



## **Secrétariat général du Conseil**

Directorate General Communication and Document Management  
Directorate Document Management  
Archives, Records and Documentation Unit

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# **Archival Access and Online Archives of the Council of the EU**

## Considering the user perspective

# Contents

- **Council Archives**
- **Archives Users**
- **Archival research & Access**
- **Conclusions**



# Council Archives

**HISTORY** - set up in Luxembourg in 1952 (ECSC archives), Brussels since 1958 (EEC and EAEC archives), Merger Treaty 1967 (ECSC, EEC and EAEC archives in Brussels).



**TODAY** - 9 linear km of archival material.

**ARCHIVES REGULATION** - 30 years rule & deposit EUI Florence.



**COLLECTIONS** - from Treaty of Paris to Treaty of Lisbon

**CONTENTS** - (European) Council / Coreper meetings, budgetary files, files relating to the preparation of legal acts (directives, regulations & decisions).



**LANGUAGES** - French, German, Italian, Dutch, English (from 1973), Danish (from 1973), Greek (from 1981).

**ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTIONS** - in French, 1952-1975 accessible online



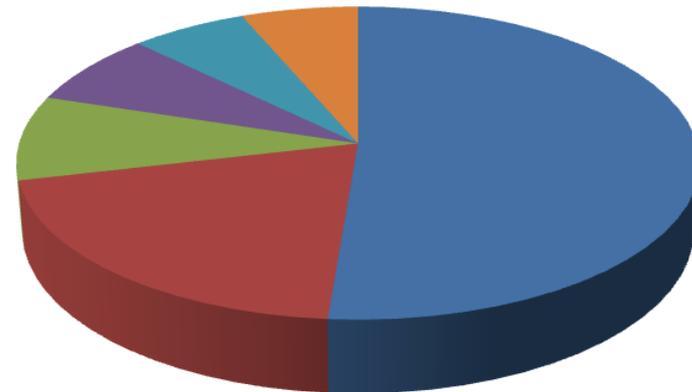
# Archive Users

## External researchers:

- Scientific researcher/university professor
- PhD student
- Lawyer/law office employee
- Other: journalist, undergraduate

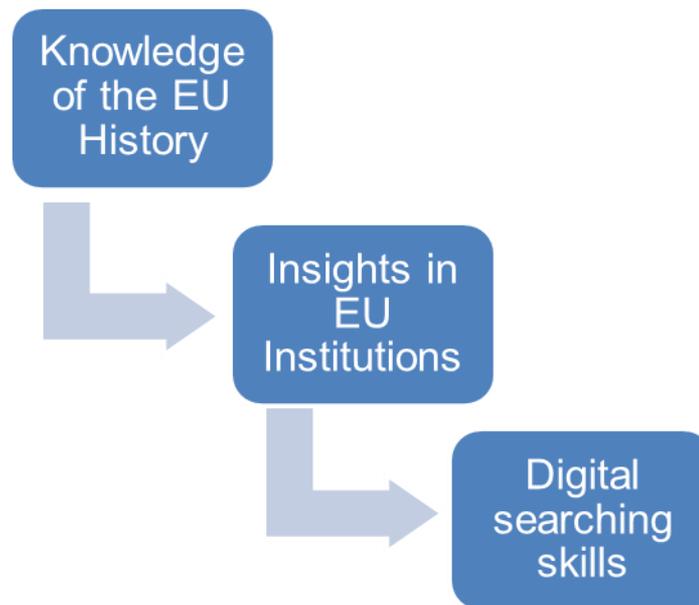
## Internal researchers:

- Council (Transparency, Public Information, Legal service, staff administration, ...)
- Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice, EEAS



- External Researchers
- Internal Staff - Council
- Internal Staff - Commission
- Internal Staff - Parliament
- Internal Staff - Court of Justice
- Internal Staff - EEAS

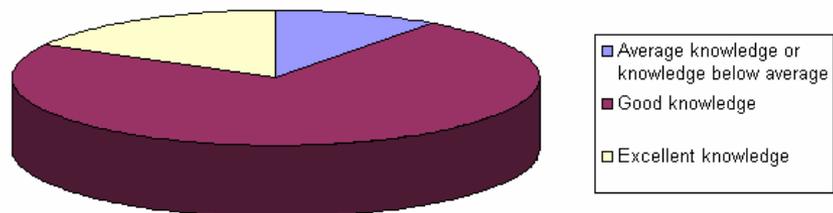
# Archive Users Skills



# Archive Users Skills

- Knowledge of EU History

Archives Users - Knowledge of EU History

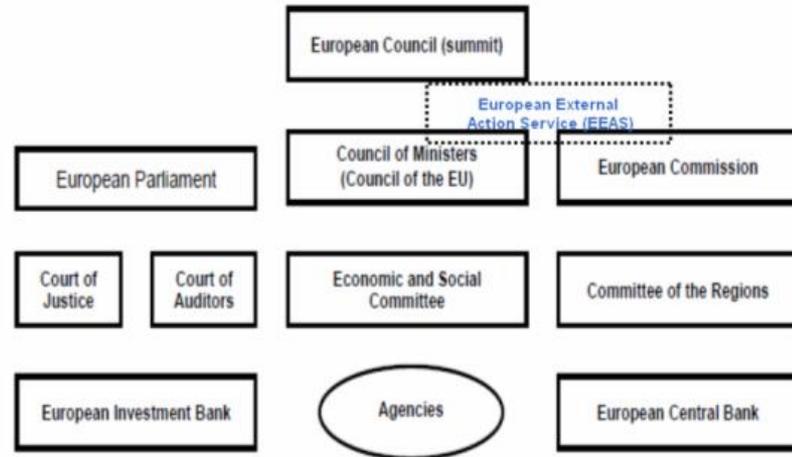
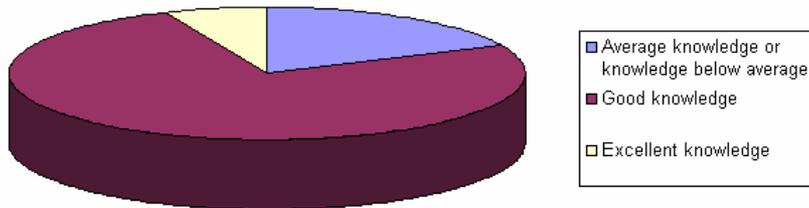


*On 9 May 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman first publicly put forward the ideas that led to the European Union. So 9 May is celebrated as the EU's birthday.*

# Archive Users Skills

- Insights in EU Institutions

Archives Users - insights in EU institutions



# Archive Users Skills

- Digital searching skills

## External researchers:

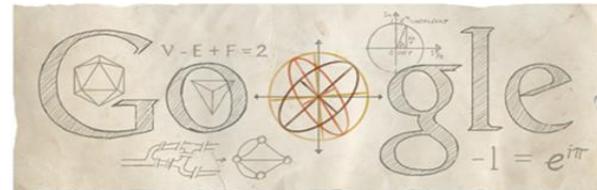
- Understand archival search interfaces better

## Internal researchers:

- Less familiar with archival research

## Technology expectations:

- Approach archives through digitised surrogates of paper archives
- Full-text search possibilities
- Intuitive tools, not requiring detailed help files



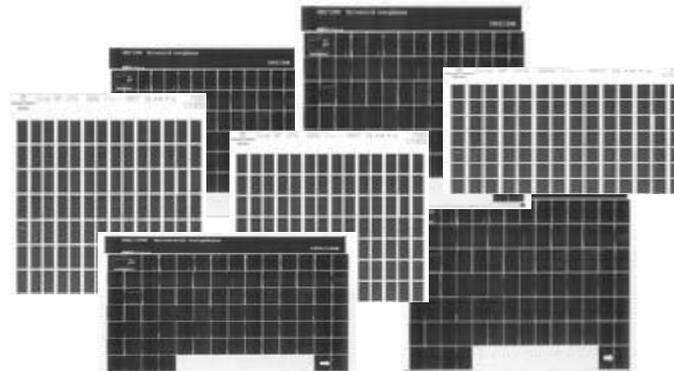
generation ?

# Archival Research & Access



# Archival Research & Access

Up to recently.....



02/06/2016



# Archival Research & Access

- Inventories
- Historical notices
- Search engine

The screenshot shows the CASE (Central Archives Search Engine) website. At the top, there is the European Council logo and the text "European Council Council of the European Union". To the right, there is a "Language selection" dropdown menu and a search bar. Below the header, there is a navigation menu with links: "The European Council", "The Council of the EU", "Topics", "Policies", "Meetings", "Documents & Publications", "Press", and "Contact". The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Documents and publications > Archives > Search the archives". The title of the page is "CASE (Central Archives Search Engine)". Below the title, there is a note: "Please note that information in the database is only available in French, and you can only search using this language." There are four tabs: "File Title", "Content description", "Council document" (which is selected), and "Commission (COM/SEC) document". Below the tabs, there are three input fields: "Prefix (before 1979):", "Number:", and "Year:". A "Search" button is located below these fields. To the right of the search fields, there is a "Help" section. The "Help" section contains the following text: "You are looking for a **numbered** Council document. The **prefix is optional**, so if the document has no prefix the prefix field must be left empty. **The year** is expressed as four digits. Before 1979, prefixes were allocated for certain categories of documents. Placed before the document number in the form of a letter or abbreviation such as 'C', 'R', 'RU', 'S', 'T', or 'CECA', they give some information about the production conditions of the document (its distribution or subject). Example: **Prefix (before 1979): R** **Number: 2956** **Year: 1974** Note: Corrections, revisions, addenda and the like are considered suffixes. To simplify the search procedure, suffixes are not included in this search."

# Archival Research & Access

## Now & future ...

- **Digitisation microfiches & paper originals**
  - Exploit new possibilities for accessibility & communication.
  - Offer new services - i.e. enhanced searching and retrieval possibilities (metadata & full-text searches).
- **Access digitised archives through local Council IT infrastructure**
  - Consult digitised files instead of microfiches.
  - Decrease in number of visiting days in the consultation room.
- **Make digitised historical archives accessible on Internet / intermediate archives (not public, < 30 years) accessible on Intranet**
  - Legal & technical challenges

# Conclusions

- **Diversity of archives users:** Internal/external researchers, different nationalities/languages, different backgrounds/professions.
- **Good knowledge of EU history/diverse insights in EU institutions:** External researchers cannot always distinguish missions/archives of the EU institutions.
- **Diverse archival skills:** Expert users consult inventories, understand provenance, visit multiple archives.



Archivists must be able to deal with all information seekers and try to limit the gap i.e. by reference help, language...

# Conclusions

- **Diverse digital searching skills:** Expert users combine different strategies to find archival material. Researchers prefer immediate easy search without long help tools.
- **Similar technology expectations:** Archives users prefer to consult digital copies & expect to find everything on Internet/Intranet.



- **Goal:** Archival search through intuitive & easy tools, metadata & full-text search possibilities + online digitised archives.

# Final thought

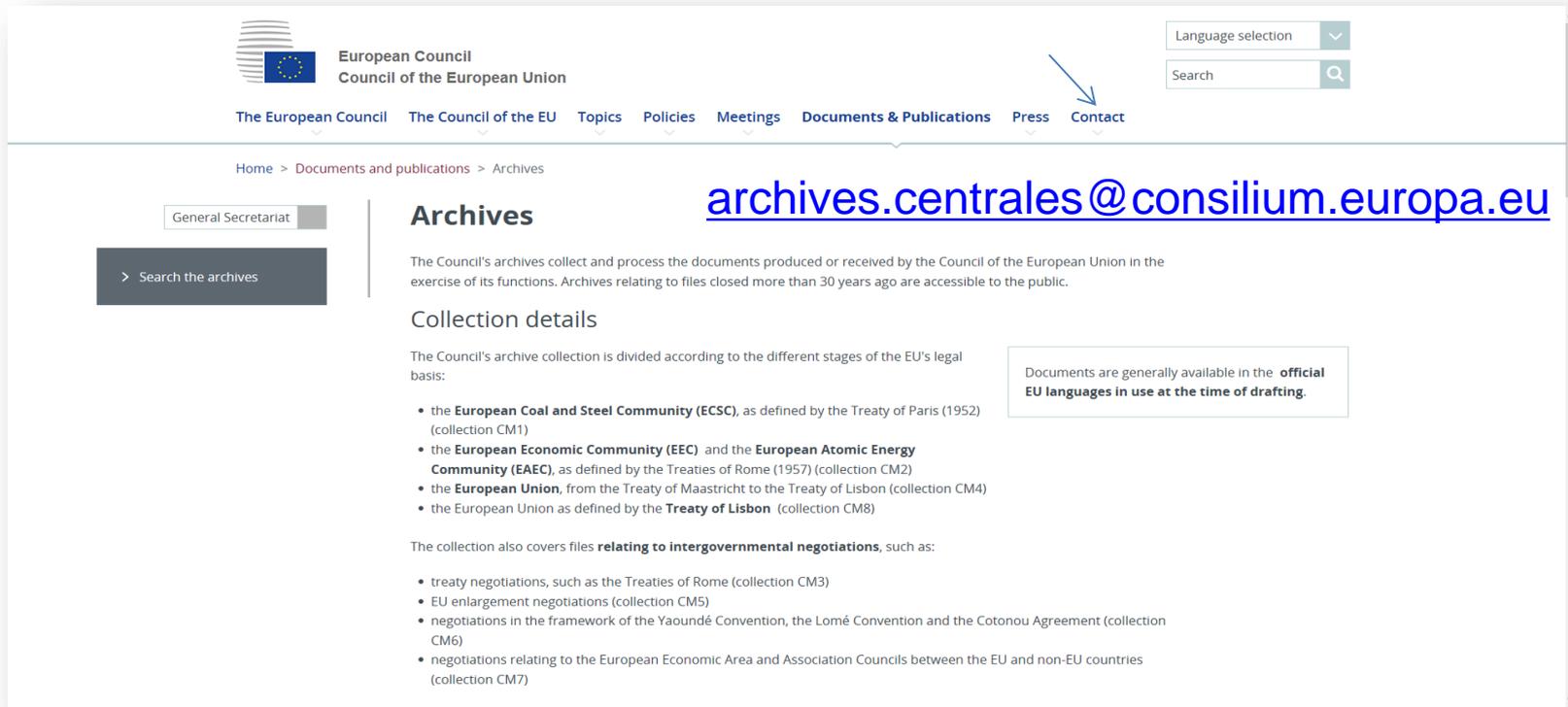
*« In principle the ultimate rationale for the existence of archival institutions is not the preservation of archives for their own sake or because archivists appraise them to be valuable, but because they are used by people from all walks of life, for all manners of purposes, to address historical problems. »*

CONWAY, P. Partners in Research. Improving Access to the Nation's Archives. User studies at the National Archives and Records Administration. Pittsburgh, 1994.



# Questions?

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/archives>



The screenshot shows the website for the European Council Archives. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the European Council logo and the text "European Council Council of the European Union". To the right, there is a "Language selection" dropdown menu and a search box. Below the navigation bar, there is a menu with items: "The European Council", "The Council of the EU", "Topics", "Policies", "Meetings", "Documents & Publications", "Press", and "Contact". An arrow points to the "Contact" link. Below the menu, there is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Documents and publications > Archives". On the left side, there is a "General Secretariat" button and a "Search the archives" button. The main content area has the heading "Archives" and a sub-heading "[archives.centrales@consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/archives)". Below this, there is a paragraph: "The Council's archives collect and process the documents produced or received by the Council of the European Union in the exercise of its functions. Archives relating to files closed more than 30 years ago are accessible to the public." The section "Collection details" follows, with a paragraph: "The Council's archive collection is divided according to the different stages of the EU's legal basis:". Below this, there is a list of bullet points: "the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), as defined by the Treaty of Paris (1952) (collection CM1)", "the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC), as defined by the Treaties of Rome (1957) (collection CM2)", "the European Union, from the Treaty of Maastricht to the Treaty of Lisbon (collection CM4)", and "the European Union as defined by the Treaty of Lisbon (collection CM8)". To the right of this list, there is a box containing the text: "Documents are generally available in the official EU languages in use at the time of drafting." Below the list, there is a paragraph: "The collection also covers files relating to intergovernmental negotiations, such as:", followed by a list of bullet points: "treaty negotiations, such as the Treaties of Rome (collection CM3)", "EU enlargement negotiations (collection CM5)", "negotiations in the framework of the Yaoundé Convention, the Lomé Convention and the Cotonou Agreement (collection CM6)", and "negotiations relating to the European Economic Area and Association Councils between the EU and non-EU countries (collection CM7)".