



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
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Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA  
**Swiss Federal Archives SFA**

Swiss Confederation

# Federal Archives Strategy

## 2021 - 2025



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## Introduction

The decisions taken by the federal government have potentially far-reaching implications for the people of Switzerland. Now more than ever, the public wants to understand the decision-making processes within the administration and Parliament – as the pandemic year of 2020 has shown. The Swiss Federal Archives (SFA) make a vital contribution to that process, by ensuring that the decisions taken today can still be understood in future. The records held by the Federal Archives are fundamental to the ability to judge the actions of government over the long term. The SFA therefore provide the **basis for a factually based debate** within our democratic society.

The SFA's strategy for the years 2021–2025 continues their ongoing development towards a **systematically digital archive** (Action Area AA 1). It therefore ties in with the Federal ICT Strategy 2020–2023 and the FDHA's digital strategy. In 2019, the SFA successfully completed the entire archiving process digitally for the first time, from submission to the archive right through to online access. While the previous strategy focused on access, the strategy for the next five years turns its attention to **transfer and archiving**: the SFA will be phasing out two key digital archiving systems that have been in operation for more than a decade, and further developing their digital archiving solutions (AA 3). At the same time, they will be optimising their new access services, putting in place the capacity to deliver all orders online in the medium term (AA 4).

This can only be achieved through **networking and cooperation** (AA 2) with other players in the digital transformation – especially at the interface between administration and archive. The SFA are more directly dependent on the administration and Parliament than almost any other office: the ways in which the latter document their work dictate the requirements for subsequent archiving. The SFA therefore ensure that archiving considerations are reflected in the design of new systems, and enter into cooperations where expedient.

Digital transformation goes hand in hand with a **reduction in the analogue domain**. First, the paper records (at least 35 linear kilometres in total) still held by the administration need to be transferred to the SFA. Second, given the massive increase in demand for access (which has doubled within the space of 10 years), the SFA cannot maintain analogue and digital offerings of equal scope. Physical access will become the exception, but will still be possible.

The SFA's statutory mandate remains unchanged, even as they move towards a digital archive. Nevertheless, **the daily work of all SFA staff** will change fundamentally, and the organisation itself must continue to develop (AA 5). The SFA's objective is to make this change process participatory and transparent, while creating an environment in which all members of staff can continually learn.

The focus throughout the 2021–2025 strategy period is on the **needs of customers**. By providing services geared to those who make use of their services, the SFA aim to ensure that they can continue to archive all information that is of government policy importance in the newly digital world, and that the public and the administration can access that information in the simplest and most user-friendly way possible. Finally, in their capacity as the archive of the Federal State, the SFA undertake to share innovative approaches with other archives and to work together with the cantons on the digital transformation.

## Mission and vision 2025

### **Mission**

The SFA aim to document fully the actions of government and provide the most open access possible to information relating to the federal government.

The SFA archive all information that is relevant to government policy.

The SFA act as guarantor for the security and protection of information.

### **Vision: Systematically digital – networked together**

#### **Guiding principles of the vision**

##### **Systematically digital:**

The SFA will provide their services primarily in digital form, develop the next generation of digital archiving, and establish digital access to archives as standard.

##### **Networked together:**

The SFA will cooperate with their partners in the digital transformation and focus on the needs of customers.

## Action areas and objectives

The 2021–2025 strategy is divided into five action areas. The statements introducing each action area explain its main emphasis. They are followed by the specific objectives.

### 1. Towards a digital archive

The SFA are systematically geared towards the digital transformation. They will progressively automate their standard processes while remaining focused on the benefit to customers.

#### Objectives:

The Swiss Federal Archives will...

- 1.1 commit to a primarily digital archiving and access process, regardless of whether information is in digital or analogue form (guiding principle: digital first).
- 1.2 progressively automate their standard archiving processes; automation will be conducted within a holistic perspective, with the aim of improving efficiency end-to-end and maximising the benefit to customers.
- 1.3 treat sensitive data securely throughout the entire process of transfer, safeguarding and digital use; where required, they will put in place enhanced protection for classified digital records.
- 1.4 exploit the combination of human expertise and artificial intelligence in data analyses and historical research in order to provide the best possible support to customers.
- 1.5 bring their influence to bear in developments in law and strategy related to the digital transformation of the federal government, in order to ensure archiving of information relating to the Federal Administration and prevent gaps from appearing in future.
- 1.6 review the implementation of the recommendations arising out of the evaluation of the Federal Act on Archiving (ArchA) with the relevant stakeholder groups, and clarify the need for, and benefits of, a revision of the law.

## 2. Cooperation in the digital transformation

The SFA will be actively involved in shaping the digital transformation within the Federal Administration, and act with their partners to ensure that archiving is factored in at an early stage and safe-guarded for the long term.

### Objectives:

The Swiss Federal Archives will...

- 2.1 work with their partners and submitting bodies to ensure that long-term use and future access to information are incorporated into the digital transformation from the outset.
- 2.2 expand their cooperation with the Federal Chancellery to simplify information management and archiving in the Federal Administration and enhance the efficiency of administration management.
- 2.3 work with federal offices that hold large volumes of data to clarify how those data are to be archived and provide services that are efficient and user-friendly.
- 2.4 extend their cooperation with public-sector institutions with a view to exploiting the potentials and synergies of linked data.
- 2.5 maintain a network with national and international partner institutions and bodies as well as the cantons in order to manage the challenges of the digital transformation in the SFA's core tasks.
- 2.6 further develop their digital archiving services for the cantons and other public-sector institutions in line with their requirements; and review the addition of further modules to this offering, such as online access.

### 3. Secure and coherent archiving of information

The SFA will archive all information that is relevant to government policy. They will ensure that digital submission is a simple process and equip digital archiving systems to meet future needs.

#### Objectives:

The Swiss Federal Archives will...

- 3.1 implement a programme to reduce the volume of legacy analogue records in the Federal Administration, with the goal of ensuring that analogue records of archival value are submitted to the SFA by 2028.
- 3.2 optimise the balancing of their dual role as service provider / advisor and as supervisory authority in information management and archiving.
- 3.3 become more customer-focused and enhance their position as a centre of competence in information management and archiving.
- 3.4 incorporate findings from many years of using archived records in the SFA into the selection of records for archiving.
- 3.5 play an active role in the further development of specialist applications as well as records and process management and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems in order to ensure coherent archiving from those systems.
- 3.6 replace the archive information system (AIS) with future-proof applications that are successfully integrated into the system landscape, to optimise stability, performance and user-friendliness.
- 3.7 replace the digital information repository (DIR) with future-proof applications that are successfully integrated into the system landscape, to optimise stability, performance and user-friendliness.
- 3.8 pursue new approaches to digital archiving and investigate their potential; this will include using linked data in the new archive information system.
- 3.9 make targeted improvements to metadata quality that offer the greatest added value for future use.

## 4. Online access to information

By 2025, the SFA will enable users to access archived information online as standard, at any time and wherever they are, and will manage the strong growth in demand.

### Objectives:

The Swiss Federal Archives will...

- 4.1 progressively expand online access and be in a position to digitise all analogue records ordered on an ongoing basis (digitisation on demand).
- 4.2 manage the annual 10% increase in the use of archive records (research, advice, supply and digitisation).
- 4.3 further develop the existing digital offering in line with the needs of customers, both the general public and the administration.
- 4.4 progressively replace on-site services (reading room and physical loans) with online alternatives, so that physical access to the Federal Archives becomes the exception.
- 4.5 ensure that digital research involving sensitive personal data is conducted in accordance with the law; online access to protected metadata will be redesigned and implemented accordingly.
- 4.6 provide swift, professional support to politicians, the administration, the media and the public at large in connection with historical and political analyses.
- 4.7 actively provide users with transparent information regarding their research options and access rights, and help to ensure that the various procedures for dealing with requests to consult records are handled straightforwardly by the offices responsible.



## 5. Further development of the SFA's organisation

As an organisation, the SFA will continue to develop with an eye to the digital transformation by means of a participatory process. Staff members and managers will expand their skills and work more closely together across departments and services.

### Objectives:

The Swiss Federal Archives will...

- 5.1 promote innovation and engage in future-oriented competence management, as well as systematically enhancing the professional qualifications of their staff.
- 5.2 further develop their management to address the challenges of the digital transformation and cooperation.
- 5.3 take charge of knowledge management, in particular with a view to the upcoming handover to a new generation within the organisation.
- 5.4 review their processes and structures and adapt them in response to developments in the digital transformation.
- 5.5 strengthen their open, transparent and participatory organisational culture, maintaining and promoting a good overall environment.
- 5.6 allocate the resources necessary to achieve the following objectives:
  - a) reduction of legacy analogue records in the Federal Administration, Objective 3.1 (upcoming submissions of at least 35 linear kilometres of analogue records by 2028)
  - b) automation and digital transformation, Objectives 2.1, 2.3, 3.5 (further development of digital archiving, handling of complex data fonds)
  - c) capacity increase in online use, Objective 4.2 (managing demand, which has been rising by 10% a year for 10 years)