



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 18.02.2005  
COM(2005) 52 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION**

**Executive summary:**  
**Report on Archives in the enlarged European Union**  
**Opportunities for future action: priorities**

## **A. BACKGROUND**

In response to the request of the Council of Ministers of the European Union through their resolution of 6 May 2003 ( 2003/C 113/02) on archives in Member States and in particular points 8 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and 9 the Executive Summary addresses the situation of public archives in the Member States, taking into particular account the enlargement of the European Union and the probable evolution of documents and archives management and archive services in the future. It suggests ways of improving document and archives management and public services for the citizens of the European Union, taking into account the new technologies.

Based on the evidence in the chapters of the present Report prepared by the National Experts group, the following priority actions are proposed, together with a number of other proposed actions which will also require consideration and action by the Member States and the EU institutions over the next three years. The proposed priority actions are at the beginning of each chapter and are amalgamated in tabular form at Annex 3 of the present Report.

The proposed priority actions are given here in summary form. They include measures to prevent, limit or restore damage of documents to or loss of archives through natural and other catastrophes, to improve the preservation of documents and archives, including archive buildings, to strengthen collaboration on the authenticity, long term preservation and accessibility of electronic documents and archives. The summary also suggests measures to be taken against theft and arrangements to be put in place for the recovery of stolen documents. It emphasises the importance of the contribution archives make to the democratic functioning of our societies by means of appropriate legislation and standards. It furthermore proposes the creation of an EU gateway to the archival heritage of the newly enlarged Union. All these actions are to be implemented through enhancing co-ordination, information sharing and exchange of good practice at the European level and with Member States through an official co-ordinating Group.

Account has been taken of desirability of further integrating these proposed actions with other European level action plans.

## **B. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED MAIN ACTIONS**

### **Proposed Priority Action 1**

#### **Preservation and damage prevention for archives in Europe (Council Resolution of 06.05.2003, point 8c 1)**

- 1.1 Measures for the prevention of damage to archives through natural and other catastrophes:
- Develop a model action plan for preventing and recovering from catastrophes;
  - Explore the possibility for setting up specialised central laboratories for trans-border emergencies;
  - Establish Rapid Response Teams for damage assessment.

- 1.2 Preservation and restoration of documents and archives:
- reinforce co-ordination measures and exchange of expertise to establish an EU programme on the restoration of damaged documents and archives in Europe
  - Archives purpose buildings; standards and specifications at the national and European level to be updated and applied in the renewal of archival buildings and of repositories in government buildings or in new buildings by an interdisciplinary working group of the EU member states and institutions.

### **Proposed Priority Action 2**

#### **Reinforcement of European interdisciplinary cooperation on electronic documents and archives (Council Resolution of 06.05.2003, point 8c 2)**

- 2.1. Implement Europe-wide collaboration for establishing authenticity, long-term preservation and availability of electronic documents and archives.
- 2.2. Update, revise and extend the present requirements for the establishment of electronic document (records) systems such as MoReq for better administration in the public sector so that the document becomes the official norm/and or specification in the European Union. This is of particular concern to all Member States especially the new States.
- 2.3. Reinforcement of DLM network and forum/ European Economic Interest group (EEIG). Funding is needed both for further development and for translations and the organisation of the DLM forum in Budapest 2005.

### **Proposed Priority Action 3**

#### **Creation and maintenance of an Internet Gateway to documents and archives in Europe (Council Resolution of 06.05.2003, points 8b and 8e)**

- 3.1. To provide an Internet/Web Gateway to documents and archives for EU citizens.

Given the development of the Internet and the Web and the success of some Member States (see part 6 of the Report) in providing such information for millions of citizens, young people and children, a Gateway should be designed and implemented. This would be in line with related developments in the European information world.

This would provide improved access, in combination with improvements in reading rooms, to these resources for scholarship, and learning and information.

### **Proposed Priority Action 4**

#### **EU and national legislation relevant to management and access to documents and archives (Council Resolution of 06.05.2003, points 8a and 8d)**

- 4.1. As both proposals for EU and national laws often have unforeseen implications for the management of documents and archives it is critical for the citizens of the Member States that the full implications are known at an early stage to facilitate the

preservation of and access to documents and archives. Therefore draft legislation on documents and archives and related laws at the European and national level should be monitored, with a view to allowing the European archival profession to contribute its expertise where needed.

- 4.2. In order to support the above there is a need to have an in-depth study of archival and related legislation at both EU and national level; the creation of a database on archival and related legislation within the EU; the translation of national archival and related legislation into English, French and German and, where needed, into other official EU-languages through the relevant national archives in order to promote a better mutual understanding of this legislation. This proposal takes into account other ongoing work by the Council of Europe and the European branch of International Council on Archives (EURBICA) and seeks to systematise it.

### **Proposed Priority action 5**

#### **Theft of archival documents**

- 5.1. Measures against theft of archival documents and the recovery of stolen archives in the EU should be examined and improved.

Develop an action plan on the basis of a questionnaire with a view to proposing improvements.

### **C. CREATION OF AN OFFICIAL ARCHIVISTS COMMITTEE** **(Council Resolution of 06.05.2003, points 8d, 8e and 9)**

- 6.1. Creation of an official Archivists Group of the EU Member States and EU Institutions. This Committee should exchange information and best practices and ensure by consensus, and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the enhanced co-ordination of archival work in Europe as described above. It should meet twice a year or as necessary.
- 6.2. To set up a programme for an initial three years to address the issues raised by the Council of Ministers' Resolution (6 May 2003) and to consider its progress and disseminate the results and best practice improvements for the use of Member States and Institutions of the European Union.
- 6.3. An evaluation to be carried out at the end of three years with a view to reporting to Ministers of Council of the EU on the results and the considered follow-up actions.