, both on acquisitions and on organising events and exhibitions.

In the context of online exhibitions, the Archives Unit works very closely with the Directorate for Campaigns on implementing exhibition work plans, developing the graphic design of digital assets and producing these assets (communications for social media, exhibition panels and booklets). In the context of storing multimedia products, the Archives Unit cooperates closely with the Audiovisual Unit and the Photobooking team in particular.

Directorate-General for Personnel

The Archives Unit provides considerable support to the Jean Monnet Academy, which is hosted in the Jean Monnet House (Houjarrets, France). It does this by delivering lectures on the history of the European Parliament during Academy seminars:

- 2 to 4 October 2023: 15 participants;
- 20 to 22 November 2023: 14 participants;
- 11 to 13 December 2023: 16 participants.

Directorate-General for Translation

Our cooperation with the Directorate for Citizens' Language makes it possible to produce digital products such as podcasts, audio content and subtitles for educational videos in 24 languages. All texts displayed online have the original language verified by the Clear Language and Editing Unit in the Directorate for Citizens' Language. They are then 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. Its cooperation with this directorate is very closely related to the online exhibitions developed by the unit and involves making full use of the printing facilities to produce various types of material (A4 and A5 booklets, exhibition panels). The unit also works with the Directorate-General on the use of cloud AI services in the context of natural language processing 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 (particularly the Conference Technicians Unit), 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. In 2023, this cooperation was centred on the Archives Unit's three workshops:

- 20 to 22 March 2023: 'Managing Archives in the European Parliament' (Luxembourg), 34 participants;

- 20 and 21 June 2023: ‘Managing Archives in the European Parliament’ (Brussels), 48 participants;
- 16 November 2023: ‘AI in Archives’ (Luxembourg), 106 participants.

The Archives Unit works with various other Directorates-General and services to explain and apply retention schedules and, especially within the Inter-DG Steering Group on Document Management (GIDOC)¹³, to establish filing plans and common conservation lists for Parliament as a whole.

4) Premises

Stocktaking and preventive conservation

The Archives Unit consistently works on preserving archives and managing storage. It maintains a general inventory of storage spaces and archives to ensure that:

- all storage spaces are identified and described;
- location identifiers are assigned to each storage location;
- the presence of each set of archives kept by the Archives Unit (i.e. acquisitions, archives processed, digitisation lots, microfilms, posters and audio cassettes) is verified or, failing this, that each set of archives is identified;
- quality control is conducted, or failing this, that associated research instruments (i.e. transfer and digitisation forms) are produced;
- the condition of the archives and the containers is checked;
- the containers are streamlined for better conservation and reconditioned, if necessary;
- each file holding unit is classified in connection with a location in the storage areas.

Conducting stocktaking made it possible to identify documents that had been stored without an associated research instrument, sometimes for several years, thus enabling the unit to better monitor the material kept by the Archives. As a result, the unit could draw up a more streamlined processing schedule and avoid successively treating scattered parts of the same group of archives. This ensured that descriptions were more consistent and more coherent. Since 2022, all stock rooms have been located inside the Adenauer building.

Microforms

The condition of the microforms in the archives was specially assessed in 2016 to evaluate their exposure to ‘vinegar syndrome’. This confirmed a slight change in most of the oldest microfilms, which are made of 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).

¹³ ‘The Inter-DG Steering Group on Document Management (GIDOC) was created by the Note by the Secretary-General of 13 October 2022. It supersedes the interdepartmental group of document management officers established 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 (also known as RAD, *Responsable de l’administration des Documents*).’ (Source: GIDOC intranet page.)

New Adenauer building

As requested by the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics, the Archives Unit helped to prepare the site plans for the location of the archives in the new Adenauer building. Part of the new building, was delivered on 1 November 2020, while the area that will host the archives is still under construction (expected completion in April 2024).

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, which would have the same features as CLARA as well as some new ones, such as compliance with modern archival standards (e.g. ISAG(D)). In July 2015, a contract was signed with the winner of the tendering process. In November 2015, the process of analysing the requirements and customising and developing the application started, and this work continued in 2016. At the same time, an analysis was carried out to check 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 ran throughout 2017, and the new AMS (CLAVIS) was delivered in 2018. Since 2019, the main activities performed have been to ensure the smooth running and availability of the platform.

The documents contained in the old AMSs, CLARA and ELEURA, were assessed and the content of these two information systems was incorporated into the new AMS, CLAVIS, in 2022. Both the CLARA and ELEURA applications have now been decommissioned by the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support.

Intermediary archives

A decision by the Secretary-General in October 2008 marked the launch of a project to set up 'retention schedules' 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 implement the document management system and monitor its development, under that decision and its implementing measures.

Work on the retention schedules was initially launched and promoted by the Archives Unit, joined by GIDOC and the document management officers in each Directorate-General in 2012. It is currently in full swing. The retention schedules are applied by the services themselves, which means that material is submitted to the archives in a systematic and orderly fashion. The schedule are continuously updated to cope with changes to regulations and to the Secretariat-General's organisation.

The process related to digital documents is ready for automation. The new Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) is still being developed by the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support. Once it is fully deployed, an integration study will be carried out to ensure the interoperability of the AMS and the ERMS.