

Archivists and public sector reforms in Belgium

Abstract. Belgium is a complex country from a political and institutional point of view. Since the 1980s, the public sector has undergone numerous major reforms. The most recent reform is the so-called 6th state reform that is part of the political agreement of the federal government of December 2011 and that forms the basis for the devolution of a multitude of competences to the regions. The paper answers the following questions: which were the consequences of the different public sector reforms for the archives sector? Which role did archives services and archivists play in the implementation of the past reforms? Which were the obstacles and success factors? How do archivists see their future role in making public authorities transparent, efficient and effective?

1. Belgium: a federal state in the centre of Europe¹

“Belgium is a federal State composed of Communities and Regions”². This is the formulation of the first article of Belgium’s constitution. This means that the decision-making power is not centralised but distributed among the federal level, the three communities and the three regions.

The federal state

When Belgium became a federal state in 1993 in the form of a so-called bipolar federalism, a number of competences remained at federal level and apply to all Belgians and to the entire territory of the country. These competences are Foreign Affairs, Defence, Justice, Finance, Monetary Policy, Social Security and Pensions, the major parts of Public Health and Domestic Affairs. The legislative power is exercised by the federal parliament and the King of the Belgians. However, the King is absolved from any responsibility. The ministers or members of the federal government co-sign the legal proposals voted by parliament and the royal decrees, and carry full responsibility for them.

The Communities

The Communities are official administrative entities based on language. Because Belgium counts three official languages (Dutch, French and German), there are three Communities. They are competent in their respective language areas. The Flemish Community is competent for the Dutch language area and also exercises competences in the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. The French Community is competent for the French language area and also exercises competences in the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. The German-speaking Community is competent for the German language area of Belgium. These Communities are thus responsible for all matters related to the Dutch-speakers, the French-speakers and the German-speakers. These are the so-called “person-related” matters such as for example the use of language, culture, the audio-visual sector, education, sports, assistance to the needy, etc. Each of the three Communities has its own parliament and government.

The Regions

Belgium is divided into three Regions: the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region. The Regions are territorial entities. The territory of the Flemish Region corresponds to the Dutch language area. The territory of the Walloon Region corresponds to the French and German language area. The Brussels-Capital Region is the competent authority for the bilingual (Dutch and French) territory of Brussels-Capital. The Regions are competent for all matters related to the interests of the people living in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia. They exercise the following competences on their territory: Economy, Employment, Housing, Public Works, Energy, Transport, Environment and Regional Planning (the so-called territory-related matters). In addition, these “member states” are also in charge of the international relations connected to their regional competences. Each Region also has its own parliament and government. In Flanders, the public authorities of the Community and the Region have been merged into one single government and one single parliament.

The distribution of competences in the Brussels-Capital Region is the most complicated: Indeed, the parliament and government of the Brussels-Capital Region are competent for regional (territory-related) matters and the Flemish and French Communities are in charge of community (person-related) matters through, respectively, the Flemish Community Commission and the French Community Commission, including their respective executive bodies and councils. For person-related matters that

¹ <http://www.eutrio.be/nl/belgie/federaal-belgie/structuur-van-de-belgische-federale-staat/structuur-van-de-belgische-federale>

² http://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/publications/constitution/grondwetEN.pdf

concern both language communities, a Common Community Commission (one common council) is responsible.

Provinces and local authorities

In addition to the federal state, the Communities and the Regions, there are 10 Provinces (5 in Flanders and 5 in Wallonia)³ and 589 cities and municipalities⁴

Belgium and Europe

In Belgium, international relations are not only a matter of the federal government. The Regions and Communities also have their share of competences with regard to international relations. Because the European Union also addresses a large number of policy areas that are regionalised (devoluted) in Belgium, the Regions and Communities of the country are very closely involved in representing Belgium at European level and in the decision-making process with regard to the European context. Consequently, Belgium can be represented at the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers) either by a federal or a regional minister, depending on the field of competence within the Belgian state. For every meeting of the Council of the European Union, a common Belgian point of view is elaborated among the competent federal and/or regional authorities of Belgium. The manner in which this common Belgian point of view is reached in practice has been fixed by a cooperation agreement between the Belgian federal and regional authorities. During the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union, both federal and regional ministers from Belgium will therefore act as Belgian chairpersons. The Regions and Communities have made an arrangement called a “rotating presidency” that stipulates which administrative entity of Belgium will act as chairperson and for which policy area.

Decision-making process

With six parliaments and six governments, ten provinces and 589 cities and municipalities, and dozens of public enterprises, independent agencies, and so forth, Belgium is a particularly complicated country for the non-initiated and quite an institutional mix-up⁵, because the country has so many unique characteristics (Regions are still relatively dependent from federal funding, although to a lesser extent now) and con-federal traits (there is still a Flemish and a French-speaking electorate and the elections of 25 May 2014 have shown once again that the electorates vote very differently in the North and the South of the country).⁶ One clear indicator of the increased institutionalisation of the country is the spectacular increase in laws and regulations that have been published. In 2008, the Belgian Official Journal comprised a total of 69,358 printed pages, of which 40,137 were new legal texts. About 37 % of these were issued by the federal state.⁷ The Belgian Official Journal counted 104,172 pages in 2013, a number which can only partly be explained by the publication of legal texts in three official languages.

2. Public sector reform in Belgium: an overview

The state structure of Belgium and its complex arrangement of competences as we know it today is the result of a long series of state reforms. By the way, it would be useful to draw up an exhaustive overview or typology of the institutional reforms that the country underwent in the past fifty years. The institutional and administrative reforms of Belgium are very well documented however. Dozens

³ http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provincies_van_Belgi%C3%AB

⁴ 308 in the Flemish Region, 292 in the Walloon Region and 19 in the Brussels-Capital Region

⁵ For reference: C. Ysebaert, *Politiek Zakboekje Structuren 2012*, Kluwer, 2012, 584 p. (simple explanation about the structure of Belgium and available as e-book), L. Asselberghs, *Politiek Zakboekje Instellingen 2014*, Kluwer, 2013, 776 p. (overview of the major Belgian institutions, associations, councils, and commissions. In addition to the public authorities of the federal state and the Regions and Communities, this publication also mentions private organisations that play a significant role in Belgian society). Only 4000 copies of *België voor beginners* [Belgium for starters] by Johan Vande Lanotte, Siegfried Bracke and Geert Goedertier (latest edition: 2014) have been sold (www.diekeure.be).

⁶ J. Velaers, *Federalisme / confederalisme.. en de weg ernaartoe*, Brussels, 2013 (Standpunten, 20)

⁷ <http://www.simplification.be/nl/print/725>. See also *Evolutie van de federale administratieve lasten. Meetrapport 2012*, Brussels, Dienst voor de Administratieve Vereenvoudiging DAV, p. 10.

of constitutional and administrative lawyers, political scientist, historians, and others have thoroughly studied into the topic.⁸

Concerning public sector reforms, a distinction must be made between the institutional reforms of the whole state and the internal reforms of the different public governments and administrations.

2.1 The institutional reforms of the state of Belgium have consequences with regard to the organisational level, the state structure, mergers or creations of new institutions, the revision of material and territorial competences, the devolution of powers, etc. Let me give you a few examples:

-the **merging of the municipalities**⁹: the largest fusion operation of Belgian local authorities took place on 1st January 1977. That day, 2,359 formerly autonomous municipalities were merged, resulting in 596 municipalities.

-the **five major state reforms** (1970, 1980, 1988-1989, 1993, 2001-2003): these state reforms among others led to the creation of decision-making bodies for the decentralised authorities and the devolution of powers from the federal level to the Regions and Communities. Because many policy areas are still a competence of both federal and regional authorities according to the distribution of powers agreed upon (shared competences), a number of juridical arrangements had to be made for the execution of the different competences in the form of cooperation agreements voted by the different parliaments.

-the organisation of the **federal administrative public offices** (law of 22nd July 1993)¹⁰

-the **splitting of the province of Brabant** on 1st January 1995: the fourth state reform split the province of Brabant in three parts: Flemish-Brabant, Walloon-Brabant and the Brussels-Capital Region composed of 19 municipalities. Through this reform, the number of provinces increased from nine to ten.

-the reform of the **Ministry of the Flemish Community**, also known as “**Better Administrative Policy**” project (Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid) that started in 2006 and was aimed to a more efficient functioning of the different administration bodies and a more logical structure, a better communication between the different entities, and an appropriate Human Resources policy. The former ministry was split up into thirteen departments in charge of homogenous fields of competence. A total of 60 independent agencies were created.¹¹

-the modernisation of the federal administration under the impulse of so-called New Public Management, better known in Belgium as the **Copernicus reform** (starting in 2000), reshaping among others the traditional ministries into federal public services, introducing a new Human Resources policy, prescribing new control systems and leading to a more “customer-oriented” communication¹²

-the **sixth state reform** split the electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, reshaped the judicial district of Brussels¹³ and transferred competences from the federal level to the Regions and Communities (2012-2013)¹⁴. This state reform also transformed the functioning of the bicameral system and allocated more financial means to the Brussels-Capital Region and the federal state level.¹⁵

⁸ See publications by A. Alen, R. Blanpain, M. Boes, E. Cerexhe, F. Delperée, P. de Stexhe, L.P. Suetens, and many more.

⁹ http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusie_van_Belgische_gemeenten

¹⁰ An overview can be found at

http://www.fedweb.belgium.be/nl/over_de_organisatie/over_de_federale_overheid/overzicht_federale_diensten/

¹¹ http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beter_Bestuurlijk_Beleid

¹² <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copernicushervorming>

¹³ Law of 19 July 2012. For a commentary see: <http://www.eubelius.com/nl/spotlight/de-hervorming-van-het-gerechtelijk-arrondissement-brussel>

¹⁴ The sixth state reform is part of the so-called Butterfly Agreement, the political agreement of 11 October 2011 reached by the Elio Di Rupo I government after 459 days of negotiations for a new government. See also:

-the changes of the **judicial system** (law of 1 December 2013, in force as of 1 April 2014), leading among others to a considerable reduction of the number of judicial districts from 27 to 12

2.2 Another type of reform concerns the business and organisation culture of the public authorities and the modernising of work processes thanks to the influence of the ideas of ‘good governance’ and later of e-Government practices. Indeed, as from the 1990s, ICT played an increasing role in Belgium in the modernisation of the public authorities. In this period, ICT started to play a more central role in the efficient management of data and data exchange between public authorities and between those authorities and private actors.¹⁶ One example hereof is the creation of the central electronic database of Social Security services¹⁷. Other examples are the central database for businesses (2003) and the e-Health platform (2009). The common point of all of these initiatives is that they are supported and managed by several stakeholders. These are reforms that were not only possible thanks to organisational, budgetary and technical efforts but for which a special legal framework had to be set up that must constantly be updated.

3. The consequences of the different public sector reforms for the archives

It is obvious that all of these reforms had a more or less important impact on archives management. I will try to clarify and illustrate the possible implications in a systematic manner.

Some reforms are less problematic than others with regard to archive management:

- when institutions are merged (as is the case with the courts and tribunals of the judicial district of Brussels for example) the rules and instruments (such as records schedules) remain identical and in force;
- when competences are transferred entirely from one level of authority to another, for example from the federal state to the regions, those administrative entities receiving the new charge of archives management are in principle subject to a different legislation with regard to archives and a different body is in charge of supervising the archives;
- when new institutions are created, the question about the budgetary, organisational and technical responsibility with regard to records and archives management arises. There usually is enough time to take pro-active measures in order to address these new circumstances;

Other reforms may cause problems for archives management:

- when institutions are suppressed and/or their competences are transferred to other bodies, the archives they are in charge of, usually must not only be moved but also given a whole new final destination. In these cases, archives tend to be very quickly destroyed or transferred (after appraisal) to a different archive service, which puts a lot of pressure on records managers and archivists – who must take decisions and are involved in the process order to ensure a proper technical and logistic transfer of the records;
- the same pressure lies on record managers and archive services when institutions are merged or public bodies are privatised. In the past, no sufficient thought was given to the consequences of such operations for the protection and long-term preservation of the archives;

Although no systematic research has been carried out about the manner in which records managers and archivists are involved in the reforms of the Belgian public sector, it appears that a an evolution from an *ad hoc* management towards a more *pro-active* policy took place.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixth_Belgian_state_reform and two reference works: Quertainmont, M. Leroy and R. Ergec, under the scientific supervision of J. Sautois and M. Uyttendaele, *La sixième réforme de l'État 2012-2013. Tournant historique ou soubresaut ordinaire? Hommage à Philippe Lauvaux. Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de Droit public de l'U.L.B. au Parlement fédéral les 25 et 26 avril 2013*, Limal, 2013, 608 p. and J. Velaers, J. Vanpraet, Y. Peeters and W. Vandenbruwaene, *De zesde staatshervorming: instellingen, bevoegdheden en middelen*, Morsel, 2014, xvi+975 p.

¹⁵ A. Mouton, ‘Recente staatshervormingen zijn vooral reddingsboeien’, in: *Trends*, 24 April 2014, p. 25-26.

¹⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-government>

¹⁷ https://www.ksz-bcss.fgov.be/nl/bcss/page/content/websites/belgium/about/inshort/inshort_01.html (Dutch)

In the years 1977-1980 – when the fusion of the municipalities was implemented – archivists from the State Archives more or less systematically inspected hundreds of places where local archives from the 19th and early 20th centuries were conserved, but these inspections did not take place with the same diligence everywhere. Inspections repeatedly took place until the 1990s, with various success, as many local archives were lost. The archives sector was almost not involved at all in the state reforms of 1970, 1980 and 1988. There were some attempts to map the history of the different state institutions – including the evolution of their organisational structure and competences – which led to a series of useful institutional studies, but the number of staff for systematically inspecting the administrations, for the drafting of records schedules and for managing the appraisal process was highly insufficient.

But since the dawn of this century, times have changed, not only among the federal institutions by the way, but also among the Regions and Communities.

The federal state

-In the course of major reforms such as the reform of the police forces (1998-2001) and the redistribution of competences with regard to agriculture for example (2003)¹⁸, a number of solid arrangements were made, also thanks to the work of archivists of the State Archives, concerning the reallocation of archives, that is to say the new final destinations of archives.

-Since 2004-2005 records schedules are drafted for dozens of major institutions and various fields of competences, that had to meet different targets: raising awareness among the management of the public sector bodies about the importance of archives management, contributing to the image building process of the State Archives as the prominent supervising and advising authority in archive matters, resolving the backlog with regard to appraisal and transfer of archives, and organising advanced training for public officers;

-The State Archives contributed in a large degree to the so called NoVoRecord project at the federal public service Social Security which opted in 2008 for a completely paperless working environment in preparation of its move to a different location.¹⁹

-The 16 protocol agreements signed in April 2014 by the government of the federal state and the Regions and Communities with regard to the execution of the devolution of dozens of competences²⁰ to the regional authorities²¹ contained a large number of stipulations on the management, appraisal, transfer and final destination of archives, which is largely due thanks to the good cooperation between the section “Archives supervision and advice” of the State Archives and the cabinet personnel of the Prime Minister. By the way, the preparations for the sixth state reform paved the way for:

1° - talks between senior officers of the federal authorities;

2° - the appraisal of risks related to the loss of information in the course of the devolution of powers;

3° - the identification of archives having force of proof and significant historical value, including their respective finding aids both in print and digital format;

4° - getting accustomed to the technical aspects of information management;

5° - establishing responsibilities with regard to information management;

6° - and last but not least writing and validating records schedules for major archive creators (among others the committee for the acquisition of real estate (in short: acquisition committee) in charge of acquiring real estate for the account of the state. It carries out prosecutions and expropriation procedures in the name of the competent minister).²²

¹⁸ Co-operation agreement of 18 June 2003 between the federal state, the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region about the exercise of devoluted competences in the field of agriculture and fishing, chapter 17 (art. 44): “about archives”

¹⁹ http://www.profacility.be/piclib/biblio/pdf_00000271fr.pdf

²⁰ This concerns both regional matters (competences related to the job market, employment, transport and mobility, housing, economy and industry, etc.) and community matters (competences related to healthcare, family policy, justice, etc.).

²¹ In total, competences corresponding to a budget of 16.9 billion € were devoluted. This devolution implies the transfer of 4000 federal public officers (‘La grande migration de 2015 alarme les fonctionnaires’, in *Le Soir*, 5 March 2014).

²² Article 3 of the Royal Decree of 3rd November 1960 about the committees for the acquisition of real estate for the account of the state, state institutions and institutions in which the state has major interest (Belgian Official Journal, 18 November 1960).

Regions and Communities

Archivists are also – despite their limited number – more present on the ground within the Regions and Communities in order to help prepare and execute the institutional reforms, which is partly a consequence of the legislation on archives voted by the parliaments of the regional authorities: in 2001, the Walloon parliament enacted a decree about public archives; the parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region did likewise in 2009, and the Flemish parliament in 2010. On 14 September 2007, the Flemish government created a co-ordinating archives service within the Department of Administrative Affairs that became the main executive body for administrative reforms, in particular for the modernisation of information management of the Flemish authorities at strategic level. The service provides advice about records management, leads a network of information managers, spreads guidelines, organises advanced training, keeps a very informative website up to date, etc. Among local Flemish administrations, archivists also play a major role in the modernising of the municipal administration. This was the case in Antwerp for example, where the city archives (Felixarchief) sets up a step-by-step plan for information management in a digital environment, on the occasion of the transfer of some municipal services to different location.²³ The city of Antwerp applied large scale substitution f.i.: retroactive, to existing, much used archival records, that are being digitised (personnel files for example), as well as proactive, by scanning paper documents received by the city administration (paper invoices and received letters for example). In order to ensure the correct implementation of these substitutions, a checklist was used.²⁴

Unfortunately the situation is very different in the Walloon Region and in the Brussels-Capital Region, where archivists are no record managers but have a rather traditional role as curators of historical archives and facilitators for historical research. The archives services are implicated in the administrative reforms in these Regions to a very limited extent only, if at all. In the modernisation of the information management of the institutions of the German-speaking Community, the State Archives plays a major role thanks to the co-operation agreement signed with the authorities of the German-speaking Community.

4. The role of Belgian archivists in future administrative reforms

There is no doubt that the numerous institutional reforms and modernisation projects in the Belgian public sector in the past decades have contributed to raising awareness about the importance of efficient records management and an archives management policy fixed by clear policy papers.

Belgian politicians, parliament staff and boards of directors of public administrations indeed become increasingly aware that organising information management plays an essential part in the preparation of reforming the public sector, of fusion and relocation operations, and of planning and executing projects intended to make public authorities more transparent, client-oriented and efficient. They have come to realize that a sound information management is one of the prerequisites for ‘good governance’ and good communication towards the citizens, and they are particularly aware that loss of information and poor access to information can potentially damage the image of the public authorities. The degree to which awareness about the matter has been raised is hard to estimate, but it can be deduced from the significance and priority that is given to the issue of government information management and accessibility in the past decade in the daily business of policy-making bodies, in policy strategies, in risk and impact analyses, in parliament discussions, in reports of the Court of Audit, in newspaper articles about the public sector, etc. These kinds of issues had much less attention a decade ago.

²³ The shift of the municipal services towards a digital work environment on the occasion of the transfer of municipal services to “Den Bell” in 2012 is extensively described in the report “Optimaal digitaal”: http://www.antwerpen.be/docs/Stad/Bedrijven/Zelfstandige_stafdiensten/ZS_Stadsarch/Optimaal_digitaal_DEF_LRES.pdf

²⁴ This checklist is a means of guaranteeing that the digital copies are as reliable as the original documents. The checklist is in fact a questionnaire to be filled in. For a number of questions you simply need to provide a description, for other questions you need to indicate whether or not certain provisions are met. If one of the required provisions is not met, a negative advice with regard to substitution is implied.

The *paperless office hype* and the search of hundreds of organisations for an elaborate and systematic approach enabling a proper management of the streams of digital documents are without doubt the main reason for organising further training about information and archives management for public officers with different levels of competence and from different levels of authority. There are surely differences with regard to the quality of the training offers, but in general, it can be noticed that there has never been a larger and more varied offer of advanced training in the past years than today. Since almost five years, the advanced training institute for the federal authorities offers a certified training about “archives management” for federal public officers, in collaboration with the State Archives. Already over 2000 public officers have taken part in this training. At Flemish level, for more than 5 years already, the co-ordinating archives service mentioned earlier has been carrying out training about digital management of archives for public officers of the Flemish authorities. With regard to the training of local public officers, the city and the province of Antwerp have been taking the lead since a couple of years, followed by the provincial authorities of West-Flanders and Namur, and others. A close collaboration with the publishing house “Politeia” has been established. They market loose-leaf training materials – brochures, checklists, handbooks – about today’s document and archives management for public authorities and organisations.²⁵ Other organisations active within this growing sector of training about document and archives management are knowledge centres for digital archiving²⁶, professional associations of archivists, the association of Flemish archives graduates,²⁷ DocSafe, a temporary partnership started in 2013 between the universities of Namur and Liège and the State Archives, destined to the training of French-speaking records managers and archivists.²⁸

The increased interest of society in sustainable conservation of government information while keeping them accessible and the public recognition of the important role records managers and archivists do – unfortunately – not guarantee an appropriate approach to the numerous challenges that the Belgian public sector faces.

I regret to say that:

1° the Belgian archivists are not systematically involved – at an early stage – in policy-making preparation works intended to produce legal initiatives on the broader subject of government information management.

2° neither at federal level nor at regional level there is any structural financing for scientific research about subjects such as sustainable information management, protection of privacy, re-use of government information, copyrights, appraisal of digital documents, comparative research on different aspects of the law on archives, etc. As in so many other fields of public administration, scientific research indeed plays a fundamental role in drafting strategies for digital access to information.²⁹

3° Belgium allocates insufficient means for the drafting of archives management plans and/or records schedules for the entire public sector and for updating and adapting these plans. In Belgium, supervising the proper management of government information is carried out by only a handful of people, which is neither acceptable nor sustainable;

4° the additional efforts undertaken by archives services in the past years in order to provide advice to public authorities undergoing reforms and to resolve the backlog with regard to appraisal and transfer of archives have in fact not been compensated financially. Indeed, the archives services involved have not received any additional funding or personnel;

²⁵ For example *Wie zoekt die vindt* edited by I. Schoups, or ‘Questions d’archivage’ edited by A.-M. Vastesaegeer (http://www.politeia.be/article.aspx?a_id=WIEKLA523S -

http://www.politeia.be/article.aspx?a_id=QUESTI406C&langue=fr-be)

²⁶ <http://www.expertisecentrumdavid.be/>

²⁷ For the Flemish association see: www.vvdab.be. For the association of French speaking archivists see: www.aafb.be. The home page of FAAD: <http://faad.be/>. For more information about the activities of FAAD: http://www.vvbad.be/sites/www.vvbad.be/files/artikel/file/META_201301_Etalage.pdf

²⁸ The inter-university training leads to a certificate in “management de l’information numérique”.

<http://www.docsafe.info/organisateurs/>

²⁹ One exception: thanks to the funding by the Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO) (Brain.be programme) the four-year HECTOR research project was started in May 2014 at the State Archives. HECTOR is short for *Hybrid Electronic Curation, Transformation & Organisation of Records*, in collaboration with Université de Namur (CRIDS), Université de Montréal (EBSI) and Université Libre de Bruxelles (STIC).

5° apart from a few minor exceptions, archivists have to undertake unreasonably efforts to gain credit for the collaboration initiatives they develop in order to increase the efficiency of the public authorities.

5. Conclusion

As in all European countries, in Belgium too, elections were held in May 2014, more precisely on 25 May 2014. On three levels, parliaments were elected in Belgium: the European parliament, the Belgian federal parliament and the regional parliaments. In a couple of weeks hopefully, a new government will take office. Usually, with a view to the future government composition, different cabinet staffs are contacted and priority lists and desiderata are presented. Senior politicians must understand that archives services do not require less but more investments, because they make fundamental contributions to the modernisation of public authorities and to improving access to public sector information by digital means. In my contacts with the different cabinets, I will refer, among others, to the example of the Netherlands where the so-called “Kamerbrief” of 9 September 2013 about the digitisation and archiving of information management (“Digitalisering en archivering informatiehuishouding”) not only formally put an end to the plans of merging the Royal Library and the National Archives in the Hague, but first and foremost gave the starting signal for a major catch-up movement intended to make the Dutch public authorities work in a fully digital environment by 2017. The “Kamerbrief” was followed by an increase in financial means by several million Euros for the National Archives, spread over several years however.³⁰

³⁰ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ocw/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/09/09/kamerbrief-over-digitalisering-en-archivering-informatie-van-het-rijk.html>