Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will make a short presentation of my thoughts on the subject elaborated. I will start making a reference to the leading role of archives in the functioning of a democratic society and I will underline this close relationship between archives and democracy. Then I will express my thoughts on the role of parliamentary archives and those of political parties to promoting democracy. And of course we will examine the ways they can achieve that.

- **Democracy and Archives:**

  There is a strong link existing between Archives and Democracy in a permanent dimension from the ancient past until the existing situation nowadays.

  Through this dynamic bilateral relationship we could find out how the one serves the other. The main “Philosophy” of Archives retains its main characteristics through the centuries:
The main sense of archiving – all the activities from creation and management to the use of documents and archives remain the same: transmitting authentic evidence of human activity and experience through time.

They have had also some basic and permanent functions such as to ensure rights, to participate in administration, to provide historical sources and to disseminate culture. In general, a basic mission of the Archives is to safeguard and preserve the public and private ‘tekmiria”, items, ensuring that people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage.

From the above it is underlined that the archives play a central role in a democratic society. This importance is imprinted on basic texts at a national and international level, they determine the general framework of their function worldwide.

At an international level, the International Council on Archives (ICA) refers to its Constitution that archives:

“.. constitute the memory of nations and of societies, shape their identity, and are a cornerstone of the information society. By providing evidence of human actions and transactions, archives support administration and underlie the rights of individuals, organizations and states. By guaranteeing citizens’ rights of access to official information and to knowledge of their history, archives are fundamental to democracy, accountability and good governance”.

I will make also a reference to an abstract of the Universal Declaration on Archives which was unanimously approved by the ICA delegates of the Annual General Meeting of the ICA in Oslo on 17 September 2010 and has now officially become one of the core pillars in ICA's advocacy policy.

According to the Universal Declaration on Archives the archives:

“... play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory. Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life”.
So, the “Archives are the society’s memory and as such they belong to everyone.”

They are also the “national psyche”, the “national memory” and their disappearance and destruction, means “social amnesia” which is catastrophic for a community or a people. The existence of archives has to have as a result a number of arrangements, a set of rules that would regulate access, transparency, accountability, protection of human rights.

The production and the functioning of archives are strongly influenced by the political context in national and international level and the existing legal framework.

I will make a special reference to the report on archives in the enlarged European Union “Increased archival cooperation in Europe: action plan”, an edition of European Commission of 2005 where much information is given of the legal framework valid in European countries and of issues of access that constitute the basic demand of the society of users.
The diagrams that are used in my speech are a record of my thoughts when I was processing the subject.

All archives to some extent promote democracy but, as we will see later on, primary role is played by archives of parliaments, political parties and politicians that concern not only the researches and specified public but also every citizen in general since as Aristotle, the Greek philosopher (384 -322 B.C.), underlined “the political nature of human beings”.

The parliaments, the political parties are the main pillars of the function of a democratic state. These bodies produce archives that first of all serve the bodies themselves for their best operation. These archives, however, constitute the source of information relevant to the function of these institutions, but they are also the mirror that with transparency the functions of these institutions have to be presented to the broader audience and the community of professionals.
It is also necessary to underline the significant role that the political foundations play in a democratic society too. The political foundations were created having as a basic aim the expectation that political education would help to develop and consolidate democracy.

There are some examples of countries like Germany where these foundations (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, etc) offer high level services in keeping archives but also in the field of the political education in these countries or in others which need that, meaning the countries that from totalitarian regimes passed to democratic ones.

The Archives of Parliaments and Political Parties play a fundamental role in modern democratic society, through key functions:

- They preserve the memory of society by constituting one of the main sources of its political and legislative history
- They provide individuals and states with the evidence that enables them to justify their rights
- They enable citizens to exercise their right of access to official information impelling the political actors to account for their actions
- In general, they guarantee the well functioning of the political system.

As you see in the diagram the archives of the parliaments and political parties are the protagonists because they connect the political institutions of a country with the society, the citizen. Besides the researchers that are interested in historical dimensions of those archives, these archives have to address the broader audience and to focus on the sensitization of the society on issues of institutions’ functioning in the framework of a democratic society.

The case might seem technical but it is deeply political since it concerns the prospect of the citizens to become aware of the historical past and present of the country and the quality of democracy.
These archival institutions should with their organization and the skilled personnel to ensure the transparency of the democratic function of the country and it is directly related to the rights of citizens: the principle of the open actions of authorities and insurance of the rights of the citizen.

The archives of parliaments, political parties and political personalities have to be open archives and to promote the political education and the political culture.

**The role of technology**

The evolutions in technology during the last years help to this direction since with the important projects of digitalization in all countries that have developed and are still in progress, the archival material is protected from physical ruin and in parallel it can be used in many ways that in the past it was not possible. The interactive connection of information, the creation of portals at a national or international level (like Apenet programme in the EU) is a reality today and a new era in issues of information and access to it.

The evolution of technology certainly leads to more democracy but not necessarily. It is needful the careful designing of these issues at a national and international level that will allow the great openings that take place in the field of archives to be done with security. Specific groups in international level (ICA) were set up in order to deal with the issues of access in the new era of the society of information. The basic aim is to elaborate guidelines for the archivists community.

The evolutions in technology have influenced the archives of parliaments and political parties too. The digital archives of parliaments and political archives should not only produce and reproduce documents. The digitalization shows a cultural and technological challenge: **to connect the archives with the society, the general public.**

The Archive’s Sciences in collaboration with the Information’s Science constitute a new framework of communication and dialogue.

The information is no more stagnant it is dynamic, powerful. The digital archives could be connected to one another and interactive with the users. This means of dynamic communication of the general public with the archival material having as a
motto “Connect the archive with the mind”. that means that the archives are not read in the same way. Each one may in his/her own way use the archival material with his/her potential

The role of archivists

At this point I would like to underline the significant role of the community of archivists because apart from their main archival duties, nowadays they should design and apply a communicative policy in order to promote the archival material and through this material democracy is promoted.

Methods of Promoting Democracy through the archival material

First of all it is necessary supporting and promoting democracy by

► keeping accessible records which support the democratic process and help to ensure accountability.

► inspiring interest in democracy through their historical collections, organizing exhibitions, seminars, lectures etc.

► establishing cooperation with Universities, working with schools, organizing visits and encourage young people to become interested in politics, democracy and their community.

► Creating specific web-based initiatives, friendly to the users

► Organizing special events (Democracy Week, etc).
The role of SPP

Our Section, SPP, as the international Committee par excellence that gathers representatives of archives of parliaments, political parties and politicians, plays an important role to the study of the evolutions on this kind of archives. We have already a website with all the necessary information available www.spp-ica.org (history, publications, activities, etc). You can see there all the previous conferences and the relative minutes.

This time we have also chosen a subject “Archives and Democracies in Transition” with a wide range of perspectives that can attract not only the interest of the archivists, but of historians and the general public, too. Among the purposes of this meeting is to re-establish the contacts we made in previous conferences of SPP in the 90’s. The transition to democracy in Baltic countries influenced as it is natural the function of archival institutions in particular the issue of access to archival material the transition to democracy means more access, more transparency.

In particular, during the days of the scientific meetings we will discuss how democratic processes are reflected in the archives of parliaments and political parties, what challenges the archives face, and what the impact and significance of the preservation and dissemination of the historical documentary heritage on the development of democracy is.

Our basic aim is to establish a solid ground of communication and cooperation among our archival institutions in order to promote democracy as an ideal and as a set of practices.