

Conference

European Private Archives of Historical Families and Individuals The ‘Shrine’ of European Historical Knowledge and Cultural Heritage

This Conference focuses on a topic that makes Europe unique in the world: the richness of **European Private Historical Archives** and their characteristic of ‘time depth’, their aptitude to depict human reality within an extensive chronological framework, vital for acquiring a profound knowledge of European history, traditions and cultural heritage.

Regrettably, the attention -especially in Digitalization strategies- is mainly concentrated on Public Archives (Government, Institutional Archives: e.g. created by dukedoms, cities, churches, magistracies) that primarily illustrate the branches of government-institutional activity, and not the life of people and of society.

On the contrary, **Private Historical Archives** -the archives of **Historical Families and Historical Individuals**- are intricately bound up in the culture, society, history in which they were formed. They are the ‘shrine’ of historical knowledge from the perspective of human environment: they describe the social, political, cultural, artistic and economic life, giving a vivid representation of European people, places, landscapes and natural environments; they offer profuse information on the activities and enterprises of individuals, families and groups, on their relations and interrelations, on their interplay with power.

Private Historical Archives have a special ‘cultural value’: they illustrate the life, activities, customs, ethics of the Europeans over the generations; they disclose the mosaic of the languages of the Old Continent demonstrating the cultural contacts, communication and exchanges among European populations in the past centuries; in addition, they show the prominent role of Historical Families and Individuals, who were profoundly involved in the political and institutional life, not only of their own countries but also in the international framework, and in the local and European geopolitical dynamics.

This Conference aims at raising the awareness and attracting the attention of both European Institutions and Citizens about the exceptional European cultural patrimony of **Private Historical Archives**, in order to strengthen specific conservation policies and promote activities to highlight their remarkable ‘cultural value’ and make them available to Europeans.