

Foreign Ministry archives services of the European Union MEMBER STATES

GREECE

1. Full title of Foreign Ministry and of archive service

Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών
Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives (YDIA)
(Υπηρεσία Διπλωματικού και Ιστορικού Αρχείου)

2. Contact details

Zalokosta 3
10027 Athens,
Greece
tel: +30-210 368 3351
+30-210 368 3141
fax: +30-210 368 3215
e-mail: archive1@mfa.gr
archive2@mfa.gr

3. Summary of historical background of the archive service

The first efforts to maintain diplomatic archives in Greece began one year after the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence. The first Greek Constitution of January 1822, known as the Epidavros Constitution, already envisaged the creation of the 'Supreme Secretary of State', to whom was assigned not only direct responsibility for the country's foreign relations, but also the collecting and safe-keeping of diplomatic documents. In April 1833, King Otto issued a royal decree aimed at the reconstruction of the state, making radical changes in almost all the basic institutions. This decree made provision, amongst other things, for the foundation of an Archives Section as part of the newly constituted 'Secretariat of Foreign Affairs'.

Until 1863, the system, by which the archives were organised, remained essentially the same. It was in that year that the change of the name of the Secretariat to 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs', as a result of a decision taken by the Second General National Assembly, gave rise to the need to separate and reorganize the individual services of the Ministry in the light of the particular objectives of each.

It was not until 1910, however, that an Archive Service with specific responsibilities and tasks was founded within the M.F.A. under the jurisdiction of the General Director of Political Affairs. At the same period the staff of the Archive Service consisted of a director, two assistants and two archivists. In the years 1910-1920, a major effort was made to classify the archive systematically, in order to make it functional and accessible to historians and researchers. However, apart from the Ministry's employees, only specific scholars were allowed access to diplomatic documents for research purposes, after they had first obtained permission from the Ministry. It was during that period, and upon the request of the prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, that permission to study the files in the Historical Archive was granted to two French historians, Edouard Driault and Michel Lh eritier, who five years later published the first diplomatic history of modern Greece.

During the German Occupation (1941-1944) the operation of the Foreign Ministry, and by extension of all its Services, was suspended, and access to the archives was strictly forbidden. After the liberation of Greece the record groups were in complete disarray: it became clear that the collection had been partly ransacked and selectively destroyed. Some of the files had been carried off when the Occupation forces departed for Germany, while a number of documents had been removed and destroyed, as was evident from the gaps found in the chronological sequence of the record groups when they were returned in sacks by the American army. The task of reclassifying the archives began in 1945 and was completed five years later.

In 1959, a royal decree (426/30.11.1959) defined the procedure by which private individuals and historians would be allowed access to the files of the M.F.A. The first article of this decree determined that diplomatic documents should remain classified for a fifty-year period. Although the Foreign Ministry files became available to scholars in 1959, research continued to be at a rudimentary level in terms of means and organisation of material, and also of the number of researchers who showed interest in the respective files. It was only after 1994 that significant progress in the reorganisation and modernisation of the Directorate of Archives in all respects has been achieved, with the creation of new departments, the adoption of sophisticated technological techniques for classifying and storing the archive collections and the devising and implementation of important research programmes.

This significant progress, can, to a large extent, be attributed to the re-establishment and upgrading of the Directorate of Archives, which, according to the New Regulation of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1998), was renamed as the Service of Historical Archives. The various legislative decrees that followed, aimed at harmonizing the way in which the Service was organized and operated with the demands of the New Technologies and modern research methods. By adding the term 'Diplomatic' to its title (art. 8, Law 2949/2001), the Service provided an indication as to what its new character would be like for the 21st century. Following the rapid progress achieved in this period, the Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives is now in a position to make a substantial contribution not only to recording Greek diplomatic history, but also to influencing its formulation by offering significant information to the Ministry's political directorates.

4. Physical access

The archive collections of Y.D.I.A. are accessible to Greek and foreign historians and researchers, and any other citizen with an interest in conducting research. Permission to study the files is granted after submission of an application by the interested party to the Secretariat of Y.D.I.A. The application is examined by a committee of diplomatic civil servants that meets during the first ten days of every second month. The Director of the Diplomatic Office of the Minister presides over the Committee, while recommendations are made by the Head of the Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives.

To assist researchers who receive the appropriate study permit, Y.D.I.A. has a reading room with a capacity of 10 seats, which is open from Monday to Friday, 9:30 to 14:30. The reading room is closed during weekends, on national and religious holidays, and for the entire months of November and August.

5. Practical facilities

-Reading Room

To assist researchers who receive the appropriate study permit, Y.D.I.A. has a reading room with a capacity of 10 seats. Diplomatic documents are located mainly by means of a card catalogue in a special index in the Y.D.I.A. reading room. In order to search the archives classified over the last five years, researchers may use key-words or complete phrases in an electronic database that includes summaries of the files which have been entered. It is the intention of Y.D.I.A. that this system will be used for the archive units classified in the future, while a programme of electronic classification is currently being applied to the earlier record groups.

6. Reproduction of documents

Every researcher has the right to order up to 50 photocopies which are made available free of charge.

7. Access regulations

Based on the New Regulation (Law 2594/1998) for the operation and organisation of the Foreign Ministry, the time limit for keeping the diplomatic documents of Greece restricted was downgraded from 50 to 30 years period, in order to conform with the practice of the majority of the E.U. countries.

8. Concise description of the principal record groups and collections

The document collection of the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic and Historical Archive encompasses the period from the beginning of the Greek national liberation struggle in 1821 to the present. The section of the archive covering the period of the Uprising (1821-1830), which in effect consists of the correspondence of the protagonists in the War of Independence with the philhellene organisations abroad as well as the Greeks of the Ionian Islands, is fairly limited, since, until 1832, there was not an organised and autonomous Service responsible for external relations. The official diplomatic correspondence of Greece begins in 1833, the year of the foundation of the 'Secretariat of Foreign Affairs' and focuses principally on interstate relations. However, the volume of the Greek diplomatic archives began to increase significantly, during 1910 to 1920 as Greece participated in international organisations on an equal footing with other member-states. From the post-war period to the present, the production of diplomatic documents has been increasing annually at an impressive rate.

The enormous volume of diplomatic documents assembled in secure facilities in the M.F.A. is organised chronologically -by year- and by provenance. These are the following categories: 1. Archives of the Central Service of the Foreign Ministry; 2. Archives of the Permanent Delegations, Embassies, Consulates and Liaison Offices; and 3. Special Record Groups. The last category relates to specific issues, events or landmarks in Greek foreign policy, examples being the groups of archives relating to the reparations after the Second World War, the Marshall Plan, documents relating to the History of Greek Jews, and so on. It is worth noting that the original texts of treaties, conventions and accords, as well as the documents ratifying them, are preserved separately in the Special Legal Service within the Ministry.

-Library

The Library of the M.F.A. is an educational, research and cultural centre the purpose of which is the academic training and education of the members of the community it serves. The library collects, processes, and above all makes available material in specialized topics such as Diplomacy, International Relations and International Law, and Foreign Policy. It was founded in order to acquire and utilize information to the benefit of the organisation to which it belongs. It has a collection of approximately 10,000 volumes. As part of its reorganisation that began in 1999 and is currently in progress, new regulations have been drawn up and intensive efforts are being made to improve its infrastructure, enrich it with new book titles and academic journals, and hire new staff.

-Film Archive

The Foreign Ministry Film Archive is the most recent department of Y.D.I.A., inaugurated in March 2000 by the President of the Hellenic Republic. Its purpose is to contribute to the preservation, promotion and proper use of the audio-visual heritage of Greece, in recognition of the enormous importance of audio-visual evidence for the political, diplomatic, social and cultural history of the country. It also aims to provide researchers with access to the film material in its possession and the supporting documentation it has assembled.

The material housed in the Film Archive and made available to interested researchers, includes about seventy hours of newsreels from Greece and the rest of the world, propaganda films and extracts from old, rare documentary films. By way of example, we may cite films by the Lumière and Manakias brothers, reportage from the Balkan Wars, the Russian Revolution and the First World War. There is extensive newsreel footage relating to the Asia Minor Campaign and the inter-war period in Greece and Europe, the Second World War and the Greek Civil War, the Colonels' Dictatorship, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the restoration of Democracy and the early years of the new regime in Greece.

The material, which is enriched constantly, is classified, identified, described and documented electronically. The electronic database also includes the relevant bibliography and references to similar film material from other archives. Special references are made to material from the other departments of Y.D.I.A.: the Diplomatic Archives, the Library, and the Photographic Archive.

The M.F.A. Film Archive has supplied material for several Greek and foreign documentaries, radio and television journals, artistic presentations and anniversary celebrations, making available audio-visual material and giving as much support as possible to the task of promoting the history of Greece.

The year 2001 saw the institution of an annual academic one-day conference under the general title 'The Film as Testimony', the aim of which is to examine in depth the work of established Greek film directors. The inaugural conference was devoted to 'Historical Sources and Commentary in the Films of Lakis Papastathis', while for the years 2002 and 2003, the symposium carried the titles 'Reality and Myth in the Work of Lefteris Xanthopoulos' and 'Immigration and Film' respectively.

Alongside the above-mentioned projects, the Film Archive has founded the 'Documentary Archive' in collaboration with private producers and institutions such as the Centre of Greek Documentaries. The purpose of the Documentary Archive is to collect and classify modern and earlier Greek documentary productions and also international documentaries of interest for Greek history. The titles collected (of which there are more than 800) are entered into the electronic database, supplemented by descriptions of the films (using key-words) and biographical details of their creators and detailed lists of their work. This facilitates the retrieval of the material for those wishing to study and make use of Greek documentary films.

It should be noted that the Film Archive assembles the above material exclusively for the use of researchers and it is under no circumstances available for commercial exploitation. It provides essential information for film directors and producers, thereby promoting Greek documentary films both in Greece and abroad.

In addition, special showings are organised to support the teaching of university courses or higher education classes, while there are also presentations of academic projects by students and guided tours in the Archive facilities.

The collection of the Film Archive and the Documentary Archive may be visited by anyone wishing to study and use the material for research or educational purposes.

The research community is allowed access to the facilities of the Film Archive after prior agreement: individuals use the special study areas equipped with video-players, while for groups, there is a small theatre with a capacity of 30 seats.

- Photographic Archive

Operating as a subsidiary department of the Film Archive, the Photographic Archive has an extensive collection of over 50,000 photographs, covering the period from the late 19th century to the present day. The subjects of the photographs cover a wide spectrum of events of modern Greek political, diplomatic, social and cultural history, special occasions organised by Greek residents abroad, and so on. Most of the photographs in the collection are classified, identified and described in an electronic database, and are also digitally processed in the Digitisation Laboratory. This laboratory also processes and reproduces documents and maps for Y.D.I.A. Access to, and use of, the Photographic Archive is at present restricted to the staff of the Foreign Ministry until the classification of the photographic material is completed.

9. Finding aids and computerisation

a) Diplomatic documents are located mainly by means of a card catalogue in a special index in the Y.D.I.A. reading room.

b) *'Archive Unit Catalogues' Series*

1. *Cinematographic Archive* (Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 2000), in both Greek and English editions.

2. *Catalogue of the Archive of the Italian Administration of the Dodecanese, 1912-1945* (Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives – Ministry of National Education and Religion – General State Archives of the Prefecture of the Dodecanese, Athens, 2002), in Greek.

3. Computerisation: see 5 and 8 above.

10. Reference works and articles

The Publications Department is responsible for publishing collections of documents, conference proceedings, various books and studies, which delineate aspects and facets of contemporary history. To date, the publication series consists of the following thematic groups:

1. 'Collections of Documents' Series

This particular series of publications forms part of the general project of systematically publishing the archival material of the M.F.A. regarding important issues of national foreign policy. The following volumes have appeared to date:

a. *The Dodecanese. The Long Road to Union With Greece* (Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 1997), in both Greek and English.

b. *Documents on the History of Greek Jews* (Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 1998), was published initially in English, and was followed soon thereafter by a Greek version in December 2000.

c. *Greece on the Verge of a New World. Cold War-Truman Doctrine-Marshall Plan* (Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 2002) (three volumes), in Greek.

d. *The Participation of Greece in the Process Towards European Integration. The Crucial Twenty Years 1948-1968*, (Volume One, Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Service of Diplomatic & Historical Archives, Athens, 2003), in both Greek and English editions.

2. 'Conference Proceedings' Series

a. *The Film as Testimony: Historical Sources and Commentary from the film work of Lakis Papastathis* (Aigokeros Editions, Athens, 2001), in Greek.

b. *Reality and myth in the artistic work of Lefteris Xanthopoulos*, (Papazisis Editions, Athens 2003), in Greek.

3. Other publications

a. *The Foundation of the Modern Greek State: Major Treaties and Conventions, 1830-1947* (Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 1999), in English.

b. *The Foreign Ministers of Greece, 1829-2000*, by Professor Antonis Markidimitris (Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 2000), in Greek.