

## 5 years on

Only five years ago, the Parliament of Catalonia approved complete regulation for the development of the current archival profession, *Law 10/2001 on archives and documents*. This Law, in which the Association of Archivists of Catalonia took a very active part, constituted an essential legislative benchmark, as it broadly exceeded the historicist notion of archiving and formalised document management as a characteristic instrument of archives. It also regulated the *Archive System of Catalonia (SAC)* and established access to public records in a show of the administrative transparency we hear so much about.

The law was indeed passed years ago but to what extent has it been complied with? We will not go into too much detail here, yet a careful glance at the text shows that although a lot of the measures expressed in its articles have been carried out, many others still need to be regulated and developed.

The most significant include the constitution, last July, of the National Council on Archives, the highest consultative body on archival matters of the Government of Catalonia. Although we have had to wait five years, its foundation is good news as it provided for the unfreezing of some of the projects that remained at a standstill. These were the *National Commission on Access, Assessment and Selection of Archives (CNAATD)* and regulation of the *Register of Archives of Catalonia*, essential tools for implementing some of the postulates of the Law. Another point that was approved was the *Plan of Archival Action in Catalonia*, the first planning schedule in archive policy to establish the strategic priorities and the lines of work to be followed.

One of the Law's important articles, number 7, deals with the responsibilities of holders of public records in everything associated with the possession of a single document management system. Although the situation of the bodies listed in sections 6.1. to 6.1.c of the Law (autonomous community and local administration organs and bodies) could be described as being in a process of standardisation, there are significant exceptions that require correction. With respect to the bodies listed in sections 6.1.d to 6.1.k, which basically correspond to public law companies and entities, most have made an effort and provide the means to integrate their public records in a single document management system that covers all processes.

In the case of Articles 20 and 21 of the Law, which refer to the SAC and to the technical requirements of the archives in it, the situation is acceptable, although the resources allocated to it are insufficient from all perspectives. In many cases, it is archivists' willingness and dedication that guarantees minimum quality in the service they provide.

The law establishes that councils with over 10,000 inhabitants must have a municipal archive service and 89.8% of cases comply therewith. Data from the 2005 Census show that in the province of Barcelona there are 76 municipalities with over 10,000 inhabitants, in Girona province there are 14, in Lleida province there are 5, and there are 13 in Tarragona province. Bearing in mind that 7 of these municipalities in Barcelona province and 4 in Tarragona province do not comply with that established in the Law in that they do not provide this type of service, their councils must adapt to the regulations by creating the municipal archive service, providing it with the necessary resources and filling the corresponding post of archivist.

Another aspect that is difficult to assess is compliance with that mentioned in Article 7.5 on the resources to be assigned. A quick glance at investment in archives in recent years and that forecast for the coming years, shows a substantial improvement in the resources allocated. Complete implementation, in just a few years, of the Regional Archive Network is a good example, although there is still much to be done and work should not be slackened. In another respect, many institutions have still do not have the minimum resources that are essential for compliance with the Law.

For the purposes of implementation, in addition to the CNA and CNAATD, mentioned above, the law that regulates taxes for the use by third parties of documents held by the Government of Catalonia still needs to be established.

Also pending completion are the *Map of Archives of Catalonia* and regulation of the qualifications, training and conditions of archive technical staff, which is essential to guarantee the success of the law on archives and documents.

Another matter that needs encouragement is the inspection function of the Government of Catalonia, regardless of whether centres are SAC or not. As specified in Law 9/1993, on Catalan cultural heritage, all centres that keep documentation that is part of the cultural heritage of Catalonia may be inspected to verify that they are organised and conserved properly.

Despite these shortfalls, it should be remembered that the Law has enabled us to demand advanced technicians' posts from all the administrations as we have both new archives and greater budget allocation. The Law has proved essential to support demands in our jobs and will continue to provide significant help in light of the many challenges arising in our institutions on account of the introduction of information and communication technologies.

Although we have a modern, flexible Law with great potential, it still needs to reach some institutions and the public. For this to happen significant dissemination work is required to disclose its vocation as a public service.

Finally, since the law has more than a purely cultural scope, the question of the organic assignment of *archive* function needs to be reappraised. The interrelationship of archives with the whole Administration and the public, their cross-disciplinary nature, and jurisdiction for document management point to a more central assignment that guarantees greater effectiveness and efficiency in the application of global policies to all documentation.