Retention and archiving of sound and video recordings in the House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament of the Kingdom of Belgium

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1. General Situation

• In Belgium, the civil service does not have a strong culture and tradition when it comes to managing and archiving government records.

• The Clerk of the House is officially the archivist of the House (de iure); there has been an archivist (de facto) since ca. 2000.

• There is no service (department) at the House dedicated solely to records management and the management of the historical archives.

• There is no general, centralised policy or system for records management and archiving.
  - There are some procedures for certain types of records.
2. Sound recordings until 1999

- Originally, stenography was used as a means of recording verbatim what was being said in meetings (plenary sessions).

- Later on, analogue sound recordings were made to support the production of verbatim minutes (we don’t know when this started).

- Stenography was still used besides sound recording.
Compte-rendu analytique.

Sténographie.

Service flamand

Huissiers

Bureau

Greffier

Huissiers
3. **How could the sound recordings have started? (Speculation)**

- In 1936, microphones for the interpreters and headphones were introduced in the Chamber.
- Starting in 1949, similar systems were installed in the committee meeting rooms.
- In the following decades, these installations were regularly modernized.
  - The sound system in the Chamber for instance was renewed ca. 1976 to make television recording easier.
3.
3.
4. Archives produced and retained as a result of the sound recording

- The records which resulted from these sound recordings were:
  - mother tapes on reels (managed by the electricians),
  - copies of these mother tapes on cassettes made for the civil servants who produced the verbatim minutes and the reports.
- Such recordings have been archived mostly when they regard parliamentary enquiries.
- Result: collection of about 1000 to 1500 magnetic tapes on reels and cassette tapes, starting in the seventies.
4.
5. Big Changes to the Sound Recordings Starting in 1999

• Since 1999, every House Member has a microphone, digital sound recordings were introduced.

• These digital sound recordings replaced stenography, which from then on was no longer used in the House.

• Since 14 July 2000 the sound recordings made to support the production of the official verbatim minutes must be archived and kept permanently.
5.
6. Video recordings since 2002 (1/2)

• Before 2002, there were only occasional analogue video recordings by television stations.
  - These are not archived by the House.
• Installation of a permanent camera system in the Chamber; started working in January 2002.
• These recordings have been archived on Sony Betamax cassettes, which have sometimes been copied on DVD’s.
• This results in about 35 linear meters of archival boxes filled with cassettes and DVD’s.
6.
6.
6. **Video recordings since 2002 (2/2)**

- Since 2014 the digital video recordings are stored on servers.

- Systematic video recordings of the public committee meetings started in 2018.

- Since 19 of July 2018, the video recordings of the public meetings are official minutes.
  
  - As a consequence they are kept.
7. Ideas on how to manage these sound and video recordings in the future (1/2)

• The House is now working on a system for media asset management (MAM-system)
  - Management of sound and video recordings
  - Making them available to the public.

• A retention schedule for sound and video recordings could be decided upon.
  - The current retention schedule does not cover all video and sound recordings.
7. IDEAS ON HOW TO MANAGE THESE SOUND AND VIDEO RECORDINGS IN THE FUTURE (2/2)

• The old analogue sound recordings and the old analogue video recordings could be digitized.

• The resulting digital files could be stored in the MAM-system.

• A MAM-system is usually not meant to archive the digital objects it contains.
  - Adapting the MAM-system for long term archiving?
This presentation accompanies a text written by Joris Vanderborght, archivist of the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Belgium. It does not contain the full content of said text.