

## CEGESOMA - State Archives

# NEWSLETTER

No 81 - January 2023



## NEWS

### EHRI

Towards a permanent research infrastructure. Read about the different steps in the process and watch the interview with Dr. Reto Speck, EHRI-PP coordinator, about the importance of this project.

► [Read more and watch the video](#)



## AGENDA



### 'OORLOGSCAFÉS'

Reminder : the next editions for the general public on collaboration and post-war repression after the Second World War in Hasselt on February 8, 2023 and Edegem on February 16, 2023.

► [Read more](#)

### PUBLIC HISTORY MEETING

On 22 February 2023, conference-debate in French with guest Myriam Leroy, author of the novel 'Le mystère de la femme sans tête'. An opportunity to discuss the complementarity and incompatibility of history and fiction around the drama of Marina Chafroff, the first woman of Belgium to be decapitated.

► [Read more](#)



## FOCUS ON THE COLLECTIONS



### MILITARY JUSTICE ARCHIVES

More than 1,400 requests for access to military justice archives have been processed over the past years by the State Archives. Read the account of Johannes Van De Walle's article in META magazine on the troubled history of these socially and scientifically important archives



and how to access them.

► [Read more](#)

## NEW ACQUISITION

The private photographic archive of German war photographer Rudolf Müller has been inventoried. Discover his private pictures of everyday life in the occupied territories and city life in Paris and Brussels, etc.

► [Read more](#)



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## 13–14 December 2022: EHRI-PP General Partner Meeting at CegeSoma



On 13 and 14 December 2022, EHRI-PP's General Partner Meeting was held in CegeSoma's conference room. As this project is entering its final phase this was the ideal occasion to assess the work done and look ahead.

The EHRI-Preparatory Phase (EHRI-PP) project has laying the legal, technical, organisational and scientific foundations to turn EHRI into a permanent research infrastructure, an ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium). As a result, EHRI's operations will no longer be funded on a project-to-project basis, as is currently the case, but in a structural way. EHRI-PP's General Partner Meetings, which have been organised every six months throughout the project, are an opportunity to bring everyone involved in the project up to speed on the activities of the various work packages and to meet informally.

### **EHRI, a priority for the State Archives**

The General Partner Meeting began with an opening speech by Karel Velle, Director General of the State Archives. He emphasised that for the State Archives, which has been an EHRI partner from the beginning through CegeSoma, EHRI is an important project that fits well with a number of its core tasks and contributes to anchoring the Holocaust in collective memory. Karel Velle expressed the hope that Belgium would be one of the founding members of the future EHRI-ERIC.

### **Building blocks of a permanent research infrastructure**

The presentations by the different work package leaders revealed that the building blocks of the permanent

research infrastructure have already been laid to a large extent. Work on the statutes, financial plan, research strategy, technology development and interaction with users is at an advanced stage. Work Package 2, for which the State Archives/CegeSoma is responsible, has drawn up the statutes of the future EHRI-ERIC. These statutes, which define the roles of the future EHRI-ERIC's various bodies, have been approved by representatives of the different ministries of the countries committed to this preparatory phase, including Belgium. These statutes can now be finalised, just like the principles for financing the EHRI-ERIC as defined in the financial plan.



As for EHRI-ERIC's user strategy, an advisory board of users that can serve as a sounding board for the further development of EHRI's services has been established. In terms of research, much attention has been paid to EHRI's thematic focus. The Holocaust remains central, but this does not exclude the possibility of including other Nazi crimes, anti-Semitism or other genocides into EHRI's research scope. Technical work has been carried out to ensure the future of services offered by EHRI. The

basis of the data management plan has been established, but this will be adapted according to the further evolution of the infrastructure. EHRI's services will be linked to the European Social Science Cloud (EOSC).

### **National Nodes**

EHRI-ERIC will be what is known as a "distributed" research infrastructure. In addition to the central seat of the ERIC, which will be located in the Netherlands, national nodes will also play an active role. Work is in progress to establish these national nodes in several countries. To this end, contact has been made with institutions and organisations that can play a role in these national nodes. As for Belgium, Kazerne Dossin and the State Archives/CegeSoma, the two Belgian partners in EHRI-PP, have organised a number of workshops to involve potentially

interested organisations and institutions in the future Belgian National Node. The General Partner Meeting also provided an opportunity to share experiences in setting up national nodes in the various countries and exchange views on the websites that will provide each of these national nodes with the necessary visibility.



### **A follow-up project**

The synthesis of all this preparatory work is reflected in the business and implementation plan, which lays the foundation for the next phase of EHRI: the implementation phase. To make this phase a reality, a new project will be submitted to the European Commission for funding. Part of the General Partner Meeting was devoted to the preparation of this project. This preparation also involved several new partner institutions from other countries that are interested in joining EHRI, such as Hungary, Sweden and Croatia. In addition to finalising EHRI-PP, which runs until 31 May 2023, work will continue on the EHRI-IP project in the coming months, for which the State Archives/CegeSoma and Kazerne Dossin remain the Belgian partners. The aim is to have EHRI up and running as a permanent research infrastructure by 2025, 80 years after the liberation of Auschwitz.

**You can find out why this is important and how EHRI is planning to get there in the interview with Dr. Reto Speck, EHRI-PP's coordinator.**



## “Oorlogscafés”: Collaboration and repression in Flanders

A new and more informal series of lectures for the large public

[World War II](#)   [Conference](#)



On 24 November, [Koen Aerts](#) (*UGent*/State Archives-CegeSoma) and **Bruno De Wever** (*UGent*) launched a new type of lectures in Gent titled “*Oorlogscafés*”. Partners are the Davidsfonds and the State Archives-CegeSoma. The goal is to share knowledge and findings from scientific research into collaboration and repression with the large public in an informal, café-like setting.

Upon registration, attendees will be given **access to some 20 webinars of maximum 10 minutes about topics related to collaboration and repression**. Once registered, you can also ask questions in advance that will be summarised and addressed at the event. “*Oorlogscafés*” are organised in every Flemish province.

-> Registration via this link: <https://www.davidsfonds.be/zoekresultaten?q=oorlogscaf%C3%A9>

-> Further information: [https://view.publitas.com/davidsfonds/het-accent\\_juli\\_2022/page/8-9](https://view.publitas.com/davidsfonds/het-accent_juli_2022/page/8-9)

**Please also note the scientific survey about the Second World War that underpins these lectures. Link to the**

survey: <https://forms.gle/X49BRr5Mc3z1jKPE9>



24/11/2022 - 19:30 to 24/04/2023 - 21:30

**Dates and locations of the Oorlogscafés:**

***Thursday 24 November 2022 from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm - NTGent, Sint-Baafsplein 17, 9000 Ghent***

***Tuesday 13 December 2022 from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm - De Steenberg, Spechtenlaan 9, 3080 Tervuren***

**Wednesday 8 February 2023 from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm - Borrelhuis, Witte Nonnenstraat 28, 3500 Hasselt**

**Thursday 16 February 2023 from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm - De Basiliek, Trooststraat 22, 2650 Edegem**

**Tuesday 9 March 2023 from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm - ZoWe Vormingscentrum, Barrièrestraat 2 D, 8000 Brugge**

**Monday 24 April 2023 from 1.15 pm to 4.00 pm - National Archives 2 - Joseph Cuvelier repository, Hopstraat/Rue du Houblon 26-28, 1000 Brussels**

**Main language**

Dutch

TAGS

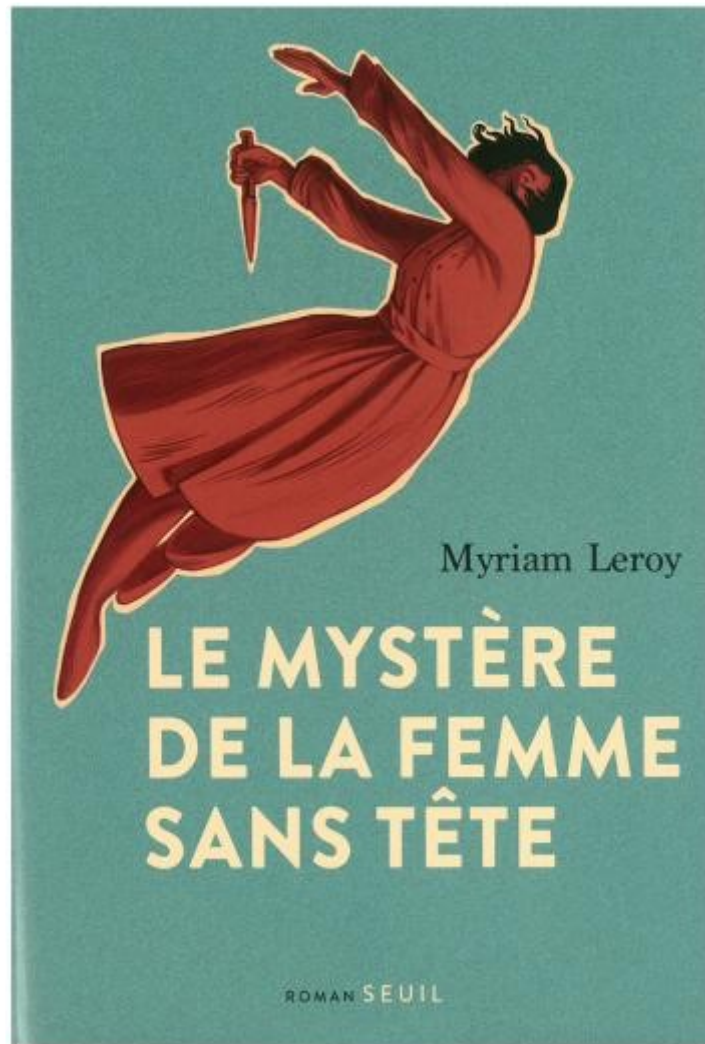
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[collaboration](#)   [Repression of collaboration](#)

## Le mystère de la femme sans tête (The mystery of the headless woman)

CegeSoma Public History Meetings (2023-2)

**World War II**   [Conference](#)



**Conference-debate with guest speaker Myriam Leroy.**

**Hosted by Chantal Kesteloot.**

On a freezing day of December 2020, the journalist and author Myriam Leroy decided to defy the lockdown rules and go for a walk around Ixelles Cemetery. Her attention was soon drawn to a tomb on which the name of a woman who died in 1942 was engraved, as well as the word “decapitated”. She was in fact the first woman from Belgium to suffer this fate during the Second World War.

This was the beginning of an investigation with intimate undertones, full of dead ends and twists that culminated in a book published by Seuil on 6 January 2023, entitled *Le mystère de la femme sans tête* (The mystery of the headless woman). This woman was Marina Chafroff. She went to her death voluntarily in order to save 60 hostages that the Nazis were threatening to execute. She was then forgotten, although she could have become an icon. Through fictionalisation and intuition, Myriam Leroy brings Marina Chafroff back to life, renders her visible once

more and lights a fire of revolt.

Between fiction and history, CegeSoma wished to initiate a dialogue with the publication of Myriam Leroy's novel. What can fiction do that history does not allow? How do these two approaches complement each other? How did Myriam Leroy manage to reveal or to imagine so many facets of the mysterious Marina? How does commitment to resistance challenge us today? And why was Marina forgotten after the war?

These are some of the elements addressed at this event. The discussion will be moderated by Chantal Kesteloot, head of public history at CegeSoma.



**Myriam Leroy** is a journalist (*UCL*) who taught press writing. She now works as a freelance journalist for the French-speaking Belgian press, radio and television, and writes humorous columns. She also pens and directs podcasts ('Madame', 'Tapis bleu', 'La poupée russe'...), plays ('Cherche L'amour', 'Sisters', 'ADN' at the TTO), documentaries ('#SalePute') and, especially, novels. Her book *Ariane* (2018) was a finalist for the Goncourt Prize for first novel, while *Les yeux rouges* (2019) was shortlisted for the Médicis Prize and was adapted as a play in 2021. She is currently working on the script for a television series (*RTBF*).



**Chantal Kesteloot** is the head of public history at CegeSoma/State Archives. She is particularly interested in the phenomenon of commemorations and the place that the past has in public space with particular regard to toponymy.

She coordinates [the website Belgium WWII](#) and is the author of various publications, including *Quand l'image fixe la mémoire. La Résistance et les photos de presse (septembre 1944 - mai*

*1945)*, which was published in 2022 in the Journal of Belgian History.



**22/02/2023 - 12:30 to 14:00**

#### **PRACTICAL INFORMATION:**

**Where:** Conference room, CegeSoma, Square de l'Aviation/Luchtvaartsquare 29 – 1070 Brussels

**When:** Wednesday 22 February 2023 (12.30 pm – 2.00 pm)

**Registration required:** Send an email to [isabelle.ponteville@arch.be](mailto:isabelle.ponteville@arch.be) or phone 02.556.92.11

Feel free to spread the word about this event.



**Main language**

French

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## Hidden passions? The archives of the military justice and their modalities of access

The archives of the military justice are of great scientific and social value. Over the past five years, the State Archives has handled more than 1,400 requests for access to these records. In a recent article for *META. Tijdschrift voor bibliotheek & archief*, archivist [Johannes Van De Walle](#) (National Archives 2 - Joseph Cuvelier repository) discussed the troubled history of these archives and their modalities of access.

The term "military justice archives" covers all archives created by Belgian military courts. As a rule, such extraordinary courts are competent to try military personnel, but under certain circumstances their jurisdiction may be extended. This was the case after World War II, when the Belgian government in London decided to entrust the trial of collaborators to the military courts. Twenty-one local courts-martial were set up at lightning speed, and together they opened more than 400,000 files: prosecutions were initiated for just over 57,000 cases; the High Military Court handed down 18,126 judgments on appeal.

Since 2018, the Belgian State Archives has been in charge of preserving the archives of the courts-martial, war tribunals, the High Military Court and the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office. In addition to voluminous series of documentation and intelligence files on the basis of which criminal prosecution policies can be reconstructed, these include the estimated 500,000 justice files relating to individual cases. These files are crucial to the study of collaboration and postwar repression, not only for historians, but also for the countless citizens seeking more information about the wartime past of their families.

Today, anyone wishing to inspect a justice file from the military jurisdiction must make a reasoned request to the Board of Prosecutors General. The right to perusal depends on the identity of the applicant: family members and researchers affiliated with a university or recognized research institution may be granted access under certain conditions.



The history of the public access policy has been erratic. Historians who from the early 1960s insisted on the accessibility of the files on the administration of justice invariably received no response from Deputy Auditor-General John Gilissen. Els De Bens, who received her doctorate from Ghent University in 1972 with a dissertation on the daily press during the German occupation, was the first to be granted access, after confronting Gilissen with the reality that many of the confiscated documents found in the files could be freely consulted abroad. The publication of her investigation a year later sparked a

The verdicts related to the Hasselt War Council, an essential access to find the justice files of this period.

flurry of controversy and parliamentary questions. The question of public access to the repression files was explicitly linked to the amnesty issue,

which was very topical at the time. Even within the General Prosecutor's Office there was growing awareness that sooner or later the files would have to be released. The minutes of a meeting of the military prosecutors in May 1972 state that "the majority of the nation acknowledged the importance of disclosure. [...] The question is whether or not one will meet a seemingly unstoppable demand for objective, and at least as complete information as possible, to get a more accurate understanding - with hindsight and a less emotionally charged approach - of the war events.' For the first time, the door of the archives of the military court came ajar. In the years that followed, more and more researchers and relatives took advantage of that opening, and slowly the General Prosecutor's Office abandoned its suspicions.

However, it was not until 1996 that for the first time the access policy adopted was defined according to objective criteria, resulting in a considerable tightening of access rules. In a circular letter, chief prosecutor Minne stated that a more restrictive consultation policy should "prevent public order from being disturbed by granting access to certain judicial archives, which, in the event of perfidious use, could rekindle certain deep-seated passions ". It is striking that in 1996 it was felt necessary to start further sealing off the files, a quarter century after the military justice's leadership ruled that public access was eventually unavoidable. It is likely that this demarche came in response to the review of the trial of Irma Laplasse, the woman sentenced to death by the military court in 1945 who was seen by amnesty advocates as a symbol of unjust repression.

In 2010, the State Archives concluded an agreement in principle with the FPS Justice on the relocation of the archives to the National Archives 2 - Joseph Cuvelier repository. Since the beginning of 2018, it is no longer the administrative staff of the Board of Prosecutors General but the archivists of the State Archives who manage the archives of the military court. Over the past four years, over 1400 requests for access have been processed in this way. The State Archives is working towards a sustainable, transparent and democratic arrangement of the access policy. Society is entitled to this more than 75 years after the end of the war.

**[The full article can be read on the META website.](#)**

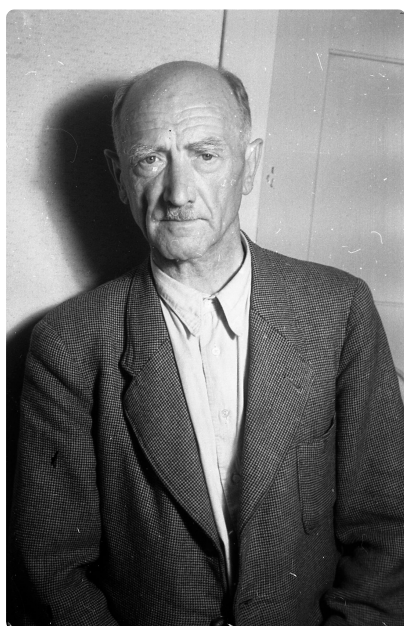
For more information about the archives of the military justice or if you are looking for a specific file, please contact the National Archives 2 - Joseph Cuvelier repository at [agr\\_ar\\_2@arch.be](mailto:agr_ar_2@arch.be).



## A unique acquisition : the photographs of "Müller-Schönhausen"



CegeSoma acquired a remarkable archival collection in early 2020: the personal photo archives of Rudolf Müller (1893-1968), donated by his son Peter. The 133 covers with negatives (size 24x36 mm), totaling over 4,500 images from 1940-1948, are now are now catalogued.



Self-portrait of Rudolf Müller, post-war, (3119, nr. 121) (c) Peter Müller

Rudolf Müller (pen name: Müller-Schönhausen), was already interested in photography as a pupil, and studied at the *Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie, Chemigraphie, Lichtdruck und Gravüre* in Munich after the First World War, after which he became a freelance photographer. From 1927 to 1937 he taught at his Alma Mater, which had become *Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Lichtbildwesen* in the meantime. Müller joined the SA in this period, for which he also did freelance work, and the NSDAP.

In September 1940, Müller-Schönhausen was commissioned by the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht to portray in France the German soldiers who were awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (*Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes*). The OKW wanted to publish a prestigious photo album about these Knight's Cross recipients (*Ritterkreuzträger*). Thereafter, Rudolf shuttled with his own Ford V8 official car, driver and technical assistant, between northern France and Belgium, and his studio in Berlin. In 1943, given the turned tide of war for Nazi Germany, he was again called to arms.



Müller destroyed the negatives and prints of his official photographs in 1945 for fear of the approaching Soviet armies. But as a passionate and talented photographer, he also shot numerous portraits, landscapes, scenes of everyday life and more abstract-artistic images on his own account. All what remains of this is now at CegeSoma.

Müller-Schönhausen's photographs show the roads and landscapes of Northern France and Belgium, but also the visible traces of the two world wars (official and improvised memorials, war graves, remnants of battles), the atmosphere in the occupied territories and city life in Paris and Brussels, among others. The *Ville Lumière* in particular appealed to him, as shown by his pictures of the tourist hotspots, the grand boulevards, the nightlife, the booksellers along the Seine river...



Müller shows his photos to German soldiers, near Bordeaux,(3119, nr. 76) (c) Peter Müller



Advertisement for the Cabaret russe 'Kremlin' in Brussels (3119, no. 30) (c) Peter Müller

[The inventory of this magnificent archive file can be downloaded now](#) and is [available via our archive catalogue.](#)

P.S. Do you also have archival documents (photos, letters, diaries, association archives, ...) related to the conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century??

[Would you like them to be preserved for future generations?](#)  
[Please contact us!](#)

## Other news

[Postdoctoral fellowships for Ukrainian researchers](#)

[13–14 December 2022: EHRI-PP General Partner Meeting at CegeSoma](#)

[Spirou in the torment of the Shoah](#)

[Launch of new calls for candidates for the EHRI-Conny Kristel scholarships - 2023](#)

[THREE QUESTIONS TO ... Léo Baudelet,](#)

[Belgium WWII – new content](#)

[News from the Wikibase Resistance project](#)

[Study Day on the Resistance at the State Archives in Liège](#)

[Take part in a scientific survey :](#)

[New issue of the JBH \(2022-3\)](#)

The Great(er) War of Military Occupations in Europe  
Research: The SNCB/NMBS and deportations during WWII

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