

The Historical Archives of the European Union

Dieter SCHLENKER

ABSTRACT

The Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) was established by Regulation 354/83 of the Council of the EC/EU. In 1984, the European Commission and the European University Institute (EUI) agreed to open these archives in Florence with the mission to preserve the historical papers of EU institutions and to collect private archives documenting the historical process of European integration. Since 2011, multiannual Framework Partnership Agreements set the frame for enhanced cooperation and partnership between the HAEU and the EU Institutions. With the amendment of the 1983 Regulation in 2015, the deposit in Florence became obligatory for EU institutions, bodies and agencies.



Opening of the Historical Archives of the European Communities in Florence on 13 December 1985. From left to right Werner Maihofer, President of the European University Institute, Jean-Claude Eeckhout, Director of Relations with the European Parliament, the European Ombudsman, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and Carlo Ripa di Meana, European Commissioner for Culture and the Environment, in front of the Archives' headquarters in Villa Il Poggiolo.

Source: © EUI 1985. Credits: Historical Archives of the European Union, EUI-652.



Villa Salviati, seat of the Historical Archives of the European Union since 2012 from above.

Source: © EUI 2017. Credits: Marco Benvenuti.

The HAEU preserves and makes accessible to the public the archives of EU institutions. It also collects and preserves numerous private papers of individuals, movements and organisations that have contributed to European integration and cooperation and, therefore, enrich and diversify the documents handed down by EU institutions. The archives facilitate research, promote public interest in European integration and contribute to transparency in the functioning of the EU.

Establishment of the archives

Reflections on opening the archives of EU institutions began under Commission President Roy Jenkins at the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1977. Until then, the archival documents had been stored by the respective producing institutions, where they had accumulated to an important volume. The decision to open the Community archives was also influenced by the fact that various international organisations, in particular the United Nations, had started to open their archives to the public.

In 1983 the Council of the European Communities published its Regulation 354/83 on the opening of the Community archives to the public. One year later, the European Commission signed an agreement with the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, where the new archives would be established.

The question of where to locate the new archives had raised intense discussions, as various options were at hand, particularly at the seats of EU institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg. The President of the EUI, Max Kohnstamm, former collaborator of Jean Monnet at the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, with the support of the Italian government, proposed Florence as an additional option to Commission President Jenkins. One of the strong points of the EUI was to provide access to EU archives in a central and single location, to raise public consultation of these archives, and lend greater visibility to the EU institutions' written memory. Finally, during the EUI's High Council in Florence on December 17-18, 1984 the deposit contract with the Commission was signed, and on December 13, 1985 the archives centre was inaugurated.

The Archives Regulation of 1983 was revised for the first time in 2003 (Regulation 2003/1700). The amended version reflected the new EU policy on access to documents, which introduced the right of European citizens to

obtain access to documents of EU institutions before 30 years, and the new rules on data protection, which introduced the protection of personal data of persons and regulated their release to the public. Later, in 2015, another major amendment to the Regulation was published (Regulation 2015/496), which introduced the obligation of EU institutions, bodies and agencies to deposit their archives in Florence.

Mission of the archives

According to the 1983 Regulation, the ownership and main responsibility in the preparation of the papers for opening remains with the producing institution, and papers are deposited in Florence by yearly shipments. The mission of the HAEU is to provide specialised and centralised historical archives services to the research community and the public.

The HAEU also has the mission to collect private papers and archives of other organisations and individuals that have made an important contribution to European integration. For these deposits, the HAEU signs bilateral deposit agreements with the organisation or individual concerned. The depositor keeps ownership on these papers.

In 2012, the Historical Archives of the EU moved to the prestigious renaissance Villa Salviati, doubling its storage capacity to 10 kilometres in a purpose-built facility. Most inventories are prepared in French, which provides consistency in treatment, research and retrieval. In the case of private papers, the language of inventories is more diverse and may change according to the depositor's preference.

The archival holdings

The holdings of the HAEU comprise primarily the historical archives of EU institutions, bodies and agencies, while the private archival holdings are divided into the papers of individuals, archives of European organisations, and finally archival collections. The holdings are almost completely paper-based and few digital-born archives have so far been deposited in Florence. Preparations for the digital era are underway as the HAEU has recently implemented a long-term digital preservation system.

The EU institutional holdings comprise the archives of the main institutions: the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission, and the Court of Justice. They also contain the archives of the Economic and Social Committee, and the archives of, so far, two EU agencies, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). More recent EU organisations will start depositing their historical archives in Florence in the coming years according to the 30 years rule.

Among the 100 deposits of individuals' private papers, we find main actors of European integration. The HAEU treats and describes the papers and publishes the inventory online. The private deposits comprise the papers of Commission Presidents Franco-Maria Malfatti, François-Xavier Ortoli, Jacques Delors, and Romano Prodi, President Fabrizia Baduel Glorioso of the Economic and Social Committee, President of European Parliament Emilio Colombo and Enrique Baron Crespo, Commissioners Pascal Lamy, Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza and Peter Sutherland, European federalists Altiero Spinelli, Alexandre Marc and Pierre Uri, and the Italian prime minister Alcide De Gasperi.

In addition to the papers of individuals, the HAEU has 30 deposits from organisations that are not EU institutions but have a European scope and mission. A first group concerns pro-European movements and youth organisations, such as the European Movement and the Union of European Federalists. Another group comprises the archives of technical and scientific organisations, such as the European Space Agency, the Bureau of European Consumers BEUC and the European Science Foundation ESF.

The collections contain archival copies provided by archival institutions or by researchers. Of note are the collection on European integration from EU Member States' diplomatic archives, the Walter Hallstein papers from

the German Bundesarchiv, and the American and the François Duchêne papers of Jean Monnet.

Finally, the HAEU hosts rich audio-visual collections, containing graphic documents, maps, 60.000 photographs, and large amounts of posters and audio or video recordings, and a collection of 1.000 oral history interviews.

During the past 40 years, the HAEU has made a key contribution to the writing of the history of European integration and of EU institutions. Moreover, the archives raised the public knowledge of the historical role of the European Union and its institutions. With the introduction of the mandatory deposit of archives of EU institutions, bodies and agencies in Florence in 2015 and the new strategic focus on digital access to archives, the HAEU is broadening its services to users and European citizens.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Historical Archives of the European Union, *Historical Archives of the European Union*, European University Institute, 2020.

SCHLENKER, Dieter, "Quelle mémoire de l'Europe dans les Archives européennes ?," in Francis Demier, Elena Musiani (eds.), *L'Europe : une autre nation ?*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2019, p. 226-232.

SCHLENKER, Dieter, "Gli Archivi storici dell'Unione europea a Firenze, " in *Le carte e la storia*, 1, 2016, p. 164-167.

Source URL:

<https://ehne.fr/encyclopedia/themes/material-civilization/european-objects/historical-archives-european-union>