

# bulletin

Finance & Photography

2021

*eabh* (The European Association for  
Banking and Financial History e.V.)



# Image collections on finance and banking history at the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU)

Juan Alonso Fernandez

In this article, we will present the history and mission of the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) and what type of documentation they manage. We will delve into the photographic collections as well as the workflow used by the HAEU's staff to manage images professionally, and explain why respect for the principle of provenance and the context promotes a more complete, objective, democratic and transparent way of accessing and analyzing images.

We analyse the photographic collection of the development projects carried out by the European Investment Bank in Europe in its initial years of operation 1959–1971. This set of high-quality photographs is a good visual record of European industrial development in the 60s. Finally, in comparison to the analogue photography collection of the EIB, we will present the challenges posed by digital photography using the *eabh* collection.

## The Historical Archives of the European Union

The Historical Archives of the European Union was established in 1983 by a decision of the Council of the European Economic Community and Euratom Council (No 354/83) and the decision of the Commission of the European Communities to open up the Historical Archives of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) which had been functional since 1952.<sup>1</sup>

The newly founded Archives were affiliated with the European University Institute (EUI), a European research institution, created by the European Communities' member states in 1975 and set up in Florence (Italy). The researchers of the EUI's Department of History and Civilization were the first to explore the historical archives of the ECSC and subsequently transferred archival material

from the European institutions to assist the study of European integration history after WWII.

Further agreements and Council regulations consolidated the legal framework stipulating the functions and features of the HAEU. Its remit is: to preserve the archives deposited by EU institutions; to make them accessible for research in accordance with the thirty-year rule; to facilitate research on the history of the European Union; to promote public interest in European integration; and to enhance transparency in the functioning of EU Institutions.

Since it opened to the public in 1986, the HAEU has steadily increased its institutional deposits. It now holds approximately 11,000 metres of archival material produced by the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors, the European Investment Bank—to name but a few. Besides these institutional holdings, the HAEU has collected deposits from individuals who contributed to European integration, non-EU Organisations, pro-European movements, political groups of the European Parliament, as well as extracts from private collections, foundations and institutions. Presently, the HAEU stores 258 fonds in the deposits of its prestigious premises in the ancient Florentine Villa Salviati.

The HAEU runs an educational program for primary and secondary schools, organizes conferences and seminars in collaboration with the EUI as well as many other European Universities, manages the Alcide De Gasperi Research Centre and assigns research grants. Having an online presence was a priority for the HAEU from the start; in 1990 its first database was created and its web presence was launched in 1994. The 522,050 database descriptive items register 449,965 archival files, 60,578



1. Overhead camera digitisation of the HAEU

photographs, 1,143 posters, 7,630 audio recordings, 291 video recordings and 698 oral history interviews (figures for 2019).<sup>2</sup>

### The photographic collections of the HAEU

The photographic collections are an integral part of the institutional and private archives preserved at the HAEU. More than 60,000 photographs trace the establishment of European institutions by documenting conferences, meetings, institutional visits around the world, key personalities, as well as a plethora of educational and scientific projects throughout Europe. For instance, international co-operation projects financed by the European Communities are well documented in photographic collections within the archival fonds of the European Commission and of the other EU Institutions. Campaigns and events of pro-European movements are illustrated in the fonds of the European Movement, the *Union des fédéralistes européens* (UEF) and that of the German federalist writer and journalist Claus Schön-dube. The papers of Klaus Meyer, Director general for development at the European Economic Community commission, contain photographs of projects in various African countries financed by the European Economic Community in the framework of the Lomé II convention (1978–1982)<sup>3</sup> and of the Community's Euro-Arab dialogue (1975). The fonds of the European Space Agency and of the European Free Trade Association include various audio-visual materials keeping track of its programmes and activities. These visual records are crucial to recounting the history of the European integration process and offer additional insights into the personal and professional activities of key actors in contemporary European history. Photographs do not simply complement the textual documents available; they are a historical resource of their own.

In order to guarantee preservation and facilitate access, the HAEU is working on digitizing its photographic collections. This aims to avoid excessive handling of analogue originals, as users only consult the photographs if

they are not digitized yet or if they are particularly interested in them. The digitization is carried out with a system based on an overhead camera. This system allows digitizing in higher resolution, with a higher level of detail and at greater speed than a flatbed scanner.<sup>4</sup> It is captured in RAW format that is later converted to JPEG for consultation and to TIF for long digital preservation. Additionally, the analogue images are placed in acid-free plastic sleeves (polyester or polypropylene) that have passed the PAT test for long-term preservation—except where plastic is not recommended, such as is the case with albumin prints.<sup>5</sup> Once they are stored individually, the images are

kept in preservation boxes in deposits with controlled temperature and humidity.

In 2018, the HAEU implemented a new system to better describe and visualize its audio-visual material with a focus on user-experience. The photographs are described at dossier level following the ISAD-G archival regulations<sup>6</sup> and, also, at item level. For this, new description fields based on the IPTC,<sup>7</sup> Dublin Core<sup>8</sup> and Sepiades international standards<sup>9</sup> were incor-

porated and structured according to the ISAD-G description areas. This means that we provide the most detailed information possible to explain the origin and context of the images in our collections; for example, by including the image's identification code, where possible the precise date that the picture was taken, its author, the contributing institution, the location, the title, the description, any notes providing further clarification, the type of photograph (i.e. whether it is a positive, a negative or indeed a slide), support as relates to the material upon which it was produced, its size and amongst other components, its format.

Additionally, the images managed by the HAEU are contextualized according to archival classification systems that respect the principle of provenance. Whereas libraries, museums and communications departments tend to isolate items and study them in isolation, we place more value on situating our material within its wider context. We make sure we capture this background within our

More than 60,000 photographs trace the establishment of European institutions by documenting conferences, meetings, institutional visits around the world, key personalities, as well as a plethora of educational and scientific projects throughout Europe.

In order to guarantee preservation and facilitate access, the HAEU is working on digitizing its photographic collections.

classification scheme, allowing for a richer appreciation and more critical analysis of a photograph's historical significance.<sup>10</sup> This respect for the context promotes a more democratic, critical and transparent reading of the photographs, since textual documents related to the photograph's origin can be accessed. Therefore more information is available to understand the intent of the images.<sup>11</sup>

### **Images and industrial development: the collection of the European Investment Bank**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is an autonomous financial body within the European Union that was created by the Treaty of Rome, signed on 25 March 1957. Its primary mission is to contribute to the development, economic and social cohesion and integration of EU Member States through investments in regional projects and the infrastructure sector. The EIB also supports EU development co-operation worldwide.

Its historical archives were deposited at the HAEU, under the terms of a convention signed on the first of July 2005. Since 2015, the EIB has been part of the new Framework Partnership Agreement, which set the terms for enhanced co-operation and partnership between the HAEU and EU institutions.

The EIB's activity in its early years is illustrated by the sub-fonds relating to loans granted by the Bank between 1959 and 1971. The sub-fonds include 25 projects carried out in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, as well as one in the Ivory Coast carried out by the African Associated States and Madagascar (AASM). Each project is extensively documented by files detailing all of the stages of the loan contracts. This includes preliminary proposals, legal documents and contracts, loan contracts, control/monitoring documentation to assess the project's progress as well as financial files on loan transfers and repayment.

These development projects are well documented by photographs. The first transfer of original photographs from projects financed by the European Investment Bank to HAEU was received in 2019. This collection consists of 252 paper positives and features projects carried out in Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and Germany between 1959 and 1971.

The images were commissioned to record the projects' impact and to communicate its achievements. The fact that the positives are high-quality photographic copies, sized 18x24 cm or larger, suggests that they were taken both for documentary and for publicity purposes.

Many of the images were published in glossy corporate brochures to flag up the key achievements of the bank in its first years of operation.

The authorship of these images is diverse since the EIB hired different photographers in each country. In some cases, they opted for photographers who were highly specialized in industrial photography, a type of photography in high demand at the time. This was the case for Baranger & Cie, a company headed by Henri Baranger, who did an excellent job documenting the EIB funded Oraison hydro-electric project carried out in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region and which included taking oblique photographs.<sup>12</sup> On other occasions, the EIB hired well-known photographers, who were not specialized in industrial photography. One of these artists was Dino Jarach, a Venetian photo-journalist involved in the world of fashion, cinema and art who documented the Alfa Romeo project carried out in Naples.<sup>13</sup> Other relevant photographers were Giulio and Fabrizio Parisio<sup>14</sup> and Helmut Först.<sup>15</sup> Finally, there are quite a few images of unknown authorship.

Most of the photographs are in black and white, but in some cases, there is a combination of black and white and colour photography. This is interesting because in the 50s and 60s, colour photography was a rarity since it was still very expensive and its use was not widespread until the 70s.

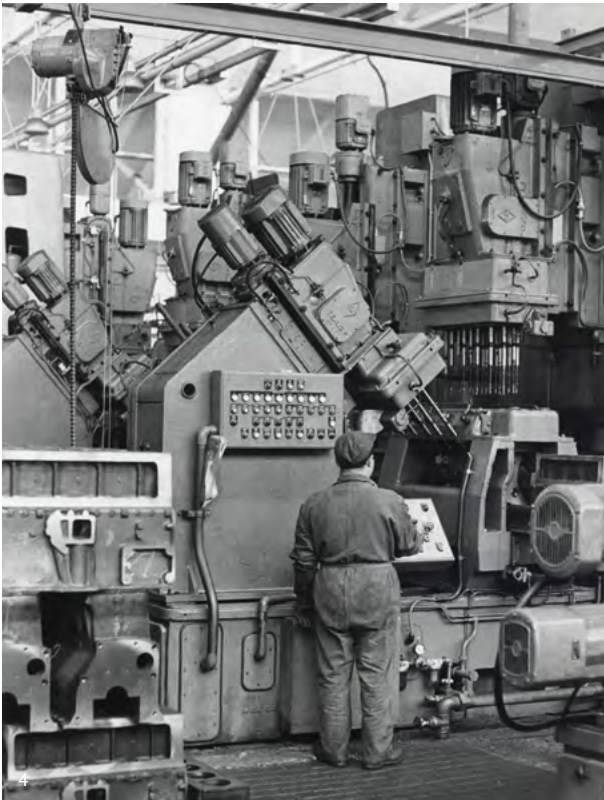
The photographs always show contextual elements of each project, be it machinery, interiors, construction processes or facilities. Human figures are featured too but they serve as a secondary element that contributes to the main theme, which is the development project. People are not looking directly at the camera and are engaged with work on the project. The photographer also remains invisible. This was most probably done to prevent any distraction from the project itself and to ensure its objective documentation, as was common for photo-essays<sup>16</sup> in photo-journalism during this time period.

There are only two portraits in the collection, but both are taken in a project setting. Most of the images are taken outdoors and during the day, except a few which are taken indoors to document facilities or factories in operation. There is virtually no use of wide angle lenses and many photographs taken with the classic 50mm lens or posterior focal lengths are included. This is likely with the intention of avoiding the distortion caused by angle brackets. Likewise, the depth of field is high and open-medium or closed diaphragms are not used. Therefore most of the

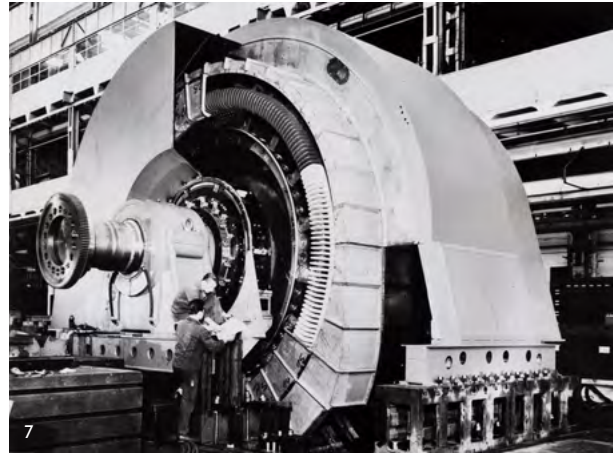
---

**The photographs always show contextual elements of each project, be it machinery, interiors, construction processes or facilities.**

---



2. Loan to Électricité de France (EDF) for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant in the south of the country, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region. First project funded by the Bank in France. Photo: H. Baranger & Cie – HAEU, BEI 2143
3. Loan to the construction of a hydro-electric power plant exploiting waters of the Taloro River in Sardinia. Photo: Unknown author - HAEU, BEI 2154
4. In 1960 the EIB granted a loan of 5 million u.a. (unit of account) for the production of diesel engines at Alfa Romeo in Pomigliano d'Arco (Naples). Photo: Dino Jarach – HAEU, BEI 2155
5. Financing of agricultural schemes and improvement of waste management in the forest areas of South-West France. Photo: Unknown - HAEU, BEI 2148



6. Loan to Société Aquitaine-Chimie for the construction of an acetylene, a chemical compound, factory in the Basses-Pyrénées department, today known as Pyrénées-Atlantiques, South-West France. Photo: Unknown author - HAEU, BEI 2144
7. Loan for a construction of a hydroelectric power plant by the river Our in Vianden, Northern Luxembourg. First project funded in Luxembourg. Photo: Unknown author - HAEU, BEI 2163
8. EIB also granted loans to companies specializing in wood pulp, like in the Belgian company Cellulose des Ardennes which received funds in 1961. This project occurred in a context of regional industrial renewal. In fact, this region has been hard hit by the closures of coal mines. The loan subsidized the construction of a paper pulp factory in Harnoncourt, closed to Virton, Wallonia, Belgium, and was the first project funded by the Bank in Belgium. Photo: Unknown author - HAEU, BEI 2142
9. Loan for a construction of a thermal power station in West Berlin. This was the first project funded in Germany, in the 'Land' of Berlin. Because of the unique status of the territory, it had been a long procedure to obtain the agreement of the governors to a loan from the bank. Photo: Bewag, Berlin - HAEU, BEI 2164



10. Loan to the Deutsche Bundesbahn for the electrification of the North-South axis' rail, strategic infrastructure linking the northern ports with the south of the country.  
Photo: Unknown author - HAEU, BEI 2165





11



12

11. Manfred Pohl, Deputy Chairman of the European Association for Banking and Financial History (*eabh*) participating at the conference 'Banking and Finance in the Mediterranean: A Historical Perspective' held in Valletta, Malta, 01-02/06/2007. Photo: Unknown author, HAEU EABH-103

12. Presentation of the 2009 *eabh* Annual Conference 'The Critical Function of History in Banking and Finance' held in Nicosia, Cyprus, 15-16 May 2009. Photo: Unknown author, HAEU EABH-109

elements that appear in the image are in focus and there is also no selective blurring of the elements.

Although their intention was to give the audience an objective view, without using artistic license, the analysis of the images shows that the photographers are professionals with a high respect for photographic composition. The images are perfectly composed and the photographers played with perspective and formal composition. They are technically accomplished photographs. The large variety of authors, countries, styles and the fact that the photographs are well-contextualized and linked to documentary evidence, make this photographic collection a fantastic visual record of the industrial development that took place in parts of Europe during the 50s, 60s and 70s.

The history of photography in the 60s and 70s focuses on specific authors and photographic techniques; there is no literature on the trends in (European) industrial photography in those years. Hence, we hope that this first attempt to systematize the EIB photographic collection will be useful towards a better understanding of the visual culture of European industrial development in this period.

### **The challenges of born-digital photos: the *eabh* collection**

We will now examine how some of the aspects of photographic analysis and management that we discussed change when archiving the digital image. The management of digital images in photographic archives is complicated by the large quantity of images and the need for a new type of preservation, not associated with the traditional physical object but with the digital file.

In this sense, the case study of the photographs found in the *eabh* collection is paradigmatic. The images in this collection document numerous research and workshop events organised by the *eabh* and some of their statutory meetings held between 1990 and 2013. The photographs illustrate workshops, openings, meetings and conferences in the field of finance and banking history. The images are an excellent sample of the activity of the *eabh*. Contrary to analogue photography found in the EIB fonds, these images have often not gone through a previous selection process. Even if they have, they usually still contain a very high number of photographs, a common aspect in digital production.

The collection is composed of a total of 244 paper positives and more than 900 digitally born images. Each dossier or event contains a large number of images that show how digital technology has inflated the production of photographs. An event that was previously illustrated with 25 photographs now consists of more than 120 images. Archival appraisal is used as a general method, but its application in photography needs to take into

consideration particular aspects, such as individual depositor contracts or the inherent polysemic nature of photos. Some of the debates regarding the large number of digital images are on whether or not to formalize the evaluation policies for the transferred photographs that base their selection on two criteria: aesthetics and content. In this way, you would avoid having repetitive or technically incorrect images (out of focus, dark...) or images that are of no documentary or evidential value. Likewise, the conservation cost of these images would be reduced and the images consulted would be relevant and there would be no duplicates. However, this would imply the application of criteria that modify the report and the original narrative. Furthermore, selection involves more management time. It seems that the best scenario would be to apply selection policies in the producing unit, be it the photographer or the institution.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding digital preservation, most of the digital images were received mainly on optical media (CD or DVD) and in sequential JPEG format. The master files for the preservation of photographic images should be TIF. However since many photographs do not exist in RAW or TIF format, it was decided to preserve the original JPEG format. Both in the events where amateur cameras were used and in those where professional cameras were used, the JPEGs are first generation so that they have not undergone any modifications beyond those made by the camera during capture. Sometimes, we only have access to the digital files in JPEG format. Although the quality is not ideal for long-term digital preservation, the format is a de facto standard in the photographic sector and the files are usually first generation (no further compression was applied) and therefore we can be more flexible in adopting this format.

### **Conclusion**

The HAEU has adapted its professional workflow to the management that photographs require. To do this, they have incorporated specific digitization, access, preservation and description policies. One of the strengths of the Historical Archives of the European Union, is the respect for the principle of provenance. This allows the photographs to be contextualized according to the activity of the institution or person producing those documents. The fact that the images are not isolated from their production, allows for a more complete, objective and democratic analysis.

A good example of this type of archival treatment is the photographs produced by the European Investment Bank (EIB) with the intention of documenting the development projects it carried out in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s. The photographs are accompanied by the production files of these projects so that, apart from the

images, you can consult the contracts, the instructions for the project and its different phases, the legal files and the payments made. The image, therefore, is not isolated as a mere object. Instead it is contextualized and its analysis can go beyond its aesthetic or content that can be gleaned from the mere observation of the image. The EIB photographic collection is also a wonderful graphic testimony of documentary photography applied to the monitoring of industrial projects, so common in European developmental work in the 1960s. You can see compelling snapshots of the industrial landscape, workers, vehicles of the time, portraits and even aerial photography.

Finally, digital production poses new challenges for photographic archives due to the enormous quantity of images and their preservation. One of the HAEU's digital photographic collections is in the *eabh* fonds. This collection, like other digital collections, is marked by the huge quantity of pictures per event and the fact that the pictures were taken in JPEG, a good format for dissemination but not ideal for long-term digital preservation. The archive has to be pragmatic and adapt its methodologies and workflows to guarantee good access and preservation of these born-digital pictures.

Photographs: 1 © HAEU / 2–10 © EIB / 11–12 © *eabh*

### Author's profile

Juan Alonso Fernandez is an audio-visual archivist employed at the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU). He is graduated in History and Documentation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He has more than 12 years of experience in photographic and audio-visual management.

### Contact

Juan Alonso Fernandez: HAEU

[juan.alonso@eui.eu](mailto:juan.alonso@eui.eu)

<https://www.eui.eu/Research/HistoricalArchivesOfEU>

- 1 Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom) No 354/83 of 1 February 1983 concerning the opening to the public of the historical archives of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community [online] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:31983R0354&qid=1427281881827&from=EN> Accessed 20 June 2020.
- 2 Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU). "About the Archives" [online] <https://www.eui.eu/Research/HistoricalArchivesOfEU/AbouttheHistoricalArchives>. Accessed 30 June 2020.
- 3 On 31 October 1979, the second Convention of economic cooperation between the nine Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) and 57 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries was signed in Lomé (Togo).
- 4 Relevant institutions in the sector, such as Photo Consortium, recommend a digitisation station based only on an overhead camera as the quality is superior to scanners. Mitjà, Carles; Martínez, Bea. "General Recommendations For Digitization" [online] *Europeana Photography Facsheet - WP3*, 2017. [https://www.photoconsortium.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/003\\_general\\_reccomendations.pdf](https://www.photoconsortium.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/003_general_reccomendations.pdf). Accessed 20 June 2020.
- 5 Image Permanence Institute. "Photographic Activity Test" [online] <https://www.imagepermanenceminstitute.org/tests/pat.html>. Accessed 24 June 2020.
- 6 ISAD (G): general international standard archival description: adopted by the Committee on Descriptive Standards, Stockholm, Sweden, 19-22 September 1999.
- 7 IPTC. IPTC Photo Metadata [online] <https://iptc.org/standards/photo-metadata/> Accessed 24 June 2020.
- 8 Dublin Core [online] <https://www.dublincore.org/> Accessed 24 June 2020.
- 9 Klijn, Edwin; Lusenet, Yola de. SEPIADES: Cataloging photographic collections [online] [https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/WG\\_2004\\_PAAG\\_SEPIADES-Cataloguing-photographic-collections\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/WG_2004_PAAG_SEPIADES-Cataloguing-photographic-collections_EN.pdf) Accessed 24 June 2020.
- 10 "[...] archives have many potential uses and an archivist cannot know exactly what these uses may be in the future. Rather than rearranging records in a way that might be 'useful' to an audience, archivists preserve the original order so that records can be understood in their original context, giving room for users to interpret and analyse the records in a multitude of ways." Bettington, Jackie, Kim Eberhard, Roweena Loo, and Clive Smith (eds.). 2008. *Keeping archives*. Canberra: Australian Society of Archivists, p. 18.
- 11 "What first distinguishes archives from libraries and museums are the records that they house. In addition to the information contained in archival records, they also have value as evidence of actions. The evidential value of archival records gives them greater power—as legal documents, as evidence in court, and as agents of accountability". Duff, Wendy M.; Flinn, Andrew; Suurtamm, Karen Emily; Wallace, David A. 2013. 'Social justice impact of archives: a preliminary investigation'. p. 332 *Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht* [online] <https://link.springer.com.eui.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007%2Fs10502-012-9198-x> Accessed 15 June 2020.
- 12 'A type of aerial photography in which the camera axis is deliberately kept tilted from the vertical by a specified angle.' oblique photography. (n.d.) *An Illustrated Dictionary of Aviation*. (2005). Retrieved October 14 2020 from <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/oblique+photography>
- 13 EIB financed the plant of the Alfa Romeo company, which produced diesel motors in conjunction with the French company Renault. The project was an example of European industrial cooperation.
- 14 They documented the exploitation of a lignite field for the construction of a thermoelectric power plant in Lucania, Southern Italy
- 15 He documented the electrification of the North-South railway axis' rail linking Germany's northern ports with the south of the country
- 16 In this sense one of the most pioneering works at the photo essay level applied to industrial development is the obsessive and epic report on the city of Pittsburgh by the American photographer Eugene Smith in the 1950s and which, after much tension, was published in *Popular Photography Annual 1959*. New York: Ziff-Davis.
- 17 Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn, and Diane Vogt-O'Connor. 2006. *Photographs. Archival Care & Management*. Chicago: Society of American Archivist, p.117.