

Interview State Archive

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Department responsible for providing Advice

Central idea: State Archives have the inspection right towards all the other federal entities → the basic principles to archive: “good, ordered and accessible format/condition”

However, inspection right is focusing mainly on the idea of “giving and taking” → you give to us, we provide you with the necessary advice = networking instead of using the hierarchy.

Federal entities have the obligation to respect the State Archives and its procedures – basic idea is that the archives are transferred to the State Archives after 30 years, there are exceptions + the federal entity transferring their archive is responsible for the cost.

What are the task of the State Archives?

- Watch the others and advice on a number of matters
- Make an inventory of the Archives
- Ensure that the Archives are accessible
- Valorize → especially genealogy

2009: radical change of the law

- Archives had to be transferred after 30 years instead of 100 year
- Increased the workload intensively, however, the number of staff remained the same.
- Only the relevant part is kept → around 2-3% of all the available data – however, the federal entity can only take this decision after having consulted the State Archives – therefore, the State Archives try to develop a framework that for each federal entity. On the basis of this framework the federal entity can decide on the data that should be kept.

Current situation: turning point → both paper archives and digital archives: how to manage the transition phase?

- Principles remain the same
- Idea: “modernization should not be the end goal in itself, it should be used a way to optimize the archive” → leads to the idea that paper versions are sometimes better than digital versions.
- Current challenge is the legal validity of digital version of the paper document → general legal framework seems to be ready however + a number of sectors already accept digital document (social security, pensions).
- Future challenge: ensure that the digital data remain readable and accessible for the future generations.

Relations with other actors

Regions: State Archives remains, in theory, responsible for all the Archives of the Belgian Administrations. However, it was split, due to the state reforms. Flanders has its own Archive Decree. FPS Finance: good functioning, but very slow in taking decisions! (problem of the scale)

Department Digip@t

Archives = Information that is Good, ordered (with logic structure, format,...) and accessible state

Hybrid numeric and “paper” : main challenge for now → What is the authentic source ?

Digip@t : they are in charge of the numerisation of the state archives (collection, preservation, communication,...). Digip@t gives advices to administrations for the generation and handling of numeric data.

Opinion on federal level

Not much support from FEDICT. Their role will maybe change with new reforms. They have more relations with smals. Not a clear “Steering actor” for the numeric agenda at Federal level (competition with FPS economy because they want to stimulate digital economy or with smals that is focused on

social security and health). FEDICT has an insufficient staff to rival with the IT departments of other administrations and the traditional administration “feodality”.

Problem of « One-stop-shop » for public e-services : need to have interoperable databases (PDF could be a common format but flats a lot of information). For instance, the Region ask the archives to be more precise regarding geo-localisation (name of the street instead of simply name of communities). There is also the responsibility problem in a process where different levels are included.

Two type of clients

- Administrations (for surveillance, audit, transfer, consultation)
- Citizens : users that have interest for legal information or for genealogy purposes.

Two main projects :

- They think that all public service providers are convinced that they should go towards sharing but there is a lack of resources for the implementation. For instance, they have a solution for electronic archives that will be shareable for next year. The G-Cloud catalogue is going to have an e-archive platform “Archive as a service”. This platform will store valuable files that still have an administrative function. Interoperability between the archives database and archives documentation. Potential case study for us : How to store location-based data and to exploit them to extract all their value.
- Development of an e-service : Collection of numeric archives and transfer of archive from local actors to the State Archives for future use. The infrastructure aspect should really be tackled (archives are sent via USB or Hard Drives but not via secured File Transfer Protocol). The storing will be on an server so that the archives are enriched with metadata for future users. Then, it will be stored on a more « long-term » secured server. These archives will be able to be accessed online if the security requirements are in line with the format for long term storing.

All the good intentions are faced with budget cuts. The federal must give money for the implementation of a digital strategy. Some administrations call private actors which is not normal for the State Archives. The sharing of infrastructure is really needed.

Location based data

The adding of location-based metadata could be interesting for the State Archives to localize the deposits, the producers of archive, the genealogic sources, ..

Requirements of users

They made a survey with their users (external and internal via website, MADDLAIN that will be published soon). They got a lot of responses, no need for them to outsource to smals