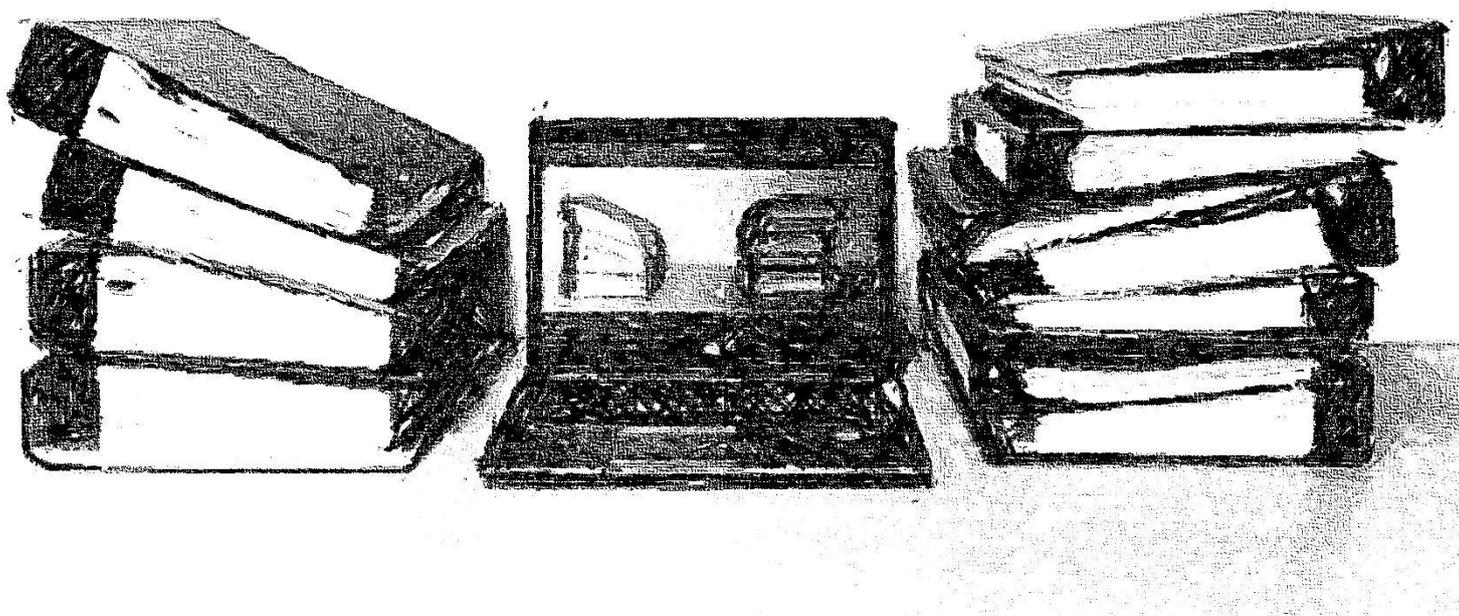




REPUBLIC OF LATVIA  
STATE AUDIT  
OFFICE

# Do Archives Ensure the Storage of E- documents?



Riga, 2015

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## **Audit Report**

“Do Archives Ensure the Storage of E-documents?”

Expediency Audit “Storage of Electronic Documents and Data at the National Archives of Latvia”

The audit was carried out pursuant to audit task No. 2.4.1-5/2015 of the Audit and Methodology Department of the State Audit Office dated 26 January 2015.

**Dear reader!**

We have finished the expediency audit concerning the storage of electronic documents at the National Archives of Latvia and prepared an audit report.

After the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia, particular value was attributed to archive funds that stored the documents of institutions of the Republic of Latvia, while the National Archives of Latvia became one of the most important sources of law of the state that had recovered its independence — within the period from 1991 to 2008, archive workers prepared and issued 777,549 archive statements, which certified ownership, proved kinship with former owners, and certified the length of service, service in armed forces, etc.

Ever since electronic documents with legal force equivalent to that of paper documents have entered our daily lives and the majority of state administration processes have been transferred to electronic information systems, the archives face new challenges.

To understand whether an inhabitant can rely on that the archives will be able to issue statements in the areas, which are currently processed in electronic form, decades later, we have carried out an expediency audit and assessed the development of the area of electronic document circulation and storage in the country.

We express our gratitude to the representatives of the Ministry of Culture, National Archives of Latvia, Centre for Culture Information Systems, State Revenue Service, Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Court Administration, Register of Enterprises, and Riga District Court, who provided information and their opinion during the audit.

Yours sincerely,  
Director of the Department

Lelde Dimante

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## Summary

### Motivation

After the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia, particular value was attributed to archive funds that stored the documents of institutions of the Republic of Latvia (1918-1940). The National Archives of Latvia (hereinafter referred to as the “NAL”) became one of the most important sources of law of the state that had recovered its independence. Within the period from 1991 to 2008, archive workers prepared and issued 777,549<sup>i</sup> archive statements, which certified ownership, proved kinship with former owners, and certified the length of service, service in armed forces, etc.

*Why did the State Audit Office start an audit?*

Ever since electronic documents with legal force equivalent to that of paper documents have entered our daily lives and the majority of state administration processes have been transferred to electronic information systems, the role of the archives has become unclear — whether an inhabitant can rely on that the archives will be able to issue statements in the areas, which are currently processed in electronic form, many years later.

The audit concerning the storage of electronic documents was carried out in order to assess the development of the area of electronic document circulation and storage in the country, taking into account the following circumstances:

- the circulation and storage of electronic documents at institutions should be a daily challenge, rather than a future challenge, as 12 years have lapsed since the Electronic Documents Law came into force;
- the circulation and storage of electronic documents in general is several times cheaper than the storage of paper documents.

### Main Conclusions

The NAL fulfils an important function for storing the documentary heritage of Latvia. Researchers, students, state administration institutions and inhabitants are the most frequent clients of the archives, applying thereto to find certain information. The fact whether this information will be available depends on several factors — whether it will be stored, whether it will be possible to identify (find) it, whether it will be legible. The archives have extensive possibilities for improving the storage of electronic documents.

One of the preconditions is a clear vision of what makes the national documentary heritage of Latvia in order to use resources for selecting and storing the most important documents.

During the audit, we have established that this area lacks single understanding. The archives have developed a sample nomenclature for documents in the processes supporting the operation of an institution, determining that documents related to public procurement, accounting and personnel, as well as executive orders must be stored. In turn, there is no understanding concerning other constantly stored information, which is stored in state information systems. The archives have no single understanding as to which data stored in

*Over 12 years, we have had no progress in the country.*

state information systems and their attributes form an electronic document and are to be selected for transferring to the archives.

Institutions, which must select and transfer electronic data for storage to the archives, are unaware either; as the result, electronic documents are not transferred from state information systems to the archives and storage at the institution is continued, despite that the archives have already assessed that 108 state information systems contain data with archive value. The situation, in which institutions continue storing electronic data and they are not transferred to the archives, suggests that the priorities and tasks determined in national planning documents in relation to the area of archiving of electronic documents are not implemented and cause a risk that the NAL might no longer fulfil the function of storage of electronic documents and data in the future and the NAL's task will be actually fulfilled by the archives of institutions.

Electronic documents are stored at the NAL in an insignificant amount, which equals only to 0.27% of the total number of cases accepted for storage over three years — mainly regarding liquidated institutions. One of the reasons for the small volume of electronic documents is that the circulation of electronic documents in state administration does not work — 49% of institutions communicate with each other in paper form<sup>ii</sup>. By increasing the circulation of electronic documents even by one per cent, the state would save up to EUR 114 thousand every year.

Transfer from the paper document storage process to the priority, i.e., the acceptance and storage of electronic documents, is challenging in technological terms. The archives have been implementing the project for the creation of an electronic document receipt and storage infrastructure for ten years now. The State Audit Office does not contest the need and significance of the project for fulfilling archive functions in order to ensure modern work with institutions and the provision of services to inhabitants, yet the achieved progress is insufficient.

VVAIS (Integrated State Archive Information System) software developed for four million euros has not been introduced and institutions have not started using it. Inhabitants and merchants have no access to the developed e-services. It is to be noted that the introduction of VVAIS (Integrated State Archive Information System) will resolve only the technical aspect of the receipt of electronic documents of institutions at the NAL; however, conceptually, the single understanding of electronic documents and data with archive value, which are to be stored in the state, is necessary, which is a precondition for the effective use of the limited resources of the NAL and institutions.

After analysing the aspects of storage of electronic documents, several problem issues have been identified in the processes of the archives themselves, which directly affect the storage of all types of documents and necessary expenses related thereto — the periods for the storage of equivalent documents at institutions are determined differently and excessive resources are used when storing cases, the storage period of which has changed or which no longer have any archive value, in the archives.

### **Most Important Decisions to Promote the Storage of Electronic Documents**

As the result of the audit, 14 recommendations in total were provided on the improvement of archive processes and cooperation in order to promote the understanding of the aspects of

storage of electronic documents, ensure that the NAL fulfils document storage functions in the long-term and promote the use of the developed VVAIS (Integrated State Archive Information System) system.

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<sup>i</sup> [www.arhivi.lv/sitedata/ZURNALS/zurnalu\\_raksti/Valda\\_Petersone.pdf](http://www.arhivi.lv/sitedata/ZURNALS/zurnalu_raksti/Valda_Petersone.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> MEPRD studies “Regarding the Document Circulation Processes of Ministries and Institutions Subordinated Thereto in 2011” and “Document Circulation Processes in State Administration in 2010” ([http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/publ/petijumi/pet\\_Eparv/?doc=17673](http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/publ/petijumi/pet_Eparv/?doc=17673), resources retrieved on 06.05.2015).