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Bulgarian Legislation: the Valorisation of Archival Records and the New Information Technologies. A Search for New Decisions to Extend the Public Access to Documental Heritage

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To be effective in the archives, this process requires a stable legislation, good planning, clear ideas, focusing on the end users and their needs, selection and analysis of appropriate forms to meet new needs and to operate in new conditions, to start pilot projects and experiments, search for new methods and ways to full integration in the new context, as well as to keep training the employees according to the new needs. The present report has a purpose to present the access to the information of the documents through the prism of the effective legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as to trace the valorisation of the archival records and the use of the new information technologies.

DIMITROVA, Ivelina, La legislazione in Bulgaria: la valorizzazione dei documenti archivistici e le nuove tecnologie dell'informazione. Ricerca di una nuova decisione per estendere l'accesso pubblico al patrimonio documentale. Atlanti, Vol. 18, Trieste 2008, pp. 343-352.

Per l'efficienza dell'archivio, servono una legislazione stabile, una buona pianificazione, idee chiare, focalizzarsi sull'utenza ed i suoi bisogni, selezione ed analisi dei modi appropriati per venire incontro alle nuove esigenze ed operare in condizioni nuove, far partire progetti ed esperimenti pilota, ricercare nuovi metodi e modi per integrarsi pienamente nel nuovo contesto, così come una formazione permanente del personale in accordo con i nuovi bisogni. Questo articolo ha lo scopo di presentare l'accesso alle informazioni attraverso il prisma della legislazione vigente in

The development and improvement of the information society observed through the last years, laid down a lot of challenges in front of the archival community which impose search, finding and introducing new decisions and approaches, which will ensure quick and easy access to information and promotion of the documentary heritage of Bulgaria and its contribution to the European history and culture. The information society is a society where the production, the spread and the use of information, including documents, are basic economic, political and cultural activities. Part of the characteristics of this society is the use of information and communication technologies and replacement of the traditional paper documents with electronic ones in all economic and social spheres.

The present report has a purpose to present the access to the information of the documents through the prism of the effective legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as to trace the valorization of the archival records and the use of the new information technologies.

The process of distribution and use of the results from previous projects with the purpose to optimize their value and increase their influence is defined by the French term "valorization". To be effective in the archives, this process requires a stable legislation, good planning, clear ideas, focusing on the end users and their needs, selection and analysis of appropriate forms to meet new needs and to operate in new conditions, to start pilot projects and experiments, search for new methods and ways to full integration in the new context, as well as to keep training the employees according to the new needs.

The search for new ways of using and offering archival records is determined not only by the ambition of those who work in the archival system to make the access to documents easier and faster, but also by users' search for information. To provide better access to the electronic information requires a partnership between the public administrations and the institutions. In the world of constant and quick changes, the modern archives in 21st century are a unit of the stable state administration and guarantee the access to information and to the important documents and archives. These are some of the most important requirements for a democratic functioning of the society. As a part of the public administration, the archives ensure the preservation of the documents with historical value, which are

used by the state institutions, organizations and departments as proofs of their rights. From another hand, they provide transparency for the citizens in respect to the effectiveness of the administration. The Republic of Bulgaria is a country where the legislation provides freedom of information. A few laws are effective which guarantee the access of citizens to documents kept in archives of organizations, as well as documents, component of the National Archival Fonds.

The Law on access to public information regulates the public relations connected with the right to access to public information in newly created documents, as well as repeated usage of the information from the public sector. In the sense of this law it is the information objectivized on paper, electronic or other storage, collected or created by the organization from the public sector, connected with the social life in the Republic of Bulgaria and giving opportunity to the citizens to make their own opinion about the activity of the subjects obliged by law. With a purpose of providing transparency in the activity of the administration and for maximum facilitating the access to public information, each head of administrative structure in the system of the executive power periodically publishes current information which contains description of its prerogatives and data for the organization, the function and responsibilities of the administration headed by him, a list of the issued acts in pursuance of his prerogatives; description of the information massifs and resources, used by the particular administration.

In the close past, the whole structure of the Bulgarian administration was orientated in such a way that in order to collect the necessary information, the citizen had to visit many administrations. The Law on electronic government was adopted in June 2007, it comes into force from July 2008 and it totally turns the administration towards the citizens and the business, i.e. they have access to the administrative services from one place and this is the National gateway. This law puts Bulgaria on one of the first places in the so-called rank list for orientation towards the client. The creation of electronic government has no alternative and is very important for the future existence of the state mechanism in the age of globalization. Each public institution is obliged to comply with the postulates of the approved in 2004 Strategy for electronic government and its related normative acts, specifying the services for the citizens which the state institutions are obliged to do in relation to the right of access to public information.

In the development of the modern communications the documenting means change. Paper documents are still produced but electronic documents come in large number. In view of that in 2001 in the Republic of Bulgaria was approved Law on Electronic Document and Electronic Signature, which regulates the definitions of the terms "electronic document", "electronic declaration" and "electronic signature". For the Bulgarian archivists the existence, the use and the preservation of the electronic documents are a new challenge. In practice, the assembling of such documents in the Bulgarian archives still did not begin. A bigger part of the created in this moment electronic documents are duplicated on paper too, and in the classifications of the files, the terms for preservation are the same, as well as the terms of the paper documents. The expert examination of the value of these documents requires new competences and knowledge.

Bulgaria, così come delineare la valorizzazione dei documenti d'archivio e l'uso delle nuove tecnologie informatiche.

DIMITROVA, Ivelina, Bolgarska zakonodaja: valorizacija arhivskega gradiva in nova informacijska tehnologija. Iskanje novih odločitev za večji dostop do arhivske dediščine. Atlanti, Zv. 18, Trst 2008, str. 343-352.

Da bi bili arhivi učinkoviti, morajo v svojem delovanju imeti stabilno zakonodajo, dobro planiranje in jasne cilje, ki se zrcalijo v željah uporabnikov, v spremljanju njihovih potreb in raziskovalne izbire in so v skladu analiziranja primernih oblik in potreb delovanja v novih pogojih, to pomeni, kako začeti nove projekte in razne eksperimente in kako biti uspešen v iskanju novih metod in poti, da bi se nove pridobitve učinkovito povezovale, po drugi strani pa biti učinkovit in dinamičen v tem, da zaposleni sledijo izobraževanju in se znajo vključevati v nove zahteve. Namen tega prispevka je v pripravi pristopa do informacij, ki jih nudi dokumentacija v skladu zakonodaje v Bolgariji, kakor tudi v sledenju pravilni valorizaciji dokumentov, še posebej v smislu nove informacijske tehnologije.

SUMMARY

The development and improvement of the information society laid down a lot of challenges in front of the archival community which impose search, finding and introducing new decisions and approaches, which will ensure quick and easy access to information and promotion of the documentary heritage of Bulgaria and its contribution to the European history and culture. In Republic of Bulgaria there is a few laws are effective which guarantee the access of citizens to documents kept in archives of organizations, as well as documents, component of the National Archival Fonds. The Archives State Agency creates new automated information system and Digital Archives for the sake of facilitating and expanding the access and use of the National archival heritage, widening the scope of provided archival services and affording new opportunities for research activity. The cooperation in the field of documents' valorization with other professions connected with the historical memory - librarians, museum curators, together with representatives of the information technologies will allow us, with the help of Internet, to provide new services, anticipating the expectations of the customers.

Now the practice exists to duplicate the electronic documents, which are in the interest of the State Archives, with text documents on paper. The reasons for the continuing parallel documentation and storage on an institutional level are complex. From legislative point of view the problems with the legal force of the electronic signature in Bulgaria are solved by admitting the validity of the electronic signature, which is its basic storage. Although, namely the problems, connected with the establishment of the copyright and the validity of the electronic signature give ground to the specialists to forecast the keeping of some administrative acts in both possible formats in the future.

In December 2006 the Law for Access and Disclosure of the Documents Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian citizen to the State Security and Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army was adopted. This act regulates the rules for access, disclosure, use and preservation of the documents of the State Security and of the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army, including their predecessors and assignees for the period from 9th September 1944 to 16th July 1991. For the application of the law a centralized archive of these documents is created. The documents from the State Security include also the documents of the Internal forces and the Intelligence department of the Border forces, created in the period from 9th September 1944 to 16th July 1991; criminal investigations carried out by the State Security; court cases on which as a result from the activity of State Security or the intelligence forces of the Bulgarian National Army sentences were pronounced. Source of information are the original documents, preserved by physical or juridical persons and submitted to the special commission on law and in the bodies of the state authority, notwithstanding the administrative acts for their destruction.

The Law on Protection of the Classified Information, adopted in 2002, formulates the public relations connected with the creation, working and keeping of classified information, as well as the conditions and the system for offering access to it. The aim of the law is to protect classified information against unauthorized access. The classified information in the sense of this law is the information which represents a state or official secret, as well as the foreign classified information. One year after the expiration of the term for protection, the documents are transferred to the State Archives and become part of the National Archival Fonds.

The documents of the National Archival Fonds of the Republic of Bulgaria are preserved in State Archives, archives and archival collections of cultural and public institutions, state and municipal museums, libraries, cultural clubs, religious organizations and private persons.

Most generally, the information serves the aims of documents' providing, the governing of the country, the development of science and culture, the protection of the rights and legal interests of the physical and juridical persons. The traditional forms of documents' use are various: the individual work of the users of archival information with the original of the document or its copy on a different carrier in the reading-rooms of the Archives, references in a correspondence way by giving copies on different carrier or reference on

the contents of the documents, exhibiting and promoting the documents in exhibitions and different media, publication of texts of documents on traditional and electronic carrier.

The use of the documents preserved in the Bulgarian Archives, is regulated by the Law on the National Archival Fonds. The state and municipal museums and libraries, the cultural clubs, the cultural, religious and other public institutions, preserving historically formed archival collections, as well as Archives which keep documents from certain type outside the system of the Archives State Agency, provide their documents for public use according to the same rules. The documents about the history of Bulgaria, which are kept in the private archives, are declared to the Archives State Agency or to its structures and are also used according to the regulations of this law.

The access to the documents is public, if there is not a legal ground for its restriction – copyright, presence of personal data, restriction required by donators, etc. Up to 2007 the foreign citizens could use the archival records only after stating the topic of their interest and obtaining permission by the General Department of Archives at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria (now Archives State Agency). By the entry into force of the new Law on the National Archival Fonds in 2007, this restriction was removed. In the aim of providing access, the Archives create finding aids on the documents which are also public.

The use of the originals of the documents outside the State Archives is not permitted. For the needs of the state bodies and organizations only verified copies of the documents - a component of the National Archival Fonds will be provided to physical and juridical persons.

Established as institutions which preserve the memory, the state and the culture of the nations, the Archives gradually take the role of an information source of scientific knowledge. The achievements in the field of information technologies and communications impose a transformation of the main information fonds of the State Archives in the Republic of Bulgaria which affects its total specialized activity. The tendency is to provide a maximum wide, easy and quick access to the archival resources, for scientific and educational needs and also for different information services offered to the citizens on the project "Electronic government".

The services that the Archives provide to the citizens approach more and more to the communication and non-material type of services, which is characteristic for modern communications. The previous model of the historical Archives is transformed from stationary into communicational. In this connection, the approved frame programmes of the European Union about the Archives as institutions, connected with the historical memory, are in conformity with the new generation of communications, which are directed through active, interactive and dynamic interaction with the users of retrospective documental information.

The interest of the readers and the requirements of the users of information are different, but they can be summarized: the creation of electronic finding aids, finding ways for efficient and quick search according to different criteria and key terms; an opportunity for crea-

tion of effective reference notes in the documents towards other information; the use and connection of the documents information with multimedia applications; an opportunity to create massifs which contain a big quantity of information, constantly accessible for use; shortening the time of information exchange between the institutions; full participation of the Archives in the building of an electronic government in Bulgaria by providing electronic administrative services in an electronic way. The challenges here are in developing optimal, modern and flexible policy of management of the provided information, its timely updating and addition, its offering in a way, which corresponds to the modern technological requirements and standards.

A short retrospection of the development and establishment of the information technologies in the Bulgarian Archives is the following:

Up to 1993 only attempts to create an electronic massif from catalogue descriptions were taken up. In 1993 in the Central State Archives of the Republic of Bulgaria card-indexes in automated way were created thematic. In 1994 the archival system was equipped with the first 33 personal computers, the first version of the unified Automated information system of the State Archives (AISSA) was developed and installed, for which employees from each territorial unit were trained. In 1995 a long-term strategy for installation of information technologies, including three basic stages was adopted: Building of Automated Information System of the State Archives (AISSA), Automated System for Management of the Archival Processes and Archives, read by machines. In the same year a centralized data base of AISSA was installed upon the main archival finding aids: "Fonds Amount", "Inventories" and "Catalogues". In 1996 an improved version of AISA was developed and installed, which includes the data basis "Partial Accessions", "Memories" and "Personal Fonds" and working instructions for preservation, protection and use of the informational massifs of AISA were prepared as well as the exchange of data with the central data base. In 1998 were created new thematic card-indexes in automated way in the Central State Archives and the territorial State Archives, situated in each district of the Republic of Bulgaria. In 1999 the Center for archival information which deals with these development and innovations was closed and the information entering the data bases decreases significantly. Departments on automation were opened in the Central State Archives - Sofia and the Central Military Archives - Veliko Turnovo.

Unfortunately the technical equipment has some defects - out-of-date computers and heterogeneity of the technical indicators. Because of the lack of unified strategy the entered information, which is the electronic data bank, is characterized by chaotic state in the massifs' formation, a low degree of use and duplicating of information. It consists of heterogeneous components, which do not correspond between themselves: structured information massif from records of the Automated Information System of the Archives, information massif of inventories in Word and Excel tables in the Central State Archives, non-systematized digital copies of documents in jpg, tif, PDF and other electronic formats which are made casually for the needs of promotion.

In 2001 a local network in the General Department of Archives was installed with an antivirus software and Internet access providing in the archival system has begun stage by stage. In 2002 the web site of the General Department of Archives was created and published. From it the visitors can introduce themselves to the history, the normative base, the statute, the structure, the international relations, the publications and the terms for access to the documents. Each territorial Archives is involved with a full list of the preserved fonds, the issued catalogues, the inventories and documental collections. Digitalized images of the most interesting documents are also published.

In 2006 an assignment was prepared with the requirements, compatible with the international archival standards, for developing of new Automated information system (AIS).

On the background of the development of the information technologies and the new requirements in the field of the use of information, the effective Automated Information System of the Archives (AISA) is insufficiently operational for accomplishment of the tasks connected with the registration, book-keeping and using of the documents, component of the National Archival Fonds of the Republic of Bulgaria. The finalization of the project on the development and the installation of the new information system is among the priority and main planning tasks of the Archives State Agency for 2008. This includes the accepting of new software product, providing of computer and communication equipment, tests of the systems, training of the employees, examination and correction of the available massifs in the old information system AISA and preparation of the data entered in other applications with the purpose of future transfer.

The development and installation of the new automated information system should satisfy many needs and requirements. It is necessary to provide simultaneous access of many users to the data base from all structural units of the Archives State Agency, to give opportunity for entry and correction of data, search and sorting of information, to prepare references and reports of managing nature, to standardize printing outputs and other characteristic functions for the automated information systems, to include web-based interface to the data base, giving opportunity for public access through Internet, to provide opportunity for managed migration of data of the old software product, to forecast an opportunity to join the scanned pictures to the existing descriptions in the data base on a "Document" level, to allow exchange of data in XML format, to be opened and flexible, built up on a module principle and to give opportunity to include new functions that serve other archival processes too. The system should accomplish the requirements and correspond to the Bulgarian national frame for operative compatibility of the information systems in the executive power approved by Council of Ministers' decision 482 from 2006.

Undoubtedly the work with electronic documents is connected with other challenges - their preservation and use. The protection and preservation of the archival records was connected by now mainly with their physical protection. With the penetration of the electronic documents the Archives face key moments which require analysis

and decision: it exists a diversity of the technical storages for preservation and the necessary software and technical equipment with the purpose of providing their using after meanwhile; it is necessary to be guaranteed the measures for the insurance of the verification and against falsification; the physical preservation should provide a long-term life of the storages; new requirements towards the professional knowledge and skills of the people who work like “archivists”. In the quickly developing global information society the profession of the archivist has an encyclopaedic nature, open to the technological innovations and one of the most dynamically changing professions. This imposes to study the new methods and the new ways of use the documents within the specialized courses of the universities.

A short example of such preparation is the practical training in archival science at South-West University Neofit Rilski – Blagoevgrad in the frames of an university course on this subject. Partners are the University and the Territorial State Archives - Blagoevgrad. Along with the studying of the main archival processes, the students in history are trained in the creation of a digitalized body of documents. The aim of the training is to practise the students using the new technologies in the Archives and including them in the scientific and informational and promoting activity of the local Archives, which through the application of international standards can find a field for expression in the world information network. The digitalization of documents from historical archive is realized in three main directions compatible with the specificity of the documents - building a data base from hand-written materials “Decisions of the Municipal Council of Gorna Dzhumaya Municipality 1912-1944”, building data base from uniform documents “Requests and Inventory Declarations for Entry in the Labour Cooperative Agricultural Economy” through scanning of the originals and digitalizing photo documents through scanning of negatives. The used technology gives opportunity of searching by key words, reaching the relevant data of the specific document related to specific topic, personality or problem. The retroconversion procedure is used for the accumulation of the data base, which represents a creation of an electronic archive on the basis of existing physical archive that includes the preparation and the scanning of documents, indexation and identification of the scanned images, saving the results from the work in a coordinated format on the hard disc. The purpose of the retroconversion is the creation of insurance copy of the documental fonds on an electronic storage and improving of the use. A complex system for formation of informational and documental data base is developed to achieve this purpose. Simultaneously with the filling in of the data base, scanning of the documents is made with a purpose for creation of digitalized copies, and also if it is necessary to correct possible errors when entering information into the data base. The system is online based, there is an editorial block in it, which gives opportunity to fill in data from each point through Internet. There is a elaborated regulated system for access and digital protection of the data. The software Web Application, Microsoft Framework 2.0, ASP.NET 2.0, Programming language C#, MS SQL SERVER 2000 are used for the technical realization of the system for management of the data base.

The Archives State Agency creates a Digital Archives for the sake of facilitating and expanding the access and use of the National

archival heritage, widening the scope of provided archival services, affording new opportunities for research activity and protection of the documents by decreasing their use in spite of the digital images as well as participation in the Internet Gateway to the documents and Archives of Europe. Its building is a complex of interconnected activities which include selection of documents, preparation of digital images and particular metadata, quality control and their preservation.

In connection to the programme “Building and Updating the Scientific and Information Complexes” from “Scientific Researches” fund, at the Ministry of Education and Science, a project Scientific and information complex “Digital archives” – modern perspectives for scientific address of the national documentary heritage” was set up. Authors of the project are South-West University Neofit Rilski – Blagoevgrad and Archives State Agency. The main purpose of the project is to make a qualitative change of the interaction between the scientific researches, the education and the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage through expanding the public access to the archival records in compliance with the European requirements. The project has also the following additional aims: creation of new opportunities for researches in all scientific directions and specialities of South-West University Neofit Rilski, expanding the information basis which provides the application of modern educational models in the social and humanitarian sciences, incorporation of young researchers to new technologies in the sphere of digitalization of the archival heritage, liberalization of the access to the national documentary heritage for the needs of the science, the education and the society. Through the project a unique information resource will be built up - Scientific and information complex “Digital Archives”, which will consist of interdependent sources - archival documents and archival finding aids. The Scientific and information complex “Digital Archives” will consist of two modules.

The module “Archival Records” is created as a basis of descriptions and digitalized images (copies) of documents, kept in the central and territorial Archives of the Republic of Bulgaria. It is accomplished through a pilot project in the frames of the long-term strategy for digitalization in the system of the Archives State Agency, with an accent on the selection of the documents for digitalization according to the intensity of use for the purposes of the education.

The module “Archival Finding Aids” is created as a basis from digitalized published finding aids, which facilitates the access to the original archival documents, kept in the central and territorial Archives in the country. It covers the main archival finding aids - inventories, catalogues, reviews and guidebooks of the fonds of the Archives and it is accomplished by students in History in South-West University Neofit Rilski - Blagoevgrad.

The scientific and information complex “Digital Archives” is built-up according to a plan and in stages from October 2007 to April 2009, as a centralized basis of digital images and descriptions of documents and reference books, a result of the unified, centralized policy of the two participating institutions.

The first stage will include scientific and research, information

and methodic and personnel providing of the digitalization. It will be realized through examination and analysis of the good practices and the practices of Bulgarian and foreign archival institutions and of the centers in digitalization, of the requirements of the International Council on Archives and the effective standards. As a result it is expected to define unified requirements for selection the archival documents and finding aids to be digitalized and a system of descriptive, administrative and structural metadata.

The second stage will be the building of the scientific and information infrastructure. It will be accomplished by purchase of the necessary specialized equipment, software and building of communication infrastructure. As a result from this it will be equipped Multimedia room for Computer Archival Science in South-West University Neofit Rilski - Blagoevgrad, Center for digitalization in the Archives State Agency and four regional centers - at the State Archives in Plovdiv, Veliko Turnovo, Varna and Blagoevgrad, and the last one will function as Laboratory for Scientific Researches, Training and Practical Seminars in History and Archival Studies. Additional equipment will be provided for the other territorial units.

The third stage will be the formation and extension of the scientific and information massif which consists of bases of digitalized documents and the connected with them archival descriptions and digitalized archival finding aids - inventories, guidebooks for the fonds, catalogues, reviews, etc. In this way will be built-up an accessible basis of digitalized archival documents and reference books, which facilitate the usage of the national documental heritage.

The fourth stage will include use, publication and access to the scientific and information complex "Digital Archives" through making regulations for access to the scientific and information complex, publication on the basis in Internet on the websites of the Archives State Agency and South-West University Neofit Rilski - Blagoevgrad, publications of electronic collections and thematic exhibitions.

Regulations for publishing of digitalized archival documents in Internet and Regulations for the user's access and the use of the digitalized archival documents will be made in the aim of regulating the Internet access to the scientific and information complex "Digital Archives". As a result from the accomplishment of the project, accessible resources in Internet will be the digital data bases, planned as part of the general Internet - a gate to the documents and the archives of Europe, digitalized finding aids, which allow searching on all levels, thematic exhibition "100 years from the Independence of Bulgaria" on the website of Archives State Agency, a permanent column "Publication of Historical Sources" in the electronic magazine "Review of History" of South-West University Neofit Rilski - Blagoevgrad.

For facilitating the access to archival documents from Bulgarian Archives the project expects publication of digitalized archival documents in electronic collections (CD), "History of Bulgaria in Documents 1878-1944", "Bulgaria in the United Nations", "The Past of Gorna Dzhumaya Town (Blagoevgrad)" and "Archive of the Bulgarian Archival Records". It is foreseen to promote the digitalized

documents in exhibitions.

From the United Scientific Information Complex “Digital Archives” is expected the providing of direct and equal in rights access of all customers to the national documental heritage through the digitalized archival documents and finding aids, expanding the circle of users and the provided archival services, including in the scientific turnover of unknown sources, promoting the national documental heritage in Bulgaria and abroad through Internet and an opportunity to expand the research in the data base in thematic, time indication, in geographical indication, etc.

In conclusion, the cooperation in the field of documents' valorization with other professions connected with the historical memory - librarians, museum curators, together with representatives of the information technologies will allow us, with the help of Internet, to provide new services, anticipating the expectations of the customers.