



The transnational archival memory of European integration

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ABSTRACT

The European Coal and Steel Community established in 1951, the European Atomic Energy Community, and the European Economic Community, both established in 1957, built the roots of the European single market and are direct forerunners of today's European Union. The vision of a united post-War (Western) Europe went far beyond economic considerations, as can be seen in the preamble of the Rome Treaties with its concept of "ever closer union". It made the European Union a unique transnational political and cultural phenomenon based on common values and supranational decision-making processes. Archives hold the memory of the multi-levelled European integration process. European integration produced a new model of transnational archives with specific privileges, immunities and working methods. These archives preserve the legal acts, negotiations, correspondence, and documents produced by intergovernmental or non-governmental European institutions and organisations and make them available to the public. The Historical Archives of the European Union play a central role in transmitting the memory, informing the public and fostering research on these diverse types of archives.

KEYWORDS

transnational archives, European integration, European Union, cultural heritage, memory

Ponadnarodowe dziedzictwo archiwalne integracji europejskiej

STRESZCZENIE

Podstawy europejskiego wspólnego rynku zbudowali poprzednicy dzisiejszej Unii Europejskiej: powołana w 1951 r. Europejska Wspólnota Węgla i Stali oraz powstała w 1957 r. Europejska Wspólnota Energii Atomowej i Europejska Wspólnota Gospodarcza. Wizja zjednoczonej powojennej Europy (Zachodniej) daleko wykraczała poza względy ekonomiczne, co widać w preambule traktatów rzymskich z ich koncepcją „coraz ściślejszej unii”. Dzięki temu Unia Europejska stała się wyjątkowym ponadnarodowym zjawiskiem politycznym i kulturowym opartym na wspólnych wartościach i ponadnarodowych procesach decyzyjnych. Archiwa przechowują pamięć o wielopoziomowych procesach integracji europejskiej. Integracja europejska stworzyła nowy model archiwów ponadnarodowych z określonymi uprawnieniami, ochroną i metodami pracy. Archiwa te przechowują i udostępniają społeczeństwu akty prawne, dokumentację dotyczącą negocjacji, korespondencję i dokumenty wytworzone przez międzyrządowe lub pozarządowe instytucje i organizacje europejskie. Archiwa Historyczne Unii Europejskiej odgrywają kluczową rolę w przekazywaniu pamięci, informowaniu opinii publicznej i wspieraniu badań nad tymi różnymi rodzajami archiwów.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

archiwa ponadnarodowe, integracja europejska, Unia Europejska, dziedzictwo kulturowe, pamięć

Introduction

The European Coal and Steel Community created with the Paris Treaty of 1951, the European Atomic Energy Community, and the European Economic Community, both established with the Rome Treaties of 1957, built the roots of the European single market and are direct forerunners of today's European Union. Behind these projects, we can see a strong economic impetus, but not only that. The vision of European unity in post-War Europe, particularly in the Western European parts, went far beyond economic considerations. The preamble of the Rome Treaties, speaking of an "ever closer union among the European peoples", underlined the quest for political, social, and cultural unity that would touch all fields of citizens' interactions and make the European Union a unique transnational political and cultural phenomenon¹.

Numerous archives hold the memory of this multi-levelled European integration process. They preserve the legal acts, negotiations, correspondence, and documents on the common policies in Europe and inspire current debates on perspectives for regional cooperation and integration. European integration created a new type of transnational archives with specific privileges and immunities guaranteed by international treaties and conventions. These archives, therefore, developed specific work methods beyond national traditions and practice².

Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) in Florence play a central role in transmitting this transnational memory. The archive preserves and provides public access to the internal workings of the EU institutions, bodies, and agencies. Besides the institutional papers, the collections gathered in Florence also comprise numerous archives of organisations and individuals that played a role in European integration. European integration is documented in its political, economic, social, educational, and cultural layers as living memory of the multi-faceted process of European integration³.

¹ *Debating european identity. Bright ideas, dim prospects*, ed. B. Radeljić, Bern 2014.

² H. Lübke, *Archivarische Gewaltenteilung*, [in:] *Handbuch Archiv. Geschichte, Aufgaben, Perspektiven*, ed. M. Lepper, U. Raulff, Stuttgart 2016, p. 13.

³ D. Schlenker, *Diverse archival memories on European integration – the role of the Historical Archives of the European Union*, [in:] *Archive und Erinnerungskulturen in Europa, Forum. Das Fachmagazin des Bundesarchivs*, Koblenz 2022, pp.143–152.

European integration: Organisations and their archives

The historical process of European cooperation and integration involved creation of numerous supranational, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organisations as institutionalised result of modern multilateralism and international diplomatic relations. The first organisation with a European scope and a dedicated administrative headquarters was actually born as early as the inter-war period – it was the International Pan-European Union, established in 1924 at the Hofburg in Vienna⁴. During World War II, and in its aftermath, numerous pro-European federalist movements emerged, such as the Union of European Federalists and the European Movement. They aimed to create a united and peaceful Europe, ensuring democracy, economic and social security, the rule of law and fundamental rights. The Hague Congress held in May 1948 became the foundation for a series of new European organisations, in particular the intergovernmental Council of Europe in Strasburg. Economic reconstruction in Europe was organised via the Marshall Plan under the Organisation of European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), with headquarters in Paris. Defence and security issues during Cold War were managed by the Western European Union (WEU), the European arm of NATO. In 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community took off as the first supranational organisation ever, with just six Western European member states. A few years later in Rome, two more Communities were added, the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community. On the other hand, Central and Eastern European countries remaining under a direct rule of the Soviet Union were grouped under the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or COMECON) until the end of Cold War in 1989.

The post-war Western European integration also resulted in creation of a number of scientific, educational, and cultural organisations. In 1954, the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Meyrin was created, and in the 1960s two European space organisations were born: the European Organisation for the Development and Construction of Space Vehicle Launchers (ELDO) and the European Space Research Organisation (ESRO), which merged into the European Space Agency (ESA) in 1975. In the field of culture, the European Centre for Culture with headquarters in Geneva emerged from the Hague Congress in 1948. Finally, cooperation in the field of education began with

⁴ A.-M. Saint-Gille, *La «Paneurope». Un débat d'idées dans l'entre-deux-guerres*, Paris 2003.

the creation of the College of Bruges in 1949 and continued with founding of the intergovernmental European University Institute (EUI) in Florence⁵.

These European organisations left invaluable archival resources, and many more non-governmental and governmental organisations, associations and federations with the word “Europe” in their organisation’s name and scope exist or have existed⁶. The institutional aspect of European integration has been receiving growing attention by scholars of political science, law, diplomatic and international relations, and history⁷. At the same time, the emergence of the new type of European archives as an important source of insight into transnational governance, their historical development and work methods as regards appraisal, selection, description, access and preservation have received much less scholarly interest.

The European legal framework, the foundational treaties, and the contracts with host countries of transnational organisations, secure important privileges and immunities for their records and archives. These rules cover their inviolability, the protection of the physical archives, and the full control over access to these archives. Furthermore, these archives are marked by absence of a specific national archival tradition or practice. The archivists working in registries, records-keeping and archival services in European organisations are confronted with diverse work methods, languages, cultures, and archival traditions. In the absence of a predefined archival school or method, they hold a certain degree of autonomy in developing internal rules and procedures, as well as applying standards and norms⁸.

⁵ See *A University for Europe. Prehistory of the European University Institute in Florence (1948–1976)*, ed. J.-M. Palayret, Rome 1996.

⁶ More than 11,000 according to: Union of International Associations. Global Civil Society Database. Yearbook of International Organizations YBIO online, <https://uia.org/ybio/>, accessed 1 July 2023.

⁷ P. Clavin, *Defining transnationalism*, “Contemporary European History” 2005, n. 14.4, pp. 421–439; *Europeanization in the twentieth century. Historical approaches*, ed. M. Conway, K. Patel, Basingstoke 2010.

⁸ D. Hofman, *Extraterritoriality and international organizations*, [in:] *Recordkeeping in international organizations*, ed. J. Boel, E. Sengsavang, London 2021, pp. 91–115; D. Schlenker, *Enduring challenges, new technologies. Some reflections on recordkeeping in international organizations*, [in:] *Recordkeeping in international organizations...*, pp. 11–27.

Historical archives of European Union institutions

With the Paris Treaty of 1951, a new set of supranational institutions of the European Communities (EC) started their operations in Luxemburg and Strasburg: the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice, and the High Authority. The High Authority as the executive branch of the first Community was later transformed into today's European Commission. The Rome Treaties of 1957 established two additional organisations, the Economic and Social Committee and the European Investment Bank. In the 1970s, the European Court of Auditors was added to the institutional framework, and the latest institution established was the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, in 1998. Mail registry and filing services were established as part of the administration of these institutions, to handle the documents produced and received by the respective bodies. The record-keeping responsibilities initially comprised current records and later expanded to organise also intermediate archives services. Records no longer needed for daily administration purposes were kept as intermediate archives on premise for internal consultation and usage.

In 1977, under Roy Jenkins presidency at the European Commission, potential establishment of historical archives and opening them to the public was first contemplated. Six years later, those considerations resulted in Council Regulation 354/83 of 1983 on the opening of the EU-institutional archives to the public. In line with practice of the member states of the Community, the Regulation set a 30 years closure period for the internal records of the institutions. A year later, the European Commission signed an agreement with the European University Institute in Florence to establish the Historical Archives of the European Communities in Florence as the single central preservation and access point for historical documents of EU Institutions⁹.

Council Regulation 354/83 defined the mission of the Archives in the field of records preservation and access to the historical archives of EU institutions. The Regulation also gave the Archives a role with regard to communication and providing information on EU-institutional archives and European integration, while the archival responsibilities of appraising, selecting, describing, and opening of archival material to the public remained mainly with the producing

⁹ D. Schlenker, *Quelle mémoire de l'Europe dans les archives européennes?*, [in:] *L'Europe. Une autre nation?*, ed. F. Demier, E. Musiani, Bologna 2020, pp. 226–232.

institutions, which retain ownership of the archival materials deposited in Florence.

The archives selected for long-term preservation and public access are those of historical and legal value, documenting establishment, mission, governance, functioning, as well as legislative and operational work of the respective institutions. Institutions may withhold documents referring to private life of individuals, touching on commercial interests of third parties, or containing confidential or secret information, for a longer period. Without interfering directly in the internal archival methods of each institution, the Archives in Florence coordinate EU institutions' common practices regarding historical archives, lend greater visibility to those institutions' archives, encourage consultation of the historical documents, and provide public access in a single, central location.

Unlike the Archives Services of EU institutions, the Historical Archives of the European Union also have the mission to collect private documents and archives of other organisations that have made an important contribution to European integration. For these, the HAEU signs bilateral deposit agreements with the organisations or individuals concerned. Many of the organisations of European integration have deposited their historical documents in Florence¹⁰.

The academic community, in particular Western European networks of contemporary historians and political scientists, took an active interest in the opening of the historical archives of EU institutions and other European organisations in the early 1980s. The History Department at the European University Institute lobbied actively and successfully for the EU archives to be located in Florence. On the other side, the European Commission engaged with the academic community by establishing the Liaison Group of Contemporary History Professors in 1982; the group subsequently founded the "Journal of European Integration". The research topics broadened since the 1990s, moving from the initial approach of biographic studies of the founders of European integration, diplomatic history, and international relations towards the growing field of European policies, the role of federalist movements, and the economic, social, scientific and cultural aspects of European integration. In 2002, the European Commission launched an institutional history series accompanied by a broad oral history programme. So far, it comprises three volumes covering the

¹⁰ D. Schlenker, *How Archives contribute to the formation of a common European memory and identity*, "Atlanti+ International Scientific Review for Contemporary Archival Theory and Practice" 2022, n. 32/2, pp. 9–14.

years 1958 to 2000 and 600 oral history interviews, which have been deposited at the Historical Archives in Florence for public consultation¹¹.

Conclusions

The archival heritage of European integration comprises rich and diverse collections that range from the first European organisations established during the reconstruction of Western Europe after World War II to an ever-growing and increasingly complex set of political, social, economic, cultural, and educational organisations. The supranational Community model, which ultimately became today's European Union, has been the most ambitious and successful project of a politically united Europe. The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the Union was an immensely important milestone for today's European Union.

History of the numerous organisations that played a role in European integration is documented in their archives, which form a new type of transnational archives with specific legal setting and work methods. Historical Archives of the European Union play a central role in the preservation of EU-institutional archives and in collecting archives of organisations and individuals that played a key role in European integration.

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¹¹ E. Bussière, *Le projet d'histoire de la Commission européenne*, [in:] *Histoire de la construction européenne (1957–2015). Sources et itinéraires de recherche croisés*, ed. J.-M. Palayret, I. Richefort, D. Schlenker, Aubervilliers 2019, pp. 191–200; A. Becherucci, *Ricerca e Archivi storici dell'Unione europea (1986–2015)*, "Le carte e la storia" 2016, n. 1, pp. 168–173.

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