

Erasmus+ Short-term Mobility Follow-up Report

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1. Project Overview

- Project Title: ISO Standards and Quality Assurance at the NAH and the HAEU
- Mobility Type: staff mobility for training – job-shadowing
- Host Organization: Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence, Italy
- Date of Mobility: 20/04/2026 to 25/04/2026

2. Achievement of Objectives

Original Objective

Quality management is a relatively new professional field in our organization. The National Archives of Hungary (NAH) obtained its ISO 9001:2015 certificate in December 2025. For years, we have been looking for European national or other archives that also operate an ISO 9001-compliant quality management system (QMS) from whom we could gain methodological and specific system development knowledge. The only such archive turned out to be the Historical Archives of the European Union. The aim of our visit was therefore to gain experience in the operation and development of HAEU's QMS and to learn about good practices, with particular regard to the management of internal audits, the application of key performance indicators (KPIs) and the methods and practices of measuring customer satisfaction. The reason for choosing the above focus areas was that these were the specific fields concerning which we have relatively little experience in the context of ISO 9001 quality management. For instance, in the NAH there is currently no formalized customer satisfaction measurement in the most important front-office areas, such as research services or records management supervision.

Activities Performed

According to the agreed program, the session on quality management entitled *ISO Standards and Quality Assurance at the NAH and the HAEU* took place at Sala dei Cuoi, Villa Salviati on Tuesday, 21 April. The approximately 2-hour meeting took the form of an interactive exchange of ideas, the main speakers of which were Samir Musa, records manager (HAEU), myself as the head of quality management at NAH, and Szabolcs Kovács, quality management assistant (NAH). In the first half of his presentation Mr. Musa provided a comprehensive overview of the core processes of HAEU and the organization's QMS. In my reaction, I outlined the similar parameters of the NAH, which quickly revealed the huge dimensional difference between the two archives in terms of both the number of records kept and the number of operational processes. Nevertheless, both parties were pleased to state that, thanks to the same standard applied, HAEU and NAH professionals speak one hundred percent the same language regarding quality management, including the applied operational and development goals and methods, as well as compliance requirements. The second half of the discussion, in line with NAH's primary interest, was about the latter, i.e. how HAEU meets ISO 9001 requirements concerning KPIs and customer satisfaction measurement.

Results Achieved

The HAEU operates under the certified ISO 9001 quality management system of the European University Institute (EUI) with the aim of optimizing its archival processes, raising the quality of its activities, and improving its services towards depositors and users. According to EUI's certificate, which was last renewed in December 2024, they identified two of their core activities as the scope of EUI's QMS, the second of which covers specifically the archival activity of HAEU: "Historical document archiving service for public institutions and private entities."

By applying ISO 9001, HAEU ensures that the following conditions are met:

- Uniformity: Since records come from many different EU institutions (Commission, Council, Parliament, etc.), ISO 9001 guarantees that all deposits are managed according to the same, strict professional standards.
- Trust: For private donors (politicians, European movements), it is a guarantee that their documents are in "good hands" and that access restrictions (e.g. 30-year rule) are strictly observed.
- Continuous development: The system requires regular measurement of user satisfaction, so that researchers' feedback is directly incorporated into the development of services. Interestingly, the HAEU was one of the first international archival institutions to obtain the certification for its entire scope of activities, thus serving as a "benchmark" for other archives.

HAEU's QMS is currently based on 37 documented processes (sometimes around 35-40 are mentioned depending on the updates. "40" is relevant because of continuous improvement in a PDCA cycle):

- Digitization: In recent years, digital preservation has emerged as a separate process from general file protection.
- Data protection: Since the introduction of the GDPR, the management of data protection incidents and the anonymization of personal data have also become separate, documented procedures.

The scope of application covers the entire life cycle of archival work, but due to legal considerations I can only present an excerpt of the full process map here. The same applies to the KPIs directly associated with operational processes.

The logic of the process hierarchy:

In ISO 9001:2015 systems, processes are divided into three main groups:

1. Management processes: Strategic planning, quality control, audits.
2. Operational/Professional processes: Similar to NAH'S system, in HAEU's QMS this is the core, the actual scope of application, where records acquisition, cataloguing, preservation and research services are located.
3. Support processes: IT security, HR/training, infrastructure.

Although support activities were presented as not subject to audits, this actually means that they are not audited *as documented process*, as they are not part of the application area (scope). In the 2025 Activity Report of HAEU they are listed as activities audited at the December 2024 external audit (financial management, continued professionalisation of HAEU staff, purchasing workflows, services towards depositors etc.). In addition, the report also states that the

maintenance activities concerning the HAEU's archival repositories in Villa Salviati and Villa Il Poggiolo, and of its reading room and office space at Villa Salviati were conducted under the HAEU's ISO 9001 quality management system.

1. Management Processes

These provide the strategic direction and quality assurance framework:

- Strategic Planning: Defining the vision and annual objectives of the archive.
- Management Review: Checking the regularity and effectiveness of the QMS.
- Internal Audit: Checking the regularity of the processes.
- Risk Management and Development: Correcting deficiencies (non-conformities) and maintaining the PDCA cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act).

2. Operational Processes

This is the "production line" where the basic tasks of the archive take place:

- Transfer and Accessioning: Receiving materials from EU institutions.
- Arrangement and Description: Recording metadata and establishing the archival hierarchy.
- Preservation and restoration: Maintaining physical condition.
- Digitization: Creating and storing digital copies.
- Research services and access: Managing research room work and online databases.

3. Support processes

Processes that provide the infrastructure and background:

- IT infrastructure management: Servers, databases and backups.
- Human resources: Training, measuring competencies.
- Communication: Maintaining contact with donors and the outside world.
- Procurement and logistics: Managing external suppliers.

HAEU's KPIs and their management in the QMS

Although the HAEU directly assign KPIs to individual work processes, very similar to the current system of the NAH, only KPIs assigned to the core archival processes appear in the annual activity reports. They identify 5 such main activities but only assign KPIs to 4 archival professional areas (the exception is Activity 1. Archives site maintenance and preservation):

HAEU Key Performance Indicators 2025		
Activities	Deliverables	Implementation
Activity 2: Reception and processing of EU institutional and private archives		
Reception of EU-institutional archives in linear meters	330	694
Reception of private archives in linear meters	30	135
Activity 3: Digital access to archival holdings (incl. use of EUI ICT infrastructure)		
Number of files/items digitised	3.000	1.215

Number of website visits	400.000	668.446
Number of file downloads	23.000	18.457
Activity 4: Reading room and user services		
Number of files consulted	8.000	10.321
Number of research sessions	820	1.087
Individual users	135	222
Activity 5: Archival and academic cooperation and communication		
Visitors, Open Days	3.700	5.000
Conferences, workshops and visits	40	36
Post-graduate research grants assigned	25	22
Education programme student participants	900	1.175

As an example of KPIs directly assigned to operational processes (and not listed in the above table) it can be mentioned that since the introduction of ISO 9001 quality management, the HAEU registers requests for consultations with archivists that require support beyond a single mail exchange or phone call. Sessions in which archivists advise users on the consultation of inventories and the search and retrieval of files from the database are recorded, either they are conducted in person or online. In 2024, 519 individual consultation sessions were registered by the HAEU archivists compared to 418 in 2024 and 217 in 2023.

KPIs are presented in ISO 9001 audit reports and the HAEU's Annual Activity Reports to the European Commission.

Customer satisfaction measurement

With the introduction of ISO 9001 quality management in 2021, the HAEU started to regularly ask its users to rank their experiences and levels of satisfaction with the services provided by the Archives.

User feedback is collected through a user satisfaction survey conducted **in the reading room** upon departure **or through the Archive's online database**.

Reading room user feedback form

Users are asked to fill in the following paper-based form and leave it with the staff at the front desk at the end of their research stay.

1. Did you come to the Archives having already an idea of its collections?
Yes/No
If yes, did you acquaint the collections through the database or through other means?
2. At your arrival and during your stay, did you receive sufficient information on how to research, access and use the archival holdings?
Yes / No
If not, what kind of additional information/help would have been useful?
3. Is the online database with its archival inventories easy to use?
Yes / No
If not, what could be improved?
4. Did you face any difficulties while searching for a specific file or document?
Yes / No
If yes, what kind of difficulties did you encounter?

5. Was the process of requesting files or other archival material, such as microfiche and digitised material, comprehensive and efficient?
Yes / No
If not, what could be improved?
6. Were you guided in how to use the various tools and finding aids available to consult the archival material, e.g. if the material was in microfilm or digital format?
Yes / No
If not, what kind of additional assistance could be helpful?
7. Related to your specific research, did you find all relevant material you were looking for?
Yes / No
If not, what additional material were you expecting?
8. How would you rate your research experience at our archive (1 lowest – 5 highest satisfaction)?
1 2 3 4 5
9. Do you have any further suggestions or feedback?

Digital form within the online database

The form asks users for their evaluation, on a scale of one to five (from low to high), of

- (1) How would you rate your research experience at our Archives?
- (2) Were the HAEU online inventories, research guides, and the digital platform easy to use?
- (3) Did you find all archival materials relevant to your research?

During 2025, HAEU obtained 405 replies to the online form, compared to 461 received in the previous year. Regarding the rating of the research experience, 68 per cent of the people who replied to that question rated the experience between three and five. 43 per cent of participating users gave the HAEU the highest score with 5 points. Regarding the ease of using the online resources and the users' success in finding relevant materials, 73 per cent ranked their experience between three and five, with 60 per cent rating those experiences with a five.

3. Learning Outcomes and Impact

Core Learning Outcomes

The visit facilitated a high-level knowledge transfer focused on maturing our young QMS through direct collaboration with the HAEU to gain unique, sector-specific expertise not available locally.

A. Standardization as a universal language

The participants discovered that ISO 9001 acts as a "lingua franca." Despite massive differences in the scale of records and operational volume, the shared standard allowed professionals from different countries to communicate seamlessly regarding:

- Methodological goals (how to improve).
- Compliance requirements (what to meet).
- Operational terminology (how to describe work).

B. Specific methodological insights

The mobility resulted in a clear understanding of:

- **KPI Management:** What needs to be monitored; the methods for monitoring; when the results shall be analysed (KPIs are useless if they are reviewed too late to take action). In line with our own ideas and the expectations of the external auditors, individual KPIs must be assigned to each operational process and a separate record must be kept of them.
- **User Satisfaction:** By implementing general feedback loops the NAH will be able to enhance the environment for adult learners (researchers and citizens) who use the archives for lifelong learning. It is also worth considering assigning individual satisfaction measurements to key front-office processes. In the latter case, however, the resource requirements for processing feedback must be taken into account.
- **Regulatory Adaptation:** Learning how to separate GDPR and digitization into standalone documented procedures.
- **Digital Transformation:** All courses and meetings of the mobility focused on existing and potential uses of artificial intelligence, digital preservation and IT security, in line with the EU priority on the digital transformation of heritage institutions.

2. Strategic and Organizational Impact

A. Benchmarking and Validation

The HAEU serves as a "sectoral benchmark." For the NAH, seeing a successful, certified implementation in a peer institution validates its own path and provides a "proof of concept" for high-standard archival quality management.

B. Shift Toward Continuous Improvement

The shift from a static organization to a PDCA-driven organization is a primary impact. The NAH now has the framework to:

- Address the "development proposals" from its own external audit.
- Incorporate researcher feedback directly into service development.
- Manage risks and "non-conformities" systematically rather than reactively.

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