

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

NO 59 - OCTOBER 2020

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RESEARCH

A first overview of three ongoing research projects: 'POSTWAREX' (death penalties after WWII for collaboration), 'ADOCHS' (processes of quality control of digitized cultural heritage collections) and the 'provincial administration of Limburg during WWII'. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/event/first-review-some-ongoing-research-projects-cegesoma)

BELGIUM WWII

Stories of lives overhauled by the Second World War. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/lives-turned-topsy-turvy-forever)

A NEW COLLEAGUE

Michael Auwers joins the permanent scientific staff of CegeSoma. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/new-colleague-reinforces-cegesoma%E2%80%99s-permanent-scientific-team)

PUBLICATION

Discover the new issue of the Journal of Belgian History. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/publication/new-issue-journal-belgian-history-rbhc-2020-2)

INVITATION

Register for the Webinar session on 11 November 2020 about the new book 'Experiencing 11 November 2018 : Commemoration and the First World War Centenary'. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/event/join-us-online-launch-book-experiencing-11-november-2018-commemoration-and-first-world-war)

EHRI

New important progress in the development of the EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure) project. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/event/ehri-makes-important-step-towards-permanent-research-infrastructure)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

All reading rooms and public spaces of the State Archives in Belgium (including CegeSoma) are closed until further notice. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/all-state-archives-repositories-closed)

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First review of some ongoing research projects at CegeSoma

[War and Society](#) [World War II](#) [Workshop](#)



On Monday October 19th, a number of scientists from the permanent team as well as the temporary project collaborators of CegeSoma gave their colleagues an update on their current research projects. This afternoon of internal presentation was also an excellent opportunity to learn how to better link new faces (obviously masked) to their respective professional activities.

Among the expected results of the [ADOCHS project](#) is the elaboration of a quality control guide for cultural heritage digitization. Aimed at digitization departments in federal scientific institutions, the objective of this manual is to propose methodological tools ensuring the quality of the digital data produced at each stage of the digitization process, while allowing each person involved in this process to view his or her work as part of a production chain with a common goal. [Chloé Brault](#) is working on this manual since September 2020.

The first step in the development of this guide has been to review the existing literature on the subject in order to identify its structure. The objective being to address the issue in two stages. First, by recontextualizing what are the challenges, limits and perspectives of digitization, thus focusing on the theoretical and technical aspects of the question. Second, by developing case studies, presenting in concrete terms the guidelines to be followed guaranteeing the quality of digital images and related metadata throughout the process.

Indeed, ensuring the quality of a digitization project does not only consist in controlling deliverables a posteriori. By proposing a guide combining theory and practice, the objective is to make the issue of quality a

common thread requiring the implementation of good project management taking into account human, technical and procedural aspects in order to meet with realism the needs of institutions according to their means. This approach requires drawing on existing practices in federal scientific institutions, notably Cegesoma and the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR), the next step in the development of the guide.

The [POSTWAREX project](#) began at CEGESOMA in June 2020. From that moment on, [Élise Rezsöhazi](#) immersed herself in a series of very rich sources so far little exploited by historians with the goal of studying the macro-juridical aspect of the policy of executions carried out by the office of the Chief Military Prosecutor (auditorat-général/auditoraat-generaal). The objective of this first stage of the research is to understand the framework in which the office of the Chief Military Prosecutor and the offices of the military prosecutors (auditorats militaires/militaire auditoraten) were led to sentence to death and then execute 242 people in Belgium between 1944 and 1950. Who were the actors involved? What legislation guided them? What processes were put in place? How was the repression coordinated?

The State Archives preserve two archival funds transferred from the Palace of Justice in Brussels that answer these questions. The documents compiled by the General Instructions department of the office of the Chief Military Prosecutor between 1944 and 1953 and then by its documentation service plunge us into political, legal and very practical questions relating to executions through numerous formal and informal letters, circulars, memos and other reports. We are thus able to retrace quite precisely the implementation of the execution procedure and to confront the very concrete but also moral problems caused by these public executions. Exchanges between the office of the Chief Military Prosecutor, the offices of the military prosecutors, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defense reflect the existing balance of power between the different authorities and stakeholders in a tense political context while repression is at the heart of public debate. These archives also show the important role of coordinator of the Chief Military Prosecution Service, in permanent contact with the military prosecution departments carrying out repression at the local level. Thanks to this pioneering research, the legal and political frameworks in which the executions took place can now be reconstructed.

Finally, [Aline Thomas](#) gave an update on the project "[The Provincial Administration of Limburg during the Second World War – Inventory of Archives and Historical Research](#)", which began in July 2020. The first phase, during which the inventory of the Second World War archives had to be reworked and updated, and an introduction to this inventory was written, has just been completed. The original inventory was problematic on two levels. On the one hand, for rather superficial questions - missing or incorrect dating, missing numbering, files not described, inadequate names of provincial departments and producers of archives, spelling errors, files misclassified, etc. On the other hand, this inventory posed problems at a more fundamental level, for complications related to its hierarchical structure which initially was rather messy and confusing, making it difficult to establish a satisfactory hierarchy of archives. Proper solutions were found for both kinds of problems. Adjustments and changes were made to the inventory so that the classification of the items, both thematic and chronological, now clearly reflects the tasks and responsibilities of the provincial government. The new hybrid filing structure is based on the different themes of major importance during the war, combined with the relevant provincial services (which acted as archive producers): price regulation and wages; passive air protection; food supply and rationing; assistance; winter relief; etc.

This revamped inventory will enable those interested in historical research on the provincial administration of Limburg during the Second World War to locate and request archival documents more efficiently. This work also gives Aline Thomas a better overview of the content and logic underlying (composition and origin) the archives. This acquired knowledge will be particularly useful in the second phase of the project, the historical research on the role of the provincial government during the war, which began recently.



19/10/2020 - 13:00 to 16:30

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Lives turned topsy-turvy, forever



As we all know, the war and the occupation have deeply and lastingly affected the lives of millions of Belgians. For most, it was essentially a matter of surviving and protecting their families. For others, the troubles of the conflict would shake or even annihilate the values at the heart of their lives. These individual fates allow us to better understand the reality of the war.

In the course of the past weeks, several new articles on the Belgium WWII website have focused on some of these individual life journeys, an opportunity to immerse oneself in stories of lives forever marked by the war. One such a story is about the commitment of Lily van Oost, known by her married name, de Gerlache (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/destins-de-guerre.html>). This young woman from a privileged household was not yet 17 when her life took a dramatic turn for the worse, as German soldiers took up residence inside the family home. She would soon join the Resistance. In late July 1944, she eventually got arrested. One month later, she was deported to Ravensbrück, just days before the liberation of Belgium by the Allies. As one can

imagine, these eight months of deportation would profoundly mark her life. Claire Pahaut has written a very moving portrayal of this exceptional woman.

And there are more touching life stories, like that of Alice Cheramy (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/destins-de-guerre/alice-cheramy.html>), born to a modest family from Farciennes. After her discrete but determined involvement in the intelligence service Clarence, she would become a prominent figure within “Leopoldist” circles, partisans of Leopold III. Her unique life story was as so many others also marked by the occupation. Fabrice Maerten relates us her journey. For others, the war signifies the continuation of earlier commitments. This was the case for Communist militant Jacques Grippa (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/jacques-grippa.html>) and for Catholic journalist William Ugeux (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/william-ugeux.html>). But sometimes, as Alain Colignon reminds us, the war throws people off the tracks, disrupting a journey that seemed well marked out. This is how the revolutionary socialist Walter Dauge (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/walter-dauge.html>) would end up in the murky waters of the New Order and eventually become the acting mayor of Flénu, shortly before falling under the bullets of the Resistance.

These are but a few of the new stories to be discovered on the Belgium WWII website. Other biographies further enrich the site. For example the ones of historian Guillaume Jacquemyns (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/guillaume-jacquemyns.html>) and his important studies of the conditions of survival of the Walloon working class, or of Resistance fighters Albert Mélot (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/destins-de-guerre/albert-melot.html>) and Marcel Demonceau (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/marcel-demonceau.html>), and last but not least the controversial story of King Leopold III (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/leopold-iii.html>).

In short, biographies to discover unique life experiences which help us to better grasp the impact of WWII on the Belgian population. Many more stories can be discovered on our website. Do not hesitate to dive (or dive again) into it!

Chantal Kesteloot

Other news

[A new colleague reinforces CegeSoma's permanent scientific team](#)

[The historical truth and the perception of the Second World War in Belgium in these times of so-called 'post-truth'](#)

[Belgian Colonial History in the JBH](#)

[Was grandpa a hero?](#)

[The peculiar summer of 1940](#)

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A new colleague reinforces CegeSoma's permanent scientific team



On 1 October, Michael Auwers joined CegeSoma. Who is he and which is his assignment?

A short portrait...

Michael Auwers studied applied linguistics at *KULeuven* and at *Università degli Studi di Trieste*, and international relations and history at the University of Antwerp.

In 2014, he defended his doctoral thesis about the social and cultural history of the Belgian diplomatic corps in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He briefly worked in secondary education and a bit longer for a scientific publisher. From 2015 to 2020, he was a teaching assistant in history at the University of Antwerp.

His publications focus on the history of Belgian diplomatic practices and foreign policy.

To begin with, he will be in charge of coordinating research about the Cold War in Belgium at CegeSoma. From

this basis, he shall participate in the Public History section, in conferences, in communication and other activities of our institution. Furthermore, he shall champion a number of ongoing initiatives such as the Journal of Belgian History.

Welcome Michael

Other news

[Lives turned topsy-turvy, forever](#)

[The historical truth and the perception of the Second World War in Belgium in these times of so-called 'post-truth'](#)

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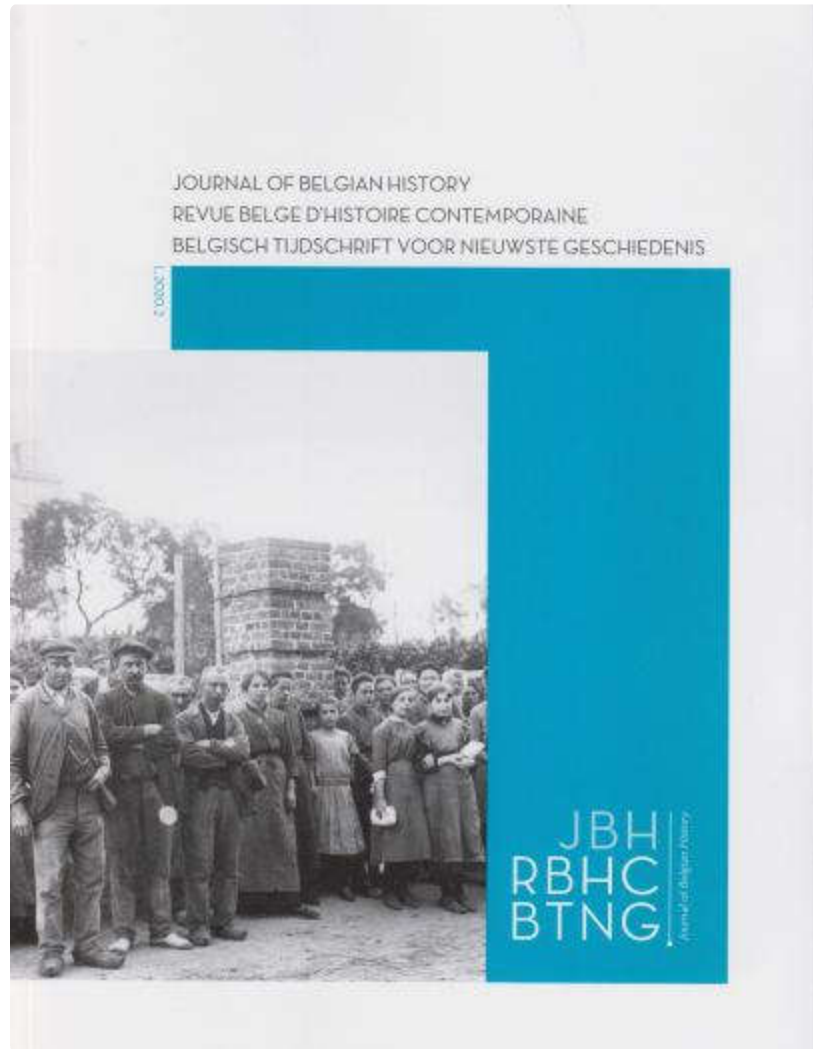
[Belgium WWII: New content on our blog and our website](#)

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A new issue of the Journal of Belgian History (RBHC 2020-2)

[War and Society](#) [World War I](#) [World War II](#) [Magazine](#)



The second issue of the Journal of Belgian History (RBHC - *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*) of 2020 has just been published and can be ordered from [Hilde Keppens](#) (CegeSoma) or via jbh-admin@cegesoma.be. It consists of four articles which will be added in 2021 to the digital archives of the RBHC, fully accessible via www.journalbelgianhistory.be.

The first contribution (in French) is the work of the young historian Thomas Briamont, who holds a Master's degree in History (2018) and a Master's degree in Art History and Archaeology : Museology (2019) from the University of Liège. His article on Belgian diplomatic strategy towards the "German problem" during the Second Berlin Crisis (1958-1961) - in the middle of the Cold War - is based on his Master's thesis. Using the concept of "securitization", he studies how the Belgian representations of Germany contributed to determine the diplomatic strategy during this crisis.

The second article (also in French) is written by Simon Watteyne, who is currently conducting doctoral research on Belgian tax policy in the 19th and 20th centuries at the ULB. His article adds a whole new dimension to the already well-studied First School War (1878-1884), since it analyzes how tax policy was used as a strategic political instrument to finance the new school legislation.

The research of Stan Pannier and Frank Caestecker (in Dutch) also focuses on the financial and economic sphere, but that of the private sector. Based on how two small Belgian companies introduced the instrument of consumer credit in the Belle Époque, they examine how a prudent basis was established for the later consumer society. Stan Pannier is a researcher at the Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee (VLIZ) where he studies the maritime history of the Southern Netherlands. Frank Caestecker is a professor at the Department of Economics at UGent and has published extensively on migration and refugee policies. He is currently researching European immigration policy and the history of financial economics in Belgium.

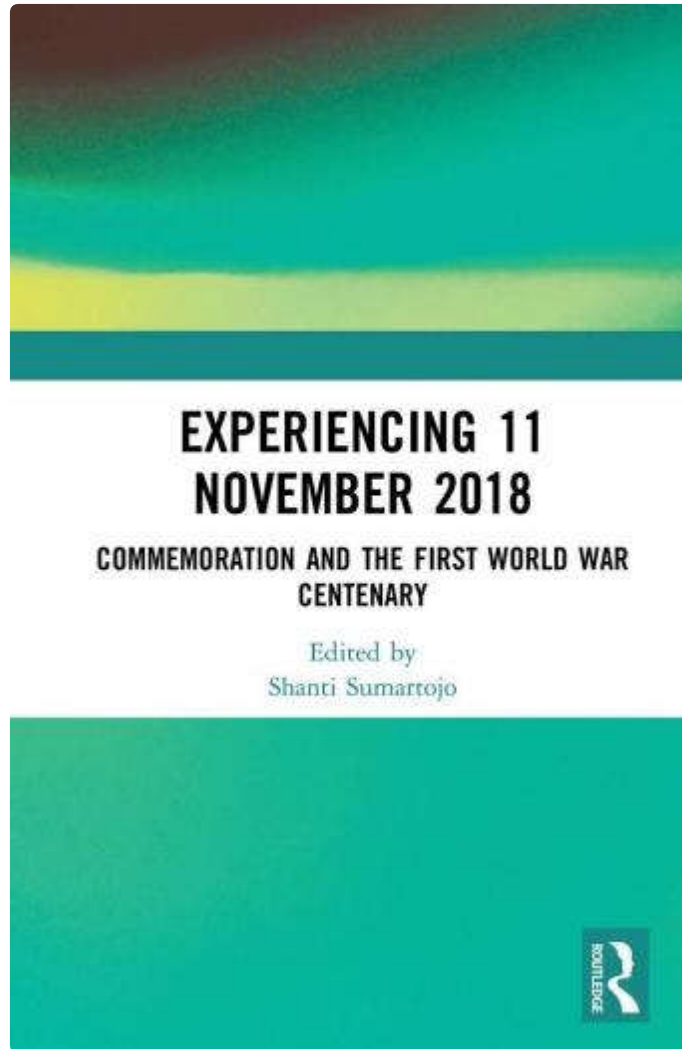
The last article (in Dutch) was also written by two authors. Antoon Vrints is a professor at the University of Ghent and a specialist in social history during and around the First World War. Dominique De Groen is a historian, poet and essayist. Together they examine in their article the processes of national identification during the First World War among the poorest sections of the population, based on written requests for material assistance.

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Join us online for the launch of the book 'Experiencing 11 November 2018: Commemoration and the First World War Centenary' (Routledge)

[World War I](#) [Conference](#)



On 11 November, join us online on the occasion of the publication of *Experiencing 11 November 2018: Commemoration and the First World War Centenary* (Routledge). This book is the product of the reflection group "Commemoration Reframed" led by professor Shanti Sumartojo, who teaches at Monash University in Australia. The group met regularly for two years. CegeSoma both hosted these meetings and participated in the project, as a continuation of the [BRAIN-MEMEX project "Memory and Experience"](#) on the history and commemorations of the First World War in Belgium. The aim of "Commemoration Reframed" was to prepare a publication on the commemoration of Armistice Day on 11 November 2018 and how this one hundred anniversary was celebrated in different parts of the world.

International and interdisciplinary research

In a truly international and interdisciplinary perspective, this book is centred around the commemoration events organised around the world on 11 November 2018 for the Centenary. If one wants to understand the impact of such commemorations at societal, political, historical and cultural levels, it is necessary to decode and analyse these events beyond the speeches, reports and historical happenings. The sensory and sentimental perceptions as well as the role of emotions are scrutinised among other essential elements to better apprehend and understand histories which are both specific and shared, and further grasp how they can shape identity.

15 papers. 10 national contexts

The book will be presented by Jay Winter, emeritus professor at Yale University and leading expert in the history of the First World War and its impact on the 20th century.

It contains 15 contributions, covering a total of 10 countries, thus with very different national contexts and distinct war experiences. As a whole, these papers offer a new approach to the concept of commemoration, ranging from the participation in the events to the perception and celebration thereof.

On the occasion of this webinar, several of the authors will also be present to discuss their contribution to the book :

Chantal Kesteloot, CegeSoma (Belgium)

Laurence Van Ypersele, Professor at UCLouvain (Belgium)

David C. Harvey, Associate Professor at Aarhus Universitet (Denmark)

Emma Hanna, University of Kent (United Kingdom)

Kathy Smits, Associate Professor at University of Auckland (New Zealand)

Of course professor Shanti Sumartojo will also be present. Without her the project would not have been feasible and the book now published under her direction truly reflects the rich discussions she coordinated and which were held at CegeSoma.



11/11/2020 - 10:00 to 11:30

Main language

English

WEBINAR REGISTRATION

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EHRI makes important step towards permanent research infrastructure

World War II



In September, the EHRI-PP project, with which the State Archives/CegeSoma has partnered, organised its second general partner meeting. While the first meeting in Munich in February could still be held in person, this was now no longer possible. Indeed, due to the pandemic the gathering had to be held virtually.

But September 2020 is also a key month for EHRI for another reason: project EHRI-3 was launched. It runs for 4 years and shall pave the way for further content expansions for EHRI.

The *general partner meeting*, in which all EHRI-PP partners are represented, took two important decisions that were prepared within work package 2 under the supervision of the State Archives/CegeSoma: the choice of the headquarters for the future permanent research infrastructure and its legal form.



Members of the EHRI consortium during the zoom meeting

ERIC

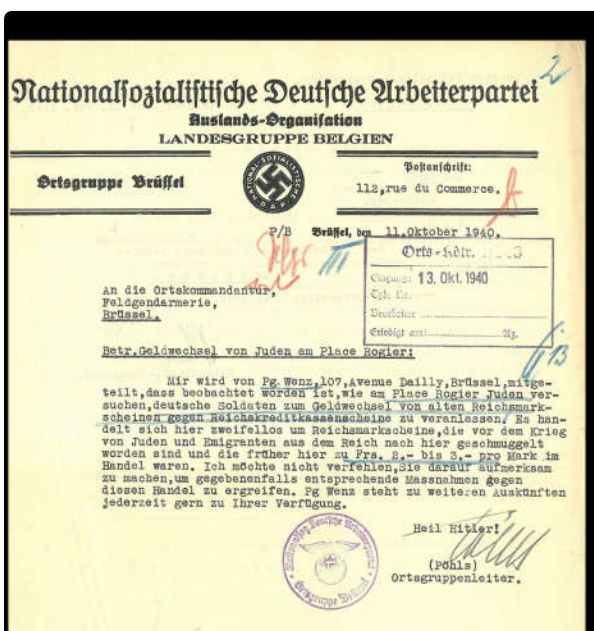
A permanent research infrastructure must have a legal personality in order to be able to function as an entity in its own right. This can be achieved in two ways. Work package 2 has analysed the different legal frameworks suitable for establishing EHRI as a permanent research infrastructure with a legal personality. The aim was to identify all possible and relevant international, European and national legal forms and to ponder their respective benefits and disadvantages. The legal forms under which other European research infrastructures were established – primarily in social sciences and humanities – were also taken into account. This enabled us to assess and analyse the different possibilities, while always keeping the statutory requirements and objectives of EHRI as a future research infrastructure with own legal personality in mind. Based on this assessment, the advice from work package 2 was to opt for an ERIC (*European Research Infrastructure Consortium*) because – in comparison with other legal forms such as a Belgian international non-profit organisation (ivzw/AISBL/IVoG) – such a consortium offers a number of advantages and is perfectly suited to meet the requirements of the European research infrastructure that EHRI is bound to become. The *general partner meeting* adopted this advice.

Headquarters in the Netherlands

The EHRI-PP partners agreed to the proposition to establish the headquarters of the future research infrastructure in the Netherlands. This is a pertinent choice: Since 2010, the [NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#) in Amsterdam successfully coordinates the EHRI project. By establishing the headquarters in the Netherlands, the EHRI-PP partners support the aspiration of NIOD to ensure continuity with regard to the future EHRI organisation.

EHRI-3

As you have read in our Newsletter of March, the European Commission has granted additional project funding for EHRI ('EHRI-3'). In addition to Kazerne Dossin, the State Archives/CegeSoma is the Belgian partner in EHRI-3.



On 16 September 2020, EHRI-3 was officially launched – virtually though, because of the current health situation. This fresh funding enables EHRI to further extend its contents, among others by incorporating new Holocaust-related sources, from smaller institutions as well, and by continuing and expanding the Conny Kristel *fellowship* programme. The *fellowship* programme boosts international research by giving (young) Holocaust researchers the opportunity to carry out archival research abroad. EHRI exists since ten years now: 'EHRI-veteran' Haim Gertner (*Yad Vashem*) held a keynote speech about the role, the significance and the realisations of EHRI.

In times of Corona pandemic, virtual meetings are indeed a sound alternative in order to keep international



projects up and running, but the informal moments of in-person gatherings, in which new and seasoned EHRI collaborators get to know each other and exchange their views are terribly missing. In one of our future Newsletters we hope to be able to eventually have on-site reports about the progress made by EHRI.

(Illustration : Letter from the archives of the Devisenschutzkommando, which was involved in the persecution of the Jews. The EHRI portal helps international researchers find their way to Holocaust archives in different countries, copyrights CegeSoma/State Archives).

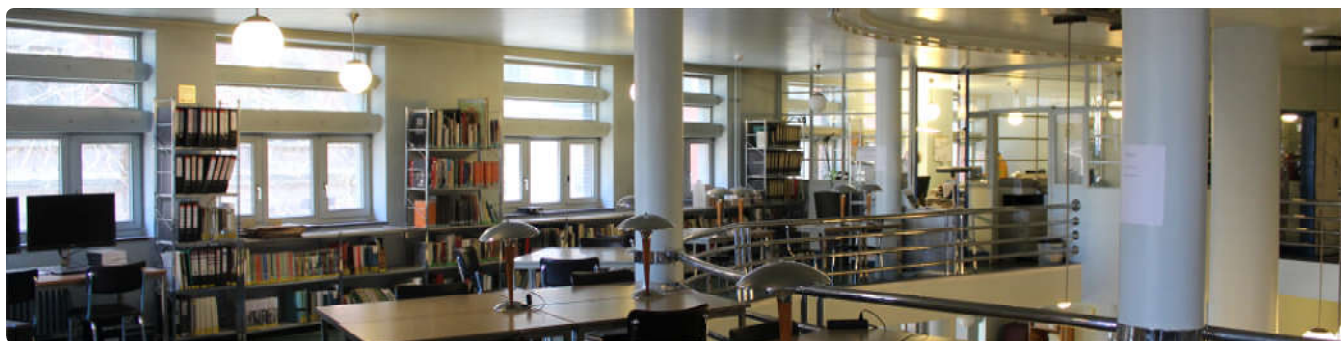


16/10/2020 - 09:30 to 13:45

RELATED LINKS

[EHRI Gathers on Zoom to Kick Off Its Third Project Phase with Many New Plans](#)
[Project Director Karel Berkhoff on What to Expect From EHRI-3](#)

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All State Archives repositories closed

As part of COVID-19 pandemic measures, reading rooms and other public areas of the State Archives will be closed until further notice. These measures, which were already enforced at CegeSoma since October 26, 2020 (following measures taken in the Brussels-Capital Region), will apply to all State Archives repositories from November 3rd, 2020.

CegeSoma can always be contacted by phone (02.556.92.11) but preferably by e-mail (cegesoma@arch.be).

During the period in which our reading room is closed, you can still carry out some research online via [our digital reading room](#), for instance:

- The general catalogue of PALLAS can be accessed [here](#).
- The content descriptions for a number of archive holdings and collections can be found [here](#).
- Some digitised documents [can be accessed online](#).
- Thematic help files for research can be accessed via ["How to start a search?"](#)

You can stay informed about further developments via our website and via [Facebook](#).

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