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User Handbook

Online access to the Federal Archives recherche.bar.admin.ch

Change log

Version	Date	Change
1.0	11.11.2019	Web portal goes live on 25.11.2019
1.1	16.03.2020	Orders and requests to consult state security files and index cards, maximum sizes for digitisation orders, clarification regarding administration loans
1.2	23.07.2021	SFA e-mail address corrected
1.3	10.06.2022	Opening an eIAM account, opening digitised documents using a Mac
2.0	12.09.2022	Anonymisation of metadata
2.1	16.10.2022	Identification service
2.2	10.10.2023	Processing time for digitisation orders
3.0	4.12.2023	Workplace reservation
3.1	3.1.2024	Rollback Chatbot
3.2	12.2.2024	AGOV as BYOI ("Bring Your Own Identity")

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1 The Federal Archives online – any time, anywhere

The Federal Archives' online access portal at www.recherche.bar.admin.ch is the central point of entry to documents from the Federal Archives. Both analogue and digital dossiers can now be consulted online. This user handbook explains the most important functions of the service. If you have any questions, please contact us via → Chat or e-mail at info@bar.admin.ch.

2 Searching

2.1 Simple search

Start your search by entering a term in the search field and clicking on the magnifying glass symbol or pressing "Enter".

Fig. 1: Simple search

The simple search considers different levels of metadata and primary data, [1] depending on the user's rights. This means that different results will be shown, depending on what you are authorised to view (→ Registration and identification).

If you do not use a search syntax, the exact term will be searched for. You can find an overview of the possible syntax when entering search terms in the advanced search at the right-hand side of the screen (→ Search syntax).

Search for various terms and enter the terms in other Swiss official languages too. To search in specific fields such as by file reference, it is better to use the → Advanced search.

You can also enter a general search term in the field and then use the → Filters to restrict your search results.

Please bear in mind that searches for reference codes and file references are case-sensitive (the same also applies to the advanced search).

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[1] Metadata describe fonds, dossiers or documents (e.g. title or time period). Primary data are the actual digital or digitised documents.

2.2 Advanced search

The advanced search allows you to carry out searches in selected data fields (e.g. title, reference code, file reference or full text).

Fig. 2: Advanced search

Enter your desired search terms. Where there is more than one term in a search field, they will be linked by a logical AND (e.g. "Bundesarchiv AND Online").

"Add search field" and "Add another search group" allow you to add extra search fields or groups (for example you can combine two search groups using OR).

You can find an overview of the possible syntax when entering search terms at the right-hand side of the screen (→ Search syntax).

2.2.1 Synonyms and translations

If a synonym or translation has been found as an alternative to one or more of the search terms you entered, a lightbulb symbol appears to the right of the search box. Clicking on this symbol opens the following dialogue:
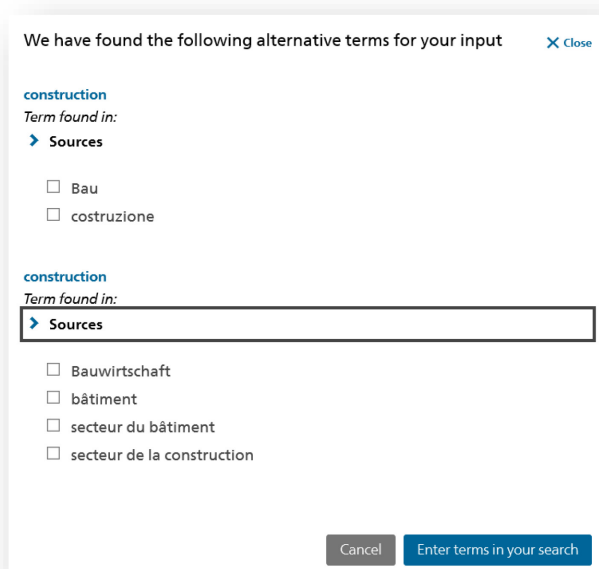
Fig. 3: Synonyms and translations

Now choose your alternative search terms and confirm your selection. The terms will automatically be added to the search field:

Fig. 4: Adding alternative terms to the search field

2.2.2 Search syntax

You can find an overview of the possible syntax when entering search terms in the advanced search at the right-hand side of the screen. The syntax applies to both the simple and the advanced search.

Use **OR** to find all results containing one or other of the search terms.
e.g.: Bundesrat OR Bundespräsident

Use **brackets** to group operators.
e.g.: (Bundesrat OR Bundespräsident) AND Parlament

Use **NOT** to exclude individual terms.
e.g.: Bundesrat NOT Parlament

Place **quotation marks** around a phrase to search for that exact phrase.
e.g.: "Basler Übereinkommen"

Use ***** or **?** to replace a number of letters (*) or a single letter (?) (not supported at the start of a word).
e.g.: Bundes*, Me?er

Search for similar but not identical words using the **fuzzy operator**.
e.g. in order to find "Bundesrat", "Bundesräte", "Bundesrats" etc., use: Bundesrat~

Use **proximity searches**. The number indicates the maximum number of words between the terms.
e.g.: "Professor Einstein" ~5

Use **^** to increase the weighting of a word.
e.g. to weight "Parlament" twice as high as "Bundesrat": Bundesrat Parlament^2

2.2.3 Searching by "creation period"

Within the "creation period" field you can search by year, month, day or time period. When selecting a time period you can leave the start or end date open:

Entering	Finds
1989	Units of description whose creation period contains the year 1989, e.g. 1970–1990, 1989, 03.08.1989
20.12.1989	Units of description whose creation period contains 20.12.1989, e.g. 20.12.1989, 1989, 1970–1990
12.1989	Units of description whose creation period contains the month 12.1989, e.g. 20.12.1989, 1989, 1970–1990
1989 -	Units of description whose creation period contains a period after 31.12.1988, e.g. 20.12.1989, 1989, 1970–1990
- 1989	Units of description whose creation period contains a period before 01.01.1990, e.g. 20.12.1989, 1988, 1970–1990

2.3 Archive plan search

The documents in the Federal Archives are arranged according to a hierarchical structure in the archive plan. The archive plan can help you to understand the context of a dossier and find dossiers on similar topics. You can either search directly in the archive plan or switch to the archive plan from a search result via the ⛁ symbol.
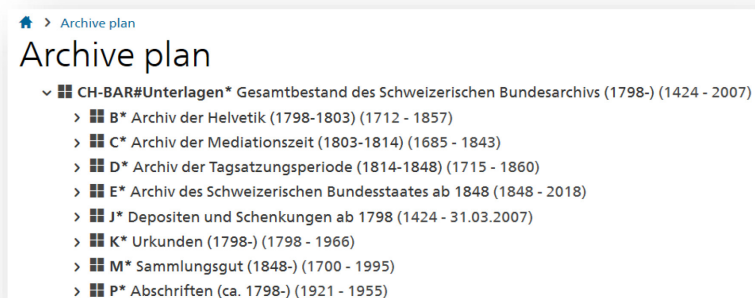

Fig. 5: Archive plan

Click on the selected unit of description to open it in the → Detail view. Click on the archive plan symbol to return to the corresponding item in the archive plan from the detailed view.

2.4 Thematic overview

A thematic overview is available for documents of the Federal State from 1848 (Main Department E). The fonds there are grouped into nine topic areas.
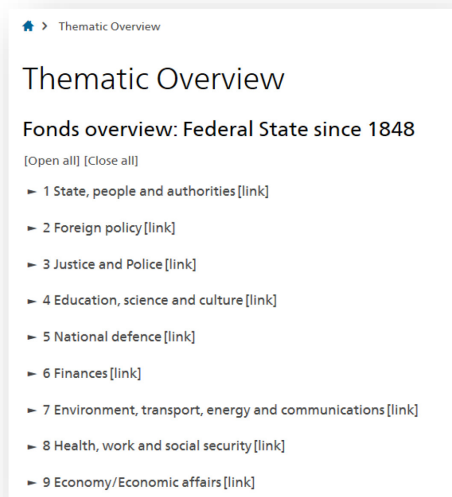
Fig. 6: Thematic overview

This overview is a particularly good place to start your search. You can switch from the fonds listed in the thematic overview to the archive plan (tree structure) and navigate in the classification system of the selected fonds.

3 Finding

3.1 Results list

The results list displays 10, 25, 50 or 100 results per page, depending on the setting chosen. In addition to the title, the following metadata are shown: reference code, time period, level, accessibility and additional content information. Authorised users can see short excerpts from the digitised documents in the results list (→ Registration and identification).

Fig. 7: Results list

You can access additional functions directly from each result:

🛒   Add to shopping cart (only appears if the unit of description is available to order)

⬇️   Download (available to logged in and authorised users)

⭐   Add to → Favourites

🔀   Show in archive plan

📋   Display archive plan context

Where metadata contain sensitive personal information or personality profiles, data protection rules dictate that these can only be published once the closure ("retention") period has ended (see Art. 12 para. 3 of the Archiving Ordinance). Unless you have the requisite authorisation, these data will be supplied to you in anonymised form (e.g. as the dossier title "▮▮▮▮: Criminal investigation").
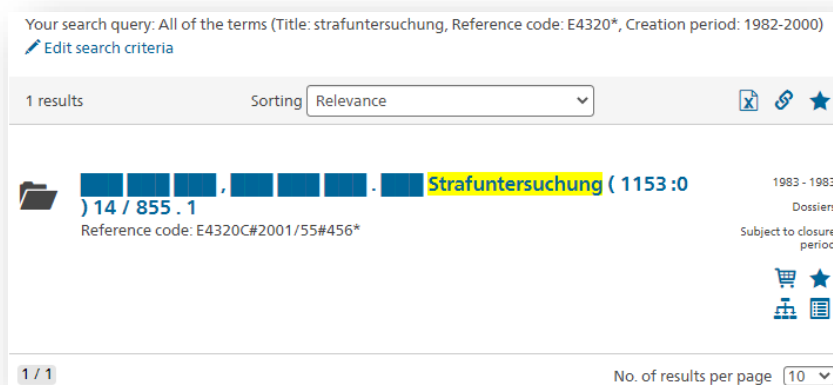
Fig. 8: Results with anonymised data

The results can be sorted by relevance, date, title or reference code. For precise information on the relevance calculation, enter the search and while holding down the SHIFT, click on the magnifying glass symbol.

Clicking on the title of a unit of description leads to the→ Detail view of the result containing further information.

Copy the link to a search request using 🔗 and use ⭐ to save to your → Favourites.

3.2 Filters

You can use the following filters to limit the number of results further:

1. Creation period
2. Thematic overview (context in the → Thematic overview)
3. Levels (description levels, e.g. fonds, dossier or document, see Glossary)
4. Accessibility under ArchA (e.g. freely accessible or within closure period)
5. Fonds (shows how many results are present in a given fonds)
6. Documents available in digital form

Click on the filter again to reset. To delete all filters, select "Reset all filters" at the start of the options.

3.3 Detail view

The detail view of the units of description displays further metadata on the search result. As in the results list, you can select among further functions here (e.g. order, display in the archive plan or add to favourites). The symbols are the same as in the results list.

Fig. 9: Detail view

Via "Order", you can arrange for analogue documents to be digitised, order documents for consultation in the reading room or submit a request to consult records (→ Ordering and consulting). Representatives of an administrative unit can also order documents from that unit as "administration loans".

If the documents are available in digital form and you have the necessary authorisation, you can order them for → Digital delivery via the "Download" or "Prepare digital version" options.

3.4 Favourites

Click on the star symbol to add a result to your favourites. You can create a new favourites list by selecting "To new favourites list".
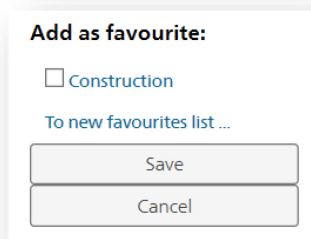
Fig. 10: Saving favourites

→ Favourites lists are administered in the user account.

4 Ordering and consulting

You can download documents from the Federal Archives digitally at recherche.bar.admin.ch or order them in analogue form for consultation in the reading rooms. The Federal Administration can also use the administration loan service.

4.1 Shopping cart

Register to order documents (→ Registration and identification). Once you have registered, you can log in via "Log in" at top right using your login data. You can only order or download documents if you are logged in.

Add documents you wish to order to the shopping cart. They will be automatically divided into two categories:

1. "Order documents": documents that are a) freely accessible, b) accessible to authorised users, or c) subject to review of accessibility by the Federal Archives.
2. "Submit consultation request": documents that are still within a closure period. For this category see → Submitting a consultation request.

Fig. 11: Shopping cart

Click on "Continue" and then select among the following options: "for delivery to the office" (only for the Federal Administration), "for digital delivery" and "for consultation in the reading room".

Fig. 12: Forms of delivery

4.1.1 Entering a reference code manually

If you know the reference code already, you can enter it and place your order via "Add dossiers to shopping cart manually > With reference code":

Fig. 13: Field for entering the reference code manually

Click on "Add" to add the unit of description to the shopping cart. You can add more than one reference code as a list using copy/paste.

4.1.2 Ordering documents that are not described

Some documents are not described online. To order them, use the "Add dossiers to shopping cart manually > Without reference code" function. Complete the form on the following page.

Click on "Add" to add the unit of description to the shopping cart. The system will not automatically check your order. We will contact you if we have any questions.

Fig. 14: Form for ordering documents that are not described

4.1.3 Ordering index cards

Individual index cards can also be ordered using the "Add dossiers to shopping cart manually > Without reference code" function. Since in this case you know the reference code of the dossier but only want a document from it that is not described, complete the following information:

- (Sub)fonds*: The reference code of the dossier
- Dossier title*: The title of the individual index card
- Time period of the dossier: The time period of the individual index card

Please enter a "0" in all the remaining fields.

Fig. 15: Ordering an index card

4.2 Digital delivery

Select the "for digital delivery" option to have analogue dossiers digitised. This service is free of charge. The processing of your digitisation order usually takes ten days. As soon as a dossier has been digitised and is ready, we will notify you by e-mail. Once you have received the documents you can place a further digitisation order.

Dossiers that are already available in digital form can be downloaded direct from the web portal provided you have the requisite authorisation.

In some cases, documents in digital form are contained in the digital archive but are not yet available via the web portal. In these cases, the "Prepare digitised version" button is shown instead of "Download".

Very large digitised documents will take longer to prepare. However, you can leave the page and we will send you an e-mail once the digital version is ready.
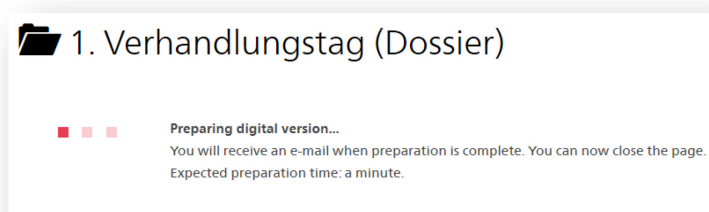

Fig. 16: Preparing a digital version

4.2.1 Opening a digitised document

You will receive digitised documents as a ZIP file. Protected data are encrypted. Please therefore extract them using a suitable program such as 7-zip for Windows or The Unarchiver for Mac. Extract the ZIP file by using Explorer to navigate to the "Downloads" folder (right click > select program > extract to…). The extracted file is structured as follows:
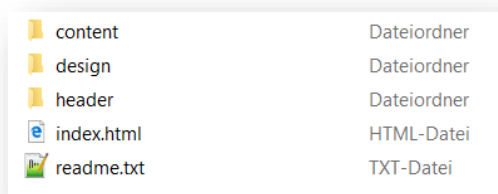

Fig. 17: Structure of digital documents

Click on the index.html file for an overview of the digitised documents.

Please read the legal information in the readme.txt file. Note that after downloading you are responsible for storing the data securely. Documents that are within a closure period may not be shared with or shown to others without the necessary authorisation. A written application must be submitted to the Federal Archives before digitised documents are used for commercial purposes.

4.2.2 Searching in the files

Search the file content as follows:

Using Adobe Acrobat Reader
Open Adobe Acrobat Reader and press Ctrl + Shift + F. Mark "All PDF documents in" and select the "content" folder. Search for your desired term.

Windows (Windows 10 and higher)
Full-text search is not activated as standard. You can find instructions on how to activate this function here.

When full-text search is activated: Click on the "content" folder in Windows Explorer and search in the files using the Windows search tool.

Mac
Click on the "content" folder in the Finder and search in the files there using the "Spotlight" search function.

4.3 Ordering for consultation in the reading room

You can also consult analogue documents in the reading rooms, but you must order them in advance. Please note the opening hours. You will receive a maximum of twelve containers per day. Order 24 hours in advance to ensure that your documents are ready for you on your desired day (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday).

Once you have placed your desired documents in the → Shopping cart, select "Order for consultation in the reading room" (see Fig. 11). You can then enter the reason for consulting the documents, select the date of your visit to the reading room, and add any comments on your order:

Fig. 18: Details of order (reading room)

Please book a workstation in the reading room using our reservation tool. Without a reservation, we cannot guarantee you a workstation. If you wish to postpone or cancel your visit, you can cancel the appointment up to 24 hours in advance via the link in the confirmation email and make a new appointment if applicable. If the appointment is less than 24 hours away and you are unable to keep it, please contact us by email at bestellung@bar.admin.ch or call 0041 58 462 89 87 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. (Mon–Fri).

4.4 Ordering for delivery to the office

Art. 14 ArchA allows Federal Administration offices that deliver records to consult the documents they have supplied while they are still in their closure period. To order such documents as administration loans, you must be authorised to do so by your administrative unit.
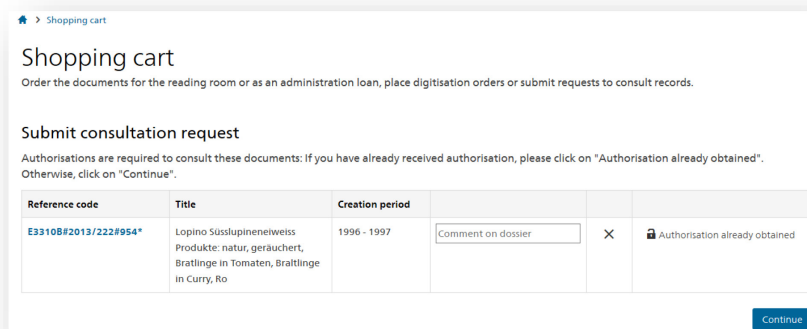
On request, the analogue documents you have ordered will be sent by mail. Where a large volume of documents is involved, we recommend consulting them in the Federal Archives reading room. If you wish to receive a digital version of a dossier, select "for digital delivery".

Documents that are already in digital form are made available digitally.

Under Article 12 of the policies on the requirement to offer documents and the delivery of documents to the Federal Archives, no copies of documents delivered may normally remain with the office delivering them or be reintegrated into the GEVER system.

4.5 Submitting a consultation request

If you order documents that are still within a closure period and you do not yet have an authorisation to consult them, these results will automatically be shown in the shopping cart under "Submit consultation request":

Fig. 19: Consultation request in the shopping cart

4.5.1 Entering and submitting a request

You can have consultation requests for a maximum of 50 dossiers undergoing processing at any one time. When you have researched all the dossiers for your consultation request, enter the required information on your request on the next page:

Fig. 20: Entering consultation request information

After you have sent your request you will receive a confirmation of receipt. You will normally receive a decision within four to six weeks.

We will notify you of the decision by e-mail. Once the body responsible has issued authorisation, you can order the approved documents for consultation.

4.5.2 Ordering documents using an existing authorisation

If you already have an existing authorisation for the documents you are researching, enter its date in the "Authorisation already obtained" field and then order them:

Fig. 21: Ordering documents with an existing authorisation

4.5.3 Requests to consult state security files

Enter the reference code of the dossier containing the state security file you are looking for (→ Entering a reference code manually). To request the file, enter the name of the person, company, organisation, etc. you are looking for under "Comment on dossier", together with any other information:

Submit consultation request

Authorisations are required to consult these documents: If you have already received authorisation, please click on "Authorisation already obtained". Otherwise, click on "Continue".

Reference code	Title	Creation period			
E4320-01C#1996/203#165*	Fries - Frontczak	1930 - 1990	file Max Frisch (*15.5.1911)	✕	🔒 Authorisation already obtained

Continue

Fig. 22: Request to consult a state security file

Once authorisation has been received, state security files must be ordered using the form (→ Ordering index cards).

5 Registration and identification

You can use Swiss Federal Archives' online access service anonymously, as a registered user or as an identified person. Depending on your status, the functions available to you will vary.

All users can search in publicly accessible metadata. To download documents, submit orders and requests or save favourites, you must open a user account. Click on "Register" at the top right of the page and follow the instructions at → Register.

If you have an authorisation for documents within a closure period, you will need "identified user" status to consult them. Follow the instructions under → Identify.

An overview of rights:

	Anonymous (no account)	Registered (with account)	Identified (with account)
Search in public metadata	✔	✔	✔
Download freely accessible documents	✘	✔	✔
Create digitisation orders	✘	✔	✔
Submit reading room orders	✘	✔	✔
Submit consultation requests	✘	✔	✔
Manage favourites	✘	✔	✔
Download documents requiring authorisation	✘	✘	✔
Submit information requests for your own documents	✘	✘	✔

Fig. 23: Rights of user accounts

5.1 Opening an account – users outside the Federal Administration (CH-LOGIN & AGOV)

5.1.1 Register

Access to recherche.bar.admin.ch is managed by "e-Government Identity and Access Management" (eIAM). The account opening process is conducted outside of recherche.bar.admin.ch. This video shows you how to access federal web applications that require you to log in.

To begin registering, click on "Register" at the top of the screen and then "Register in eIAM".

Users outside the Federal Administration should select the "CH-Login & AGOV" procedure.

Fig. 24: Select CH-LOGIN & AGOV procedure

Click on "Create account" under CH-LOGIN:

Fig. 25: New registration – eIAM

Enter the confirmation code you received by e-mail:

Fig. 26: Enter eIAM confirmation code

Now apply for access to the online access service by adding your telephone number and accepting the terms of use. You do not need to complete the other fields.

Fig. 27: Applying to access the online access service

Fig. 28: Completed application to access the online access service

Return to the application and enter your user data.

Fig. 29: Form for entering user data

You have now successfully registered as a user of the Federal Archives' online access service.

5.1.2 Identify

In order to view or download documents subject to authorisation, you must identify yourself as a user. This process, which is conducted using live verification by means of artificial intelligence, is provided by the *Identity verification via document scan and liveness check* service of fidentity AG.

In order to use the fidentity identification process you must:

- → Register for the Federal Archives' online access service
- hold a valid passport or ID card from one of the countries in the list
- have access to a smartphone equipped with a camera (step 2).

Fig. 30: Means of identification

If you meet the requirements for identification, you can start the identification process using the fidentity service.
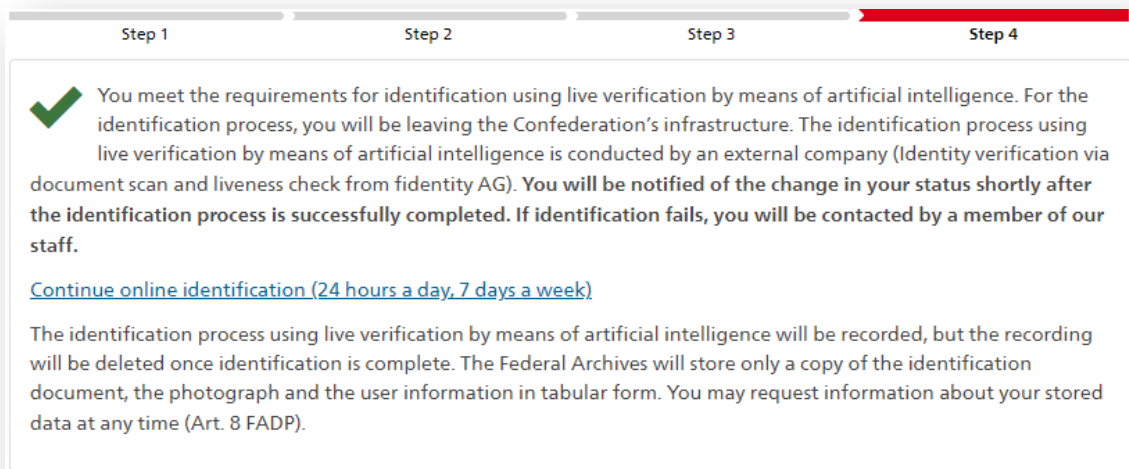

Fig. 31: Starting the identification process

Once you have been identified via fidentity you will receive an e-mail notifying you of the change in your user status.

If you do not meet the requirements for identification or the process was unsuccessful, contact benutzer-admin@bar.admin.ch.

5.2 Opening an account – users in the Federal Administration (FED-LOGIN)

Users from the Federal Administration with a smartcard should click on "Register" and then apply for access to recherche.bar.admin.ch via the "FED-LOGIN" procedure (see Fig. 23):

Fig. 32: eIAM access application via FED-LOGIN

Read and accept the terms of use. Apart from the telephone number, you do not need to complete any of the other fields. The access application is completed and you can return to the application (see Fig. 28). Then enter your user data in the application and complete the registration process (see Fig. 29).

Logging in via FED-LOGIN automatically gives you identified user status in the web portal.

5.3 User account

Once you have logged in, you can access your user account by clicking on your name at the top of the screen. There you can review and adjust your settings, monitor your orders and consultation requests, and edit your favourites lists.

5.3.1 Settings

Via "User status" you can check what role you have and what rights you hold as a registered or identified user.

Registered users can apply here for "identified user" status, which grants broader rights (➜ Identify).

If you need to change user data, you can select "Change user data" under "User data" at the bottom of the screen. Here you can change your e-mail address or mobile number for login under "Change login data". There are some data that you cannot change yourself; in this case, contact benutzer-admin@bar.admin.ch.

Click on "User interface" to change the number of search results and the standard sorting of the results list or hide the explanation that is displayed when a search is unsuccessful. You can also adjust these settings within the results list, but in that case you cannot save them.

5.3.2 Order overview

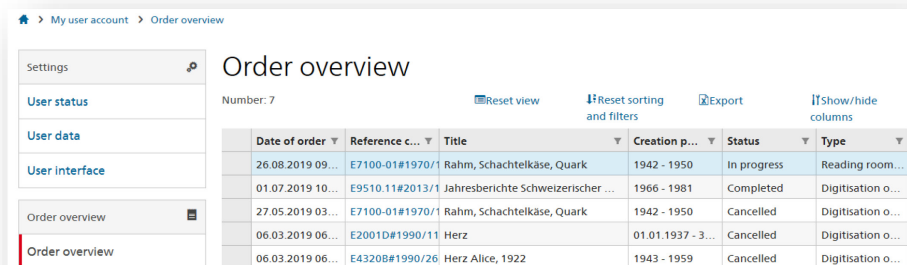You can monitor the status of your order in the order overview of your user account.

Fig. 33: Order overview in the user account

The order overview lists all the documents you have ordered – digitisation orders, reading room loans, administration loans and consultation requests (see Fig. 33).

You can add further columns to the table or hide existing ones, filter and sort values and, if desired, export them to a separate file.

5.3.3 Favourites lists

You can administer your favourites lists in your user account.
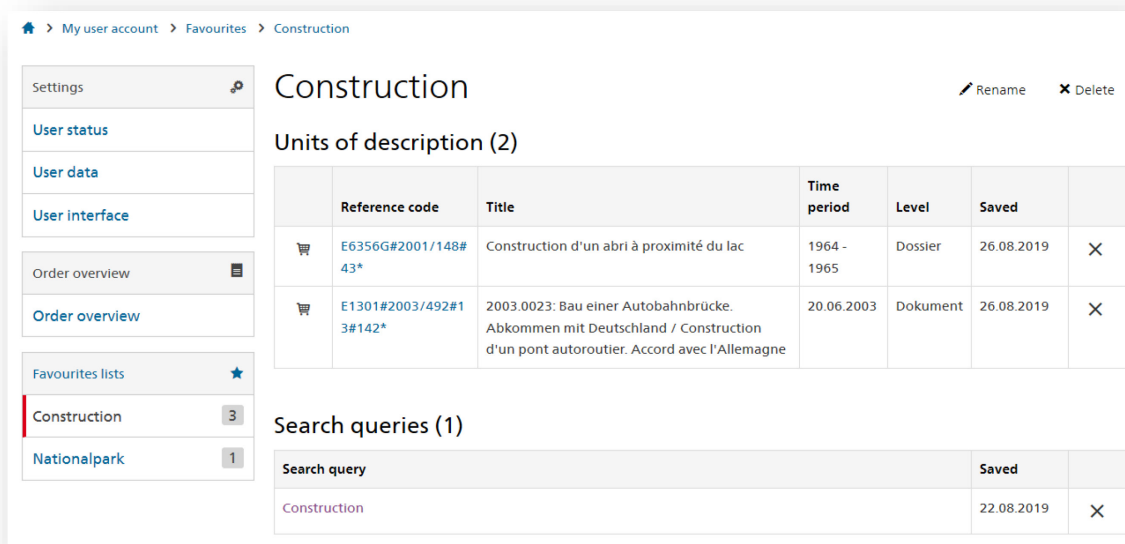
Fig. 34: Favourites overview in the user account

Units of description and searches that you have saved are shown separately in the favourites lists. A saved search carries out the same search again; if additional documents that match the search have been catalogued since you saved it or your authorisation level has changed, there may be more results in the list than in an earlier search.

Click on the title of an existing favourite to rename or delete it, order individual documents directly via the shopping cart symbol, or download them via the download symbol.

Fig. 35: Managing favourites in the user account

6 Questions

Whatever page you are on: Click on the chat symbol on the left-hand side of the page to get answers to your questions.
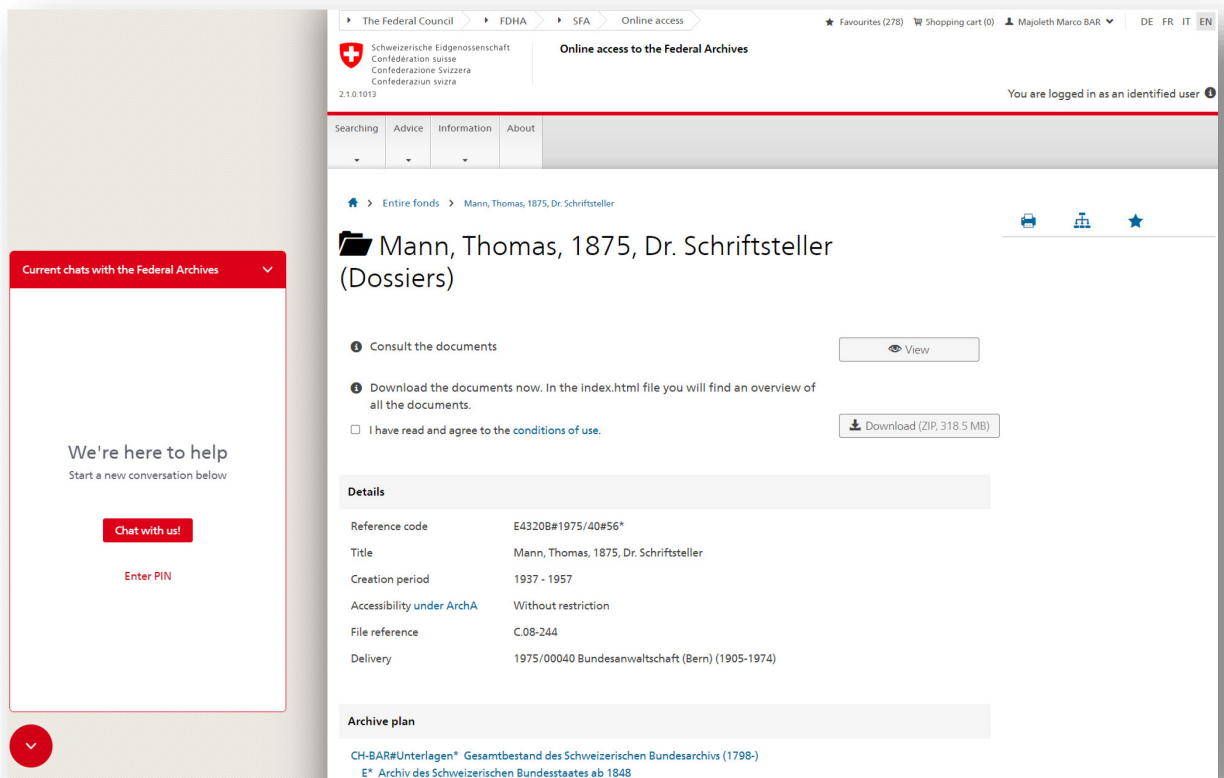

Fig. 36: Start a chat with the Federal Archives

If you have questions about a search, a member of the advice service is available to answer them from 9 a.m. to 12 midday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays to Thursdays.

7 List of illustrations