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1.04 Strokovni članek

1.04 Professional Article

ARCHIVING OF RECORDS – LATVIAN STYLE

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Abstract:

Today, information and communication technologies have become an integral part of our daily lives and basic information for the performance of their functions and for decision-making institutions accumulate in databases/information systems. The diversity of electronic information is extensive and continues to grow every year, creating ever-new challenges for Archives.

The article presents the cooperation of the National Archives of Latvia with record creators, regulations regarding records and archives management and responsibility of both sides. At the moment, the priority of the National Archives of Latvia is appraisal, description and acquisition of electronic records and information system data sets. The article presents the approach from different perspectives. An overview of the Unified State Archives Information System is given and the process of acquisition of electronic records is described: standards, tools and file formats; record types created by institutions; current situation in institutions and cooperation with institution in order to transfer electronic records from institutions to the National Archives of Latvia according to regulations and standards.

Key words:

archives' management, electronic records, preservation, accessibility, challenge

Izvlaček:

Arhiviranje zapisov - latvijski stil

Informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije so danes postale del našega vsakdanjega življenja, osnovne informacije, potrebne za njihovo izvajanje in za sprejemanje odločitev, se zbirajo v podatkovnih bazah ali informacijskih sistemih. Raznolikost elektronskih informacij je velika, vsako leto raste in postavlja vedno nove izzive za arhive.

Prispevek predstavlja sodelovanje Državnega arhiva Latvije z ustanovami, ki so ustvarjalci gradiva, predpise, ki uravnavajo upravljanje z dokumentarnim in arhivskim gradivom, ter odgovornost obeh strani. Prioritete Državnega arhiva Latvije so vrednotenje, popisovanje in prevzemanje elektronskega gradiva in podatkovnih nizov informacijskih sistemov. Prispevek obravnava pristop k naštetemu z različnih vidikov. Podaja pregled enotnega informacijskega sistema državnega arhiva in opiše postopek prevzema elektronskega gradiva: standarde, orodja in formate, tipe ustvarjenih zapisov, trenutno situacijo pri ustvarjalcih ter sodelovanje med arhivom in ustvarjalcem pri prevzemu gradiva glede na zakonodajo in standarde.

Ključne besede:

upravljanje z arhivskim gradivom, elektronsko gradivo, hramba, dostop, izzivi

1. COLLABORATION WITH INSTITUTIONS

The National Archives of Latvia (hereinafter - Archives) cooperates with the creators of the national documentary heritage and supervises their records and archives management. At the same time, it counsels them in the field of records and archives management. There are about 3,800 institutions under the supervision of the Archives. These are State and local authorities, but there are also private institutions which have concluded a cooperation agreement with the Archives. Someone will ask why there is such a large number. Are all these institutions so important and produce records with archival value? The archives sector in Latvia is regulated by the Archives Law, which came into force on January 1, 2011, and it states that the requirements of the law apply to any institution that holds records of archival value. According to the Archives Law *“institution – any institution or a private person to which the State powers have been granted by an external regulatory enactment or the agreement of public rights (including the President of the State, the Saeima, the Cabinet, the State Audit Office, Ombudsman, the Bank of Latvia, local government and other derived legal person of public rights, direct or mediated administrative institution, the Central Land Commission, the Central Election Commission, the Prosecutor's Office, the court, notary, bailiff), a capital company in which a public person owns capital shares or stocks, a capital company which is under the decisive influence of a capital company of one or more public persons and also an association or foundation member or founder of which is a public person”*.

According to the Archives Law the institution has an obligation to have record classification schemes approve by the Archives, retention periods of records, reference systems, as well as deeds regarding destruction of records prior to the destruction of records. Also, institutions have the right to receive consultations and methodological aid from the Archives regarding records and archives management issues. Records with archival value which have been selected for permanent retention shall be transferred for permanent State retention to the Archives not later than 15 years after creation or receipt.

At the end of 2012, new regulations were issued in the records and archives management field - *Regulations Regarding Records and Archives Management and Procedures for the Transfer of Records for Permanent State Retention to the National Archives of Latvia*. Until then, since 2006, there have been no external regulatory enactments in Latvia which determine the procedures for the records and archives management, the criteria for determining the retention period for the record storage and the technical requirements for the preservation of records in the archives of the institutions. In Cabinet regulations, record management processes are regulated in compliance with the MoReq specifications (and versions 2 and 2010 thereof) guidelines on document classification and file management: electronic records are classified and grouped in files similar to paper records. The procedures for the description of records were also changed, because so far they were not suitable for describing and capturing information in an electronic environment. Also, prescribed multi-level description according to the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)). These Regulations shall include the provisions ensuring the description, preservation and use of electronic records of the institutions.

Duties of institutions and archives, which are specified in the Cabinet regulations:

1. To approve the records classification scheme and the retention periods of records, the nomenclature of files shall be submitted to the Archives once every three years. If a model nomenclature of files has been drawn up for institutions or groups thereof, institutions shall submit the nomenclature of files to the Archives for approval once every five years. Archives shall approve the records classification scheme and the time periods for records retention included in the nomenclature of files within three months and determine records of archival value.
2. An institution shall prepare records for retention within five years after the end of a records management period. If a longer time period is necessary, it shall be approved with the Archives. An institution shall submit a reference system (multi-level archival description scheme, multi-level archival description, inventory lists) to the Archives for approval. Archives shall approve the reference system submitted by an institution within three months.
3. A records destruction acts shall be drawn up for records (regardless of the form of information medium), the retention term of which has expired and sent to the Archives. Archives shall approve records destruction acts within three months. According to regulation, the files and records of short-term retention shall not be included in the referred-to act, if describing of records of permanent retention and records of long-term retention has not been performed for the relevant records management period.

Most institutions do not like this regulatory requirement, because it prevents the destruction of records. For Archives that is a good control mechanism to ensure that institutions describe their records.

2. UNIFIED STATE ARCHIVES INFORMATION SYSTEM

In 2012, the Archives introduced a Unified State Archives Information System (hereinafter – VVAIS). VVAIS is an essential element for the development and sustainability of the sector. Its establishment and development will ensure the long-term preservation and availability of electronic-created records and public-interest information systems in the future. VVAIS helps ensure the realization of basic functions of archives – the collection, preservation and accessibility of records (including – electronic). VVAIS in day-to-day work, Archives employees began its use in 2015.

The main objective of the VVAIS is to help store and manage information on archival files and records or systematization elements (text records, electronic records, film records, video records, photo records, sound records) or record sets or description units (fonds and series).

The system consists of three environments:

- the working environment (internal environment) is intended for the maintenance of information. The main users of the working environment are Archives' employees;
- a public environment in which e-services are available to public users and possibilities for searching and viewing public information (describing unit and thematic database);
- the institutional portal used by the staff of the institutions.

VVAIS supports the following processes:

1. *Supervision of institutions* - the system shall ensure the possibility of maintaining information related to the supervision of institutions (basic details of the institution, contact details, correspondence, approved documents and information about approval phase). The review and approval processes of submitted record classification schemes, time periods for retention of records, reference systems, and destruction acts also is provided in the system.
2. *Description of archival records* - creation and maintenance of the reference systems of the archival fonds — fonds, series, file description, archival description schemes and inventory lists in the system. The system also provides the ability to maintain authoritative record information. An authoritative record describes a person, organization or family who, during their lifetime, created or are otherwise related to archived records.
3. *Archives' records management* – Archives' internal records management system, that ensures activities with Archives' public records¹ throughout their life cycle - from their creation until destruction.
4. *Management of tasks and meetings* - By assigning tasks to system objects - records and customer requests - the system executes the movement of these objects - coordination, consideration, signing, execution, etc. A control and reporting function is also provided. Meetings are organized in the system by adding date, time, participants, issues to be discussed, related documents and provide the opportunity to comment and vote online.
5. *Execution of requests* - E-services provided in the system: requesting an archival reference, ordering a copy of audiovisual documents, registration for work in archival reading rooms, ordering documents for work in the reading room. Service processing and execution data is also stored.
6. *Researcher service* - Submission, registration, approval, data for processing documents' requests and information regarding the dates of issuance of documents in the reading room.
7. *Preservation of documents* - Supporting the document retention process: entering and maintaining data on storage units, maintenance of repository information and storage, acceptance of storage units, issuing of storage units, verification of the existence and physical condition of storage units, searching for missing things, destruction of storage units, ensuring the circulation of restoration orders, storage copy support - microfilming and digitization support.

¹ *Public record* - a record created or received as a result of activity of an institution.

3. INSTITUTIONAL PORTAL

This specialized VVAIS module is a good opportunity for institutions to describe (according to the International Archives Standard ISAD(G)) their records online. Archives also benefit from this, as the information goes directly to the database, which makes it easier for the Archives to collect information about the archival fonds and for ensuring its availability and use to the public.

Institutions may use e-services available in the Institutional Portal by signing a contract with the Archives.

Viewing and maintaining the information on the Institutional portal is done in the system work environment. Work with system objects by viewing them, entering object data, and performing other operations required for maintaining the system.

The Institutional portal is used:

- to view and update the institution's data;
- for consultation;
- to submit documents to the Archives ;
- develop and coordinate the multi-level archival description scheme, multi-level archival descriptions and inventory lists;
- preparing acts of transfer-of-storage units;
- to transfer electronic records online (at the moment this functionality is not available).

4. ARCHIVING OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Archiving of electronic records is currently the Archives priority. In 2017, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Developments, which is responsible for the field of electronic administration, information society and Information Technology state administration in Latvia, developed an Information report "*On electronic record circulation between Ministries and institutions subordinate to them*". The report identified problems in the field of electronic record circulation – electronic communication with courts, electronic circulation of restricted access information and archiving of electronic records.

The report was submitted for consideration to the Cabinet and on this basis a decision was made that ministries, institutions subordinate to them and the State chancellery are to provide:

1. Mutual circulation of documents - no later than June 1, 2018, it is necessary to switch to the use of electronic records (with the exception of restrictions established by regulatory enactments). *To our surprise, this process was implemented and carried out successfully.*
2. No later than August 1, 2020, the electronic information systems under their responsibility, in which records are stored permanently, should be aligned with the VVAIS. *At the moment, as known to the Archives, there are 10 institutions have successfully adapted and about 50, which are in the process (from about 500, half of which are also holders of State information systems). Institutions often lack the necessary communication between staff responsible for*

document management and IT professionals. Archives still lack human resources, as the remuneration that archives can offer in the IT field is not competitive. Over the past year, the Archives has finally managed to employ 2 qualified specialists, who are now successfully cooperating and advising IT specialists of institutions in a field of archiving electronic records.

At present, the proportion of electronic records is about 98% in individual institutions, but on average it ranges between 50 and 60%.

The appraisal of electronic records (also data included in information systems) is carried out by approving the nomenclature of the institutions' files and by approving retention periods of records. Likewise, the nomenclature of files contains information about the record creation/storage environment. The Archives also maintain a requirement that data/data sets/registers in systems should be included in the nomenclature of files by setting retention periods.

For most data from State information systems the term of retention period has already been determined in regulatory enactments. Also, the functionality of the systems and the main data groups are described which facilitates the appraisal. Also, Archives' specialists go to the institution to survey and appraise the specific information system and determine the data sets and their retention periods together with the representatives of the institutions.

In Latvia, normative acts determine that electronic records are transferred to State storage no later than 5 years after their creation. This rule does not work yet. Since most institutions began to actively use electronic records with a secure electronic signature in 2011 or 2012, there was also a shift to the new system of record description. Also, the developers of electronic record management and other information systems are not in a hurry to adapt their systems for automatic permanent retention records transfer to the Archives, although the requirements for data retrieval and XML schema has been made known as early as 2011.

The electronic records shall be described in the same way as the paper documents, and the requirements are set by the Cabinet regulations. In creating a multi-level archival description, an institution shall perform describing in one of three ways:

1. in the VVAIS;
2. in the information system of the institution which ensures describing of records in conformity with the following requirements:
 - 2.1. retrieval of all the necessary information regarding each level of description and registration lists of storage units and electronic records level from the system is possible;
 - 2.2. descriptions are retrieved in electronic form in XML format (the structure of the form shall be approved with the Archives) or using the spreadsheets referred to in Annexes to Regulation regarding records and archives management;
3. in spreadsheets referred to in Annexes to Regulation regarding records and archives management.

Describing audio-visual, photo and sound records, the elements of description shall be approved by the Archives. These documents are also described in spreadsheets. Examples of spreadsheets with explanations are available to everyone on the Archives Portal.

5. PROCESS OF ACQUISITION OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

In order to transfer electronic records (including audiovisual, photo and sound records), institutions or private individuals enter into agreement regarding transferring those records for permanent State retention.

Agreement of electronic record transfer to the Archives should include the following conditions:

1. format, encoding, size and data carrier;
2. the time period for transfer of the records;
3. content and design of the transfer package;
4. the rights and restrictions of the use and accessibility of the records;
5. the term of control examination.

For now, we distinguish three scenarios of electronic records acquisition by record type:

1. Audio-visual, photo and sound records.
2. Databases. Currently we have a pilot project for database acquisition using SIARD Suit format developed by the Swiss Federal Archives for archiving of relational databases.
3. Electronically signed public records and office formats regulated by the government such as pdf, docx, xlsx etc.
4. GEO data (pilot project).

In general, the Archives uses the Open Archival Information System (hereinafter - OAIS) standard which describes the working model of the Archives information system. Currently the OAIS applies only to electronically signed records and office formats. Thus the first two scenarios are realized in the way that Archives receives records from institutions in accordance with inventory list without creating Submission Information Package (hereinafter - SIP) packages.

Electronically signed records and office format record acquisition consists of several steps:

1. the Archives agrees which records the institution will transfer in the current year;
2. the Archives creates an Encoded Archival Description (hereinafter EAD) from a pre-agreed institution inventory list from VVAIS;
3. the institution prepares records which consist of records itself and metadata about records in XML format in accordance with XSD schema created by Archives;

4. using the SIP creator, the institution imports the EAD and prepares records and metadata;
5. when import is done and there is no validation mistakes, the institution creates the SIP package and transfer it to the Archives;
6. SIP packages are imported to the Archives storage solution Tessella SDB.

In the majority of cases, storage and management approach of electronic records in institutions are different. Even though the mentioned steps are easy to follow, in practice institutions implement the archival module in the record management system slowly and often they store electronic records on external HDD, or even on a desktop computer without backup. It shows that there are still a lot of issues concerning the archiving of electronic records.

During the last two years, the Archives and institutions made a great leap forward in questions of archiving of electronic records. One of the biggest achievements is established communication. It gives us the ground where we can move forward. For now, around 60 institutions are in close cooperation with the Archives and already 10 have aligned their information system with VVAIS.

One of the tasks of VVAIS - electronic record acquisition - is based on 2012 year technical solutions. Because of the rapid development of the electronic record archiving industry, those solutions are already morally obsolete and are inconvenient for users without special knowledge of XML.

In 2017, the European Commission funded the E-ARK Project, which developed new standards for electronic record archiving. VVAIS, however, does not comply with them. Standards have a very important role to play in ensuring the exchange of archival information within EU countries. In view of these very significant arguments, additional state budget funding is needed to update VVAIS.

At the moment, the shift from Tessella SDB to the latest version of Preservica has been launched. In this way, within its own limited budget, the Archives intends to avoid the VVAIS errors and to provide the description, acquisition, preservation and accessibility of electronic documents and data.

6. CONCLUSION

Archives become more accessible to the public and our challenge and priority is archiving electronic records, which includes appraisal, description and acquisition of electronic records and information system data sets.

Archives should often be very flexible when it comes to electronic records. On the one hand we have a variety of standards and regulations, but on the other hand, cases might be different. For example, when you meet new file formats created by institutions; or some weird storage issues, like institution is obligated to store attachments to paper documents on CDs and those CDs are original archival material, meaning you cannot destroy them by law.

Archives have a limited budget and staff, as well as insufficient skills and qualifications. Thus, archives currently have a limited capability to develop, implement and test new strategies for adapting to the rapid development of information technologies.

However, considering the above, we try to follow the principle that innovation processes are much more successful when methods and tools are already known, they

are tested and successfully used. Respectively in our case best approach is to learn from others' experiences.

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Državni arhiv Latvije sodeluje z ustvarjalci kulturne dediščine ter nadzoruje rokovanje z zapisi in arhivskim gradivom. Hkrati jim nudi tudi strokovno svetovanje na področju upravljanja z zapisi.

Informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije so danes postale del našega vsakdanjega življenja, osnovne informacije, potrebne za njihovo izvajanje in za sprejemanje odločitev, se zbirajo v podatkovnih bazah ali informacijskih sistemih. Raznolikost elektronskih informacij je velika, vsako leto raste in postavlja vedno nove izzive za arhive. Leta 2012 je bil predstavljen enotni informacijski sistem državnega arhiva, izdani pa so bili tudi predpisi, ki urejajo upravljanje z dokumentarnim in arhivskim gradivom. Omenjeni informacijski sistem je bistven element za razvoj in vzdržnost arhivskega sektorja, razvoj sistema pa bo zagotovil dolgoročno hrambo in dostopnost elektronsko nastalih dokumentov in javnih informacij za prihodnost. Sistem podpira osnovne naloge v arhivih – zbiranje, hrambo zapisov in dostop do njih. Poseben modul

sistema, »Portal za ustvarjalce«, daje ustvarjalcem možnost popisovanja dokumentov po standardu ISAD(G).

Prioriteta Državnega arhiva Latvije je vrednotenje, popisovanje in prevzemanje elektronskega gradiva ter podatkovnih nizov informacijskih sistemov. Prispevek obravnava pristop k naštetemu z različnih vidikov. Podaja pregled enotnega informacijskega sistema državnega arhiva in opiše postopek prevzema elektronskega gradiva: standarde, orodja in formate, tipe ustvarjenih zapisov, trenutno situacijo pri ustvarjalcih ter sodelovanje med arhivom in ustvarjalcem pri prevzemu gradiva glede na zakonodajo in standarde.