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## ARCHIVAL COLLABORATION OF CZECH ARCHIVES WITHIN CENTRAL EUROPE

### Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to present the main areas of international cooperation in Czech archives, especially within Central Europe. Cooperation is developed both within the framework of membership in the International Council on Archives (and its organisations) and on the basis of direct cooperation agreements with archival institutions abroad. Long-term research of archival materials in various foreign archives, as well as participation in various conferences and meetings, is ongoing. Significant international cooperation is associated in particular with the ICARUS association, in connection with the "Monasterium" project. An example of international cooperation, this time connecting two countries/regions, the Czech Republic and Bavaria, is the archival web portal "Porta fontium". The Czech Archival Society, as a professional organisation of Czech archivists, has also been developing cooperation with neighbouring Central European countries for a long time. The official concept of archival development in the Czech Republic between the years 2018 and 2025 with a view to 2035 emphasises internal problems and does not mention international cooperation, but there is no reason to fear that this area will not continue to be developed.*

**Keywords:** *International Council on Archives, National archive, state archives, research of archival material, ICARUS - Monasterium, Czech Archival Society*

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## ARCHIVAL COLLABORATION OF CZECH ARCHIVES WITHIN CENTRAL EUROPE

International cooperation between Czech archives has been underway since the times of Czechoslovakia (*Simkovičová, 2009*), which became a member (or rather its archival administration) of the International Council on Archives in 1958 (*Wanner, 2019*).<sup>2</sup> Joining the Council resulted in an opportunity to renew or establish good relations with foreign colleagues and to take a more intense interest in archival developments abroad. However, the actual cooperation was primarily influenced by the political conditions and limited to other socialist countries.

### 1.1 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVAL ADMINISTRATION AND RECORDS SERVICE AT THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

The independent Czech Republic, which came into being on 1 January 1993, has continued its membership in the International Council on Archives and is a member of the European Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (EURBICA) (*Simkovičová, 2009, pp. 362–363*). After 2001, activities related to the membership of the Department of Archive Administration and Records Service of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic in the European Board of National Archivists (EBNA) increased, bringing together representatives of national archives or archival administrations or directorates of EU members and accession countries. The meetings take place twice a year in the country holding the EU Presidency. Closely related to this was the creation of the Commission of National Archives Experts, organised by the European Commission, which has evolved into the European Archives Group (EAG), which meets twice a year in Brussels (*Simkovičová, 2009, pp. 364–365; Wanner 2013a,b*).

Another area is cooperation on the basis of implementing protocols for intergovernmental cultural agreements, especially within the framework of direct cooperation agreements with archival institutions abroad. From 1991 to October 2006, fourteen such agreements were concluded, mainly with neighbouring countries (Germany, Poland, Austria, Russia, Slovenia, Italy, France, Romania, Croatia, and the Ukraine) (*Simkovičová, 2009, pp. 368–369*). These agreements include visits by foreign guests, arranged by the Department of Archive Administration and Records Service of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, primarily to study in archives and learn about the National Archives' professional activities.

### 1.2 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND STATE ARCHIVES

Since 2005, the Czech archival sector has also been represented in the DLM (Document Lifecycle Management) Forum, of which the National Archives is currently a member. The DLM Forum includes public archives, IT companies, academics and other entities interested in archiving, records management, document management and information lifecycle. It is an EU partner organisation that issues expert recommendations and opinions, model requirements, etc. in handling various documents in digital form, including their long-term preservation. It currently takes the traditional form of a foundation. In recent years, representatives of the National Archives in Prague, as well as Dr Michal Wanner, the permanent representative of the Department of Archival Administration and Records Management of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, have par-

2 The Czech archivist and historian Václav Husa (1906–1965) was one of the members of the so-called Temporary Council, which met in Paris from 9 to 11 June 1948, and a member of the first Executive Committee. The application to the International Council on Archives was sent to Paris in June 1958, after the archival administrations of the USSR, Poland, Romania and Hungary and the main state archives of the GDR had become members of the ICA, and after the application had been approved by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

ticipated in meetings in Lisbon, Oslo, Bern, Helsinki and Tallinn (*Simkovičová, 2009, pp. 365–367*).<sup>3</sup> The DLM Forum and other areas of European cooperation (EBNA, EAG) were connected with several projects in which Czech archivists also participated – Standard MoReq2, APEx (Archives Portal Europe), APEnet, Europeana, European cooperation in the field of conservation, etc. (*Wanner, 2010, 2015a,b, 2017a,b, 2018*).

Long-term research of archival materials in various foreign archives is ongoing. In recent years, the National Archives staff, have been studying materials in German archives (Berlin, Munich) as a part of the project "Nazi Occupational Administration", relating to the administration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>4</sup> To publish an edition of reports of the papal nuncios at the imperial court in Prague (Cesare Speciano, 1592–1598, and Antonio Caetano, 1607–1611), long-term research has been carried out in the Vatican Apostolic Archives, as well as in the Vatican Library or the Ambrosian Library in Milano and other archives in Rome, in cooperation with the restored Czech Historical Institute in Rome (*Černušák, 2013, 2017; Pazderová, 2016*). The collaboration between the National Archives in Prague and the Austrian State Archives in Vienna has been intensive and long-lasting (*Simkovičová 2009, p. 370*), resulting in the extensive book *A Guide for the Czech Visitor*, published in 2013 (*Drašarová et al., 2013*), and various studies (e. g. *Vojáček – Kahuda, 2014*).

Since the 1990s, cooperation between the National (formerly State Central) Archives in Prague and the Italian archivists has been successfully developing within the framework of a cultural agreement between the archival administrations of the Czech and Italian Republics, as well as research into the holdings of the State Archives in Florence in connection with the archival fonds of the Tuscan Habsburg Family Archives, stored at the National Archives in Prague (*Gregorovičová, 2013; Simkovičová, 2009, pp. 369–370*). In addition to the actual study of archival materials, cooperation also took the form of various consultations, preparation of inventories, participation in conferences and publications (editions, articles). The most visible result of this cooperation was the organisation of exciting exhibitions (*Benešová, 2004*). Already in 1991, the then State Central Archive lent a large set of maps and plans from the collection above, first for a show at the State Archives in Florence ("Lorraine Tuscany in the Maps of the State Central Archive in Prague") (*Gregorovičová – Semotanová, 1992*), and then for a similar exhibition in Siena in 1997 ("Manuscripts and Maps of the State Central Archive in Prague. The Treasure of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany"). A selection of the exhibited materials was later presented in Prague, first in the exhibition "Italian Tuscany on Maps of the 18th and 19th Centuries" (1992) and later in the exhibition "Siena in Prague", organised in 2000 in cooperation with the National Gallery in Prague and the Archive and University of Siena, so that it was possible to supplement the archival material with loaned works of art (*Pazderová – Bonneli Conenna, 2000; Siena in Praga*). This was followed in 2003 by a smaller exhibition at the State Central Archive entitled "The Hidden Charm of Letter Papers, Small applied arts in Tuscan correspondence stored in the State Central Archive in Prague" (*Gregorovičová – Nevímová, 2003*). These exhibitions have thus also become an important proof of the cooperation between Czech and Italian archivists.

Archivists from the Czech Republic also actively participate in meetings of archivists and staff of other memory institutions from Germany and the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe, where Germans lived in the past and which manage the archives of the German-speaking population, i.e. in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Roma-

3 See <https://www.nacr.cz/o-nas/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-za-rok-2019#zahranici>, <https://www.nacr.cz/o-nas/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-za-rok-2021#zahranici21>.

4 See <https://www.nacr.cz/o-nas/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-za-rok-2021#zahranici21>, <https://www.nacr.cz/o-nas/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-za-rok-2019#zahranici>.

nia, Slovenia, etc. These meetings have been held regularly since 2010 (annually until 2013 and biennial since 2015) in the German spa town of Bad Kissingen in Bavaria and are devoted to various issues related to archives and archival material (information on different archival materials and archival collections, their content, processing and use, digitisation of archival materials and making them available online, as well as the retrieval of personal archival materials such as memories or diaries and interviews with survivors) (Kravar, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2020; Heßdörfer – Kluttig, 2011; Riedel – Souhr, 2012; Armgart, 2013; Armgart, 2014; Krämer-Riedel, 2016).

Various archival internships are also available on the basis of international agreements, especially at the French National Archives or the German Archivschule Marburg (Simkovičová, 2009, p. 373). Most of the international cooperation, however, is carried out within the framework of specific projects between Czech archives and various foreign institutions, within the framework of cross-border cooperation, in the framework of research projects and also in the form of research stays in multiple archives, especially in neighbouring countries (Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Hungary). The project "The process of the constitution of historical sources in the perspective of the interaction of archival and historical science and the theory of the value of (archival) documents" implemented at the State Regional Archives in Prague and supported by the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) in cooperation with the Archivschule Marburg (Germany), was one of the most recent projects.<sup>5</sup> Information on foreign contacts and trips is mainly provided by the annual reports of individual archives and summary reports published in the leading archival periodical, the Archivní časopis (Archival Journal) (Weinlichová, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018; Dostálová, 2019, 2020; Simkovičová, 2009, pp. 376–438).<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3 MONASTERIUM AND ICARUS

Significant international cooperation is associated primarily with the ICARUS association, founded in 2008, following the "Monasterium" project ([www.monasterium.net](http://www.monasterium.net)), founded in 2001 in the diocesan archives in St. Pölten in Lower Austria. Its main aim was to create a virtual online archive of medieval and early modern documents, first from Lower Austrian and Austrian monasteries, but gradually also from monastic archives in other countries and from other archives of mainly ecclesiastical provenance from the whole of Central Europe. The main coordinators of the project were representatives of the Institute zur Erforschung und Erschließung kirchlicher Quellen, based in St. Pölten. The project involved numerous church institutions, public and private archives and universities from Austria, but also from other countries – Bavaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland and Italy. In 2005, the National Archives in Prague began to participate in this project. The National Archives contain archives and documents of important church institutions, including the archives of formerly dissolved monasteries and deposited materials of monasteries restored after 1990 (Simkovičová, 2009, p. 371; Křečková, 2009, 2010). In total, there are 13 archival fonds of ecclesiastical provenance and, in addition, five non-ecclesiastical fonds, whose documentary collections, however, also primarily concern ecclesiastical issues. These documents were digitised by the end of 2006, followed in 2007 by the digitisation of the records of the Archive of the Czech Crown. This is one of the oldest and most valuable archival collections of the Czech state, and its content goes beyond its scope, and gradually the documents from other

5 See <http://www.soapraha.cz/Files/vyrocní-zpráva-2018.pdf>.

6 However, only the travels of employees of state archives and the archival administration of the Ministry of the Interior are recorded, not those of other types of archives (especially archives of universities and scientific institutions). Simkovičová 2009, pp. 376–438, gives an overview of foreign trips of Czech archivists after 1945, but especially after 1990, until 2007.

collections were digitised. In the next phase, documents from other archives, not only from the state archives (the Moravian Land Archive in Brno, the Land Archive in Opava, the state regional archives in Prague, Třeboň, Plzeň, Litoměřice and Zámrsrk) were digitised, but also from other archives in the Czech Republic holding important collections of ecclesiastical documents (the Archives of Charles University, the Archives of Prague Castle, the Archives of the National Museum, the Archives of the Cistercian Monastery in Vyšší Brod) (Křečková – Pazderová 2007; Křečková 2007, 2008). The International Center for Archival Research (ICARUS) itself was founded on the basis of written statements from the archives and institutions of the countries participating in the "Monasterium" project as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience in European archiving, which was also intended to assist in the creation and implementation of specific projects, including the raising of funds. The founding general assembly of the association took place on 11 June 2008 in Bratislava and today the association brings together over 180 archives and research institutions (mainly university departments) from 33 European countries as well as Canada and the United States (Křečková, 2009, 2010).<sup>7</sup>

The "Monasterium" project was then gradually followed by other new projects – "Matricula" (creation of a portal of church registers of Central Europe – however, only the Moravian Land Archive in Brno was involved from the Czech Republic), "Charters Network 2008–2010" (with the involvement of the National Archives in Prague, Moravian Land Archive in Brno, the Land Archive in Opava and the state regional archives in Prague, Třeboň, Plzeň, Litoměřice and Zámrsrk), "Cadastral Maps" (the Czech Republic is involved in the Land Archive in Opava), ENAC (European Network on Archival Cooperation), "Topoteque", "Timemachine", "European Digital Treasures".<sup>8</sup> In cooperation with the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes (IRHT) in Paris, a research institution under the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), the project "History of Medieval Europe" (HOME) has been running since 2019, focusing on the processing of texts of scanned documents of medieval offices in the framework of eHumanities.<sup>9</sup> For now, the latest event within the ICARUS organisation (and the European Digital Treasures project) is the exhibition "Europa, wer bist du? Menschen, Mächte, Mythen" (*The Construction of Europe; European Discoveries; Exiles, Migrators, Flows and Solidarity*), organised in cooperation with the national archives of Hungary, Malta, Spain, Portugal and Norway (using some documents from other national archives, including the National Archives of the Czech Republic), which will take place at the Diocesan Museum in St. Pölten in three parts from 7 May to 30 October 2022.<sup>10</sup>

#### 1.4 ARCHIVE WEB PORTAL PORTA FONTIUM

Another example of significant international cooperation, this time connecting two countries, is the archival web portal "Porta fontium" (<http://www.portafontium.eu/>), implemented in cooperation between the State Regional Archives in Pilsen and the General Directorate of the Bavarian Archives. At its very inception there was the project named "Bavarian-Czech Network of Digital Historical Sources" (2010–2012), followed upon by "Czech-Bavarian Archival Guide" (2013–2015), the purpose of which was to map the terrain of archival materials on both sides of the Czech-Bavarian border. Soon digitisation of selected archival material from West-Bohemian and some Bavarian state ar-

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.icar-us.eu/en/>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.icar-us.eu/en/cooperation/online-portals/>, <https://www.icar-us.eu/en/cooperation/projects/>, <https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/>, <https://www.topothek.at/de/>, <https://www.timemachine.eu/>, <https://www.digitaltreasures.eu/>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.nacr.cz/o-nas/vyrocní-zpravy/vyrocní-zprava-za-rok-2019#zahranici>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.digitaltreasures.eu/>, <https://www.museumamdom.at/>.

chives started, namely parish records (which Pilsen started to digitise even before and made them accessible, from 2010, through Acta Publica web application in partnership with Moravian Land Archive), but also land registers and *urbaria*, chronicles, photographs, documents, census logs, periodicals, police conscription records for the city of Pilsen from years 1918–1941 or list of guests in West-Bohemia spas. Digitised materials have been accessible on the portal since November 2012, and they are still used by the researchers. The original project has expanded and taken the form of a database, which was made accessible in May 2015 and is to bring detailed information on archival collections in all state archives of the Czech Republic (not just in Western Bohemia) which include the so-called *Bavariana*, and collections in the state archives of Bavaria which include the so-called *Bohemica*. At the same time, archival collections, formerly divided and located in various archives on both sides of the border, are to be virtually interconnected, such as documents from the Waldsassen monastery stored in the State Archive in Amberg and in the State District Archive in Cheb (*Augustin – Halla, 2017*).

This Czech-Bavarian project continued in the years 2014–2020 under the title “Modern Access to Historical Sources”, in June 2021 its results were presented at the final workshop “New Technologies in Exploring the Past” in the Czech Republic, on 29 June 2022 a similar workshop “Digitale Quellen – digitale Methoden” was held in Munich.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.5 ACTIVITIES OF THE CZECH ARCHIVAL SOCIETY

The Czech Archival Society, a professional organisation of Czech archivists founded in 1990, has been developing cooperation with neighbouring Central European countries for a long time. The cooperation is mainly in the form of participation of representatives of the CAS at archival congresses or conferences in neighbouring countries (Slovakia, Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary) and, in turn, representatives of archival organisations of these countries at national archival conferences in the Czech Republic. Reports of participants in foreign events are regularly published in the yearbook of the ČAS. More significant is the cooperation within the so-called Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary), which was established on the basis of a mutual declaration in 2007. It has resulted in several joint meetings, such as the conference “Culinary Heritage in Documents” (Warsaw 2009) (*Ryantová, 2010*), a meeting on sources in Russian archives (Gödöllő 2015) or an “archival picnic” (Warsaw 2015) (*Đurčanský – Ryantová, 2016*), and in 2016 a joint international travelling exhibition of reproductions of archival documents entitled “From Visegrad to Visegrad” was organised, launched in Warsaw and then presented in other countries and cities (*Svoboda – Valůšek, 2017*).

In June 2010, the Czech Archival Society also organised a Czech-Saxon meeting of archivists, following on from the previous Saxon-Czech meetings and associated with a conference on “Sources for Bohemian/Saxon history in the archives of both countries” (*Richter-Laugwitz, 2010; Ryantová et al., 2011*). Two years later, an international conference on “Tuition Archival Science – Development, Tasks and Perspectives” was held in České Budějovice, co-organised by the Czech Archival Society and the Institute of Archival Science and Historical Auxiliary Sciences of the Faculty of Arts of the University of South Bohemia, with speakers from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, as well as from Austria, Germany and the Netherlands (*Ryantová, 2014*), and students of archival science also participated in the organisation of the conference.

11 See <https://www.portafontium.eu/article/moderner-zugang-zu-historischen-quellen?language=de>, <https://www.portafontium.eu/article/workshop-2021-bericht>, <https://www.portafontium.eu/article/workshop-juni-2022>, <https://www.portafontium.eu/sites/default/files/programm-anmeldung-workshop-2022-06.pdf>.



In March 2013, the Czech Archival Society co-organised the traditional spring meeting of German and Austrian archivists of universities and scientific institutions (associated in Germany since 1978 in the professional group of the Association of German Archivists and Archivists and similarly since 2008 in Austria in the professional group of the Association of Austrian Archivists). This meeting took place in Prague in the context of the idea of a wider cooperation between university archives and scientific institutions in the Central European area (Becker, 2013; Blecher – Happ, 2014). Due to the positive course of this event, it was decided to continue these wider meetings, and so the next one was held in Vienna in April 2017 (Blecher – Happ – Mikoletzky, 2018) and the last one in Munich in April 2022.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The presented paper could not present the archival cooperation of archives and archivists of the Czech Republic in its entirety (it is only possible to mention, for example, the study stays of university teachers, but also teachers within the Erasmus programme and related contacts). Its aim was to highlight at least the most important activities. Although the official concept of archival development in the Czech Republic between the years 2018 and 2025 with a view to 2035 emphasises internal problems and does not mention international cooperation, there is no reason to fear that this area will not continue to be developed, whether it is participation in the activities of international organisations, participation in various conferences or meetings, research of archival material in various foreign archives or other activities.

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12 See <https://app.guestoo.de/public/event/e843dcae-ca91-467f-ba61-6fcacc48febe>.

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