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Access to the Documentary Heritage in Romania

[Summary]

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The dissertation with the title *Access to Documentary Heritage in Romania* starts from the premise that access to documentary heritage is not merely an administrative procedure or a technical right to consult documents, but a condition for exercising cultural rights, for shaping individual and collective identity, and for developing citizens' capabilities in a democratic society. Documentary heritage is analysed as an educational, cultural, and civic resource, while memory institutions are viewed as providers of public services with the responsibility to ensure effective access to these resources.

The dissertation clearly outlines three original contributions: the reconstruction of the history of access to documentary heritage in Romania, from the reading room created by B.P. Hasdeu to the present, the first national comparative evaluation of documentary heritage users, and, not least, the analysis of the relationship between the memory institution and the user through instruments specific to public administration and public service management.

Starting from the main research question, "What is the dynamic of the relationship between the memory institution and the documentary heritage user in Romania?", the dissertation is not limited solely to archives or access to documents; in essence, it is a study of the relationship between citizens and memory institutions, examined through the lens of public administration, fundamental rights, and the quality of the public service providing access to documentary heritage. The research seeks to analyse the two components of this relationship: the memory institution, as the provider of the public service of access to documentary heritage, and the user, as the beneficiary of this service. In accordance with the research objectives, the study investigates the factors that influence the access regime to documentary heritage at the international, European, and national levels, tracing the evolution of the regulatory framework, democratic principles, and institutional practices that have shaped access to documents. At the same time, it examines perceptions of documentary heritage research in Romania by evaluating the experiences of users within the main memory institutions and by investigating the reasons underlying the non-use of these services. In this context, the research identifies both the principal difficulties encountered by users and the mechanisms through which memory institutions can enhance their social relevance, accessibility, and capacity to attract new categories of users.

Chapter 1 provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation of the research, starting from the premise that the documents preserved by memory institutions represent an essential component of cultural heritage and that their value is fully manifested only insofar as they are accessible to the public. From this perspective, documentary heritage is not regarded exclusively as a body of historical or administrative sources, but as a cultural, educational, and identity-related resource capable of contributing to the formation of civic consciousness, the consolidation of collective memory, and individual and community development. Documents are analysed as testimonies of human experience, enabling an understanding of the past, an interpretation of the present, and a projection of the future.

The first part of the chapter clarifies the fundamental concepts used in the research, such as access, accessibility, documentary heritage, archives, memory institution, and user. Special attention is given to the terminological distinction between documentary heritage and cultural heritage, emphasizing that documents, regardless of whether they are preserved in archives, libraries, or museums, constitute cultural goods that require both conservation and valorisation through public access. In this context, the choice to use the concept of

documentary heritage is justified, as it is considered more appropriate for designating historical documents subjected to research and cultural valorisation. The chapter also analyses the evolution of the way in which international organizations, especially UNESCO, have integrated documentary heritage into the broader system of cultural heritage.

The chapter also develops the relationship between access to documentary heritage and fundamental human rights. Starting from the concept of the right to culture, it shows that access to documents represents a concrete expression of the right to information, education, research, and participation in cultural life. Thus, access to documentary heritage is interpreted not merely as an administrative service, but as a necessary condition for the exercise of fundamental rights and for the active participation of citizens in democratic life.

A central place in the conceptual framework is occupied by the notion of memory institution, used to designate archives, libraries, museums, and other organizations responsible for collecting, preserving, and making documentary heritage available to the public. These institutions are analysed as infrastructures of collective memory and as providers of a public service with an essential role in democratizing knowledge and transmitting cultural values between generations. Complementarily, the user is defined as the beneficiary of this public service, regardless of the purpose for which they access documents, whether academic, genealogical, educational, or informational.

The theoretical foundation of the research is built by reference to the capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. From this perspective, access to documentary heritage is understood as one of the capabilities that the state and public administration must ensure for citizens in order to enable their intellectual, cultural, and civic development. Historical documents are considered resources that contribute to increasing the level of knowledge, developing critical thinking, and fostering an active and informed attitude within society. The chapter complements this perspective by integrating Robert Dahl's theory of democracy, as well as the principles of good governance and good administration, which provide the necessary framework for understanding access to documentary heritage as an obligation of the democratic state and as an indicator of the quality of public services.

Finally, the chapter offers an extensive review of the specialist literature relevant to the research topic, bringing together contributions from archival science, public administration, law, philosophy, and cultural studies. This analysis highlights the interdisciplinary character of the topic and demonstrates that access to documentary heritage must be understood as a complex phenomenon situated at the intersection of fundamental rights, public policies, collective memory, and human development. Through the set of concepts, theories, and principles presented, the chapter provides the intellectual foundation necessary for investigating the relationship between memory institutions and documentary heritage users, a relationship that constitutes the core of the entire doctoral research.

The second chapter presents the methodological architecture of the research and justifies the choices used to investigate the relationship between memory institutions and documentary heritage users. The starting point of the approach is the identification of a double deficit: on the one hand, the lack of systematic analyses of access to documentary heritage from the perspective of public service (or from any other perspective), and then the absence of mechanisms for evaluating the quality of this service through instruments specific to public administration, such as user satisfaction surveys. In this context, the research seeks to provide

both a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon and an empirical evaluation of how it functions in practice.

The research design is constructed as a multi-sited ethnography, following the phenomenon of access to documentary heritage across several levels of analysis. The investigation begins with the international context, continues with the European and national levels, and ultimately reaches the institutional level, where the relationship between the memory institution and the user is concretely manifested. This approach makes it possible to understand access to documentary heritage not as an isolated phenomenon, but as the result of the interaction between norms, principles, public policies, institutional cultures, and professional practices.

The methodology adopted is mixed, with a predominance of the qualitative approach, complemented by quantitative instruments (a questionnaire-based survey, followed by descriptive statistical analysis of the responses). The qualitative component included documentary analysis, discourse analysis, comparative study, historical research, socio-political analysis, the biographical method in institutional analysis, and the institutional case study. Normative documents, policies, initiatives, and projects developed by international organizations such as UNESCO, the International Council on Archives, the Council of Europe, and the institutions of the European Union were examined, as were national legislation and regulations shaping the regime of access to documentary heritage. In order to evaluate European practices (an empirical component of the research) regarding access to documentary heritage, the results of relevant international investigations, such as the Council of Europe/OSA questionnaire (2022), were analysed, and an original European questionnaire (2024) was carried out, addressed to institutions preserving documentary heritage. This instrument made it possible to compare Romanian practices with those existing at European level and, above all, to identify contemporary trends regarding access, digitization, online services, and mechanisms for evaluating user satisfaction. The research thus aimed to identify the factors that influence access to documents, from the legal framework and political regime to the organizational culture and managerial conduct of institutions.

At national level, the analysis focused on seven representative institutions in the field of documentary heritage in Romania: the National Archives of Romania (ANR), the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), the Romanian National Military Archives (AMNR), the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMAE), the Library of the Romanian Academy (BAR), the National Library of Romania (BNaR), and the National Bank of Romania (BNR). Although these institutions operate within different organizational frameworks, they were analysed in a unified manner through the lens of their role as providers of a service of public interest, namely access to documentary heritage. Special attention was paid to the National Archives of Romania, as the regulatory and coordinating authority in the archival field, and the case study method was used to evaluate the way in which the principles of public administration are translated into the concrete activity of reading rooms.

A quantitative component based on questionnaires was used to investigate the users' perspective. A national questionnaire addressed to documentary heritage users was designed and applied in order to evaluate their experience in relation to access to documents, the services provided, research conditions, institutional staff, and the observance of users' rights. The data obtained were coded, transformed into variables, and statistically analysed, while the

results were interpreted from a qualitative perspective in order to identify the main trends, problems, and expectations of the public. Complementarily, a second questionnaire addressed to non-users was conducted, with the aim of identifying the reasons why certain categories of the public do not use documentary heritage and of determining the measures that could increase its attractiveness and accessibility.

The research was complemented by participant observation carried out between September 2023 and May 2024 in the institutions included in the analysis. The direct experience accumulated in reading rooms, the dialogue with staff, and the immediate confrontation with the difficulties encountered by users provided additional information for interpreting the results and for understanding the concrete mechanisms that influence access to documentary heritage. This ethnographic dimension made it possible to correlate the data obtained through questionnaires with the institutional realities observed in practice.

Overall, the chapter defines an interdisciplinary and complex methodological framework, built around the relationship between the institutional regime of access, the capacity of memory institutions, and users' perception of the quality of the public service. By combining historical, legal, administrative, and sociological research with instruments of empirical evaluation, the methodology adopted provides the necessary foundation for an in-depth analysis of access to documentary heritage in Romania and for the formulation of evidence-based conclusions and recommendations.

The third chapter analyses the evolution of access to documentary heritage from the perspective of fundamental human rights and of the main international and European initiatives that have contributed to defining and consolidating this right. The research follows the transformation of access to documents from a privilege reserved for political and religious elites into a right recognized for all citizens, closely connected with freedom of information, the right to culture, the right to education, and democratic participation.

The historical analysis shows that, in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, access to archives was strictly controlled by political and religious authorities, documents being considered instruments of power and of the exercise of authority. The first manifestations of broader access to information are identified in Athenian democracy, but the consecration of access to documents as a civic right occurs only in the context of the political transformations generated by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and of the French archival legislation of 1794 marks the moment when access to public documents is recognized for the first time as a right of citizens, not as a privilege granted at the discretion of the authorities.

After the Second World War, the development of the international system for the protection of human rights provided new foundations for access to documentary heritage. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights enshrine the right to information, education, research, and participation in cultural life, rights that create the premises for recognizing access to documentary heritage as an essential element of human development and democratic participation. The chapter argues that access to documents must be understood as a concrete expression of cultural and informational rights, being indispensable to the effective exercise of citizenship in a democratic society.

A central place in the analysis is occupied by the activity of UNESCO and the International Council on Archives (ICA), the main international organizations involved in promoting and regulating access to documentary heritage. The chapter presents the programmes, conventions, and recommendations that have contributed to the development of a global framework for the protection and valorisation of documentary heritage, with emphasis on the Memory of the World Programme, launched by UNESCO in 1992. This programme aims to preserve humanity's documentary heritage and to facilitate universal access to documents of exceptional importance, while also promoting digitization, online access, and the use of new technologies for the protection and valorisation of historical documents. The chapter highlights the complementarity between preservation and access, underlining that the protection of documentary heritage finds its full justification only through its use and accessibility.

Special attention is given to the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form, a document that synthesizes the principles developed previously and explicitly states that access is one of the fundamental purposes of preservation. The Recommendation promotes the expansion of access through digitization, the development of search tools, the use of modern technologies, and the reduction of unjustified restrictions, reaffirming the link between documentary heritage and fundamental human rights.

At European level, the chapter examines the contribution of the Council of Europe to the development of a common policy on access to archives. It analyses the initiatives adopted after the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Recommendation No. R(2000)13 on a European policy on access to archives, considered the first international standard devoted exclusively to this field. The document enshrines the principles of universal access, equal treatment of users, free consultation of documents, and the limitation of restrictions only to situations strictly necessary for protecting the public interest or individual rights. The Recommendation defines access to archives as a right of all citizens and establishes a set of ethical, procedural, and technical principles that have influenced European archival legislation and practices.

An important element of the chapter is the analysis of empirical research conducted under the coordination of the Council of Europe to evaluate the implementation of Recommendation No. R(2000)13. The chapter presents both the pan-European survey carried out between 2000 and 2004 and the research conducted in 2022, which involved national archives, regional and municipal archives, professional organizations, and representatives of civil society. The results of these investigations provide a comparative framework for evaluating the situation in Romania and make it possible to identify European trends regarding access to documentary heritage, the digitization of services, and the relationship between memory institutions and users.

An original element of the research is the European questionnaire conducted in 2024 and distributed, with the support of Archives Portal Europe and the International Centre for Archival Research (ICARUS), to archival institutions in Europe. The research brought together responses from 28 institutions in 19 states and highlighted the existence of convergent practices regarding the digitization of services, the provision of digital copies, and the development of remote access. The results show that European archives are undergoing a

process of transformation from the traditional reading-room model toward hybrid research ecosystems, in which online access becomes an essential component of the public service. At the same time, the study revealed that mechanisms for evaluating user satisfaction remain insufficiently developed: only approximately 40% of the participating institutions use permanent feedback instruments. The institutionalization of user satisfaction assessment is more frequently encountered in archives from Northern Europe, Western Europe, and the Baltic States, whereas participating institutions originating predominantly from South-Eastern Europe reported less frequently the existence of permanent user satisfaction assessment instruments. These findings confirm the relevance of the research dedicated to documentary heritage users in Romania and the need to develop standardized instruments for evaluating the services provided by memory institutions.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates that access to documentary heritage has evolved from the status of a privilege reserved for power to that of a fundamental right associated with freedom of information, cultural participation, and the exercise of democratic citizenship. At the same time, it highlights the decisive role played by international and European organizations in developing common standards of access, transparency, and accountability, which today constitute essential benchmarks for contemporary archival policies and practices.

The fourth chapter represents the historical and legal core of the research, following the evolution of access to documentary heritage in Romania from the perspective of fundamental rights, archival legislation, institutional practices, and the factors that have influenced the relationship between the state, archives, and users. The analysis demonstrates that access to documents has never been an exclusively technical or administrative phenomenon, but one deeply dependent on the political context, on the state's conception of the citizen, and on the role assigned to documentary memory in society.

The first part analyses the constitutional foundation of access to documentary heritage. Although none of the Romanian constitutions explicitly enshrines a "right to archives", the research shows that the access regime rests on a set of fundamental rights and freedoms: the right to information, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, the right to education, and cultural rights. Their evolution faithfully reflects the transformations of the Romanian political regime. The 1991 Constitution, influenced by international human rights standards, provides the most favourable framework for access to documentary heritage, while authoritarian and communist constitutions, although formally proclaiming numerous rights, limited them by subordinating them to the interests of the state and the dominant ideology. The chapter thus demonstrates that access to documents is inseparable from the degree of democratization of society and from the effective observance of human rights.

The historical analysis of the period 1831-1946 shows that the first concerns regarding archives were exclusively related to the collection and preservation of documents. The Organic Regulations created the modern archival institutions, but they did not recognize public research as one of their functions. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the first signs of openness toward research appeared, culminating in B.P. Hasdeu's initiative in 1877 to make a reading room available to researchers. Nevertheless, access remained selective for a long time and reserved for the intellectual elite. The research reveals that the lack of finding aids, insufficient premises, the large volume of unprocessed documents, and even the personalities of the directors were factors that delayed the democratization of access. The

1925 Law on the State Archives consolidated the institution's scientific dimension, but without explicitly regulating the public's right to consult documents.

The communist period occupies an important part of the chapter and is presented as the moment when access to archives became strongly dependent on the ideological interests of the regime. Although the State Archives formally preserved their status as a scientific institution, their activity was subordinated to political control and to the party's propaganda objectives. The legislation adopted between 1947 and 1989 established numerous mechanisms for filtering access, while historical research was carefully supervised. The reading room operated under a regime of permanent administrative control, researchers being required to justify the topics investigated, while access to certain categories of documents was limited or prohibited. The chapter demonstrates that access to archives under communism cannot be understood separately from the broader system of control over information and from the state monopoly over collective memory.

An original contribution of the research is the analysis of the profile of the directors of the State Archives during the communist period. On the basis of archival documents and sources from the CNSAS fonds, significant differences are identified among directors with regard to their attitude toward research and institutional openness. The results suggest that, beyond legislative and political constraints, the personality and professional background of the directors directly influenced the organizational climate and the real possibilities of access to documents. Thus, access was determined not only by legal norms, but also by the human factor and institutional culture.

For the post-communist period, the chapter highlights the profound transformation of the access regime. After 1989, Romanian legislation was progressively harmonized with European and international standards, and the emphasis shifted from the control of information to the facilitation of access. The chapter analyses measures aimed at making documentary heritage more accessible, the development of research tools, digitization, and the expansion of services intended for the public. In parallel, it also discusses the limits of access, determined by the need to protect personal data, privacy, national security, and other legitimate interests. The research emphasizes that the contemporary challenge is no longer the opening of the archives, but finding a balance between transparency and the protection of individual rights.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of the determining factors of access to documentary heritage in Romania. The main conclusion is that access is the result of the interaction between several categories of factors: the legal framework, the political regime, the level of organization and processing of archives, the existence of finding aids, material and human resources, the organizational climate, and the attitude of staff toward users. Therefore, access to documentary heritage cannot be explained exclusively through the existence of favourable legal norms, but must be understood as the product of a complex relationship between institution, administration, and citizen; this chapter demonstrates that the evolution of access to archives essentially reflects the evolution of the relationship between state and individual in modern Romanian society.

The fifth chapter analyses the relationship between memory institutions and the beneficiaries of the public service of access to documentary heritage, starting from the premise that the value of an institution cannot be assessed exclusively through the heritage it

holds, but also through its capacity to respond to the needs of society. The research combines theoretical and normative analysis with an extensive empirical component, based on case studies, participant observation, and two original sociological investigations dedicated to users and non-users of documentary heritage.

The first part of the chapter analyses the case of the ANR from the perspective of the principles of public administration. The principles of legality, equality, transparency, proportionality, satisfaction of the public interest, continuity, adaptability, and impartiality are examined, with attention to the way in which they are reflected in the concrete activity of the institution and in the services provided to users. The analysis demonstrates that access to documentary heritage does not depend exclusively on the existence of a favourable legal framework, but also on the capacity of institutions to apply these principles in their daily relationship with citizens. The transformations that occurred after 2007 and especially after 2020 are highlighted, when digitization and the development of online services significantly changed the modes of research and access to documents. The digitization projects implemented by the National Archives, including eVITALA and eANR, are also presented and considered examples of good practice in the process of adapting the institution to the requirements of the digital society.

A distinct section is devoted to the comparative analysis of the seven memory institutions selected for the research: ANR, CNSAS, AMNR, AMAE, BAR, BNaR, and BNR. For each institution, the conditions of access, the regulations of the reading rooms, the available services, and the modes of interaction with the public are evaluated. The analysis reveals significant differences between institutions in terms of accessibility, degree of digitization, research conditions, and user orientation.

The main contribution of the chapter is the sociological research carried out among users of services providing access to documentary heritage. The study aimed to measure researchers' level of satisfaction and to identify the main strengths and vulnerabilities of the institutions analysed. The results indicate a moderate to high overall level of satisfaction, with approximately 37% of respondents declaring themselves very satisfied and 34% fairly satisfied with their experience in reading rooms. However, almost one third of the participants expressed various forms of dissatisfaction, confirming the existence of persistent structural problems.

The analysis of the responses shows that institutional staff represent the main factor of satisfaction for users. The professionalism, availability, and support provided by archivists and librarians were the most frequently appreciated aspects in all the institutions investigated. Especially in the case of the ANR, the staff generated the highest number of positive assessments, followed by the efficiency of services, working conditions, and the facilities provided to researchers. These results demonstrate that the human factor continues to play a decisive role in the perceptions of the quality of the public service, even in a context marked by accelerated digitization.

At the same time, the research identified a series of recurring problems. The most frequent sources of dissatisfaction concern online research tools, difficulties in identifying documents, access restrictions, the opening hours of reading rooms, and policies regarding document reproduction. The results show that users attach increasing importance to digital

services and remote access, which confirms the need to continue investments in digitization and in the development of integrated research portals.

A relevant indicator analysed within the study was the perception regarding the observance of users' rights. The best results were obtained, once again, by ANR, with more than four fifths of respondents considering that their rights are respected. Similar percentages were also recorded by the BAR, BNaR, and AMAE. By contrast, institutions that manage documents with special regimes or with a higher degree of restrictions recorded lower levels of satisfaction.

The second sociological investigation, dedicated to non-users, sought to identify the reasons why a significant part of the population does not use the services provided by memory institutions and does not valorise documentary heritage. The results highlighted the existence of a major problem of visibility and cultural education. Most respondents are unable to associate memory institutions with the possibility of researching historical documents and do not know the types of information that these institutions preserve. Approximately 61% of participants demonstrated difficulties in identifying the documentary heritage that can be consulted in such institutions.

The research also revealed the existence of symbolic and psychological barriers. For many respondents, archives and heritage libraries are perceived as institutions reserved for specialists, historians, or professional researchers, rather than spaces open to all citizens. This perception considerably limits the potential use of documentary heritage and reduces the social impact of memory institutions. At the same time, the results demonstrated that interest in documents and history exists, but is often blocked by a lack of information regarding access modalities.

When asked what changes could lead to more frequent use of these services, respondents indicated as priorities the digitization of documents, the existence of a single portal for access to documentary heritage, and the development of more intuitive research tools. The need for a more active promotion of institutions, educational programmes dedicated to the public, and the expansion of online access were also mentioned.

The general conclusion of the chapter is that access to documentary heritage must be analysed not only through the lens of legislation and administrative procedures, but also through that of the concrete experience of beneficiaries and of those who, for various reasons, do not use these services. The results of the research confirm a high level of appreciation for the work of the staff and for the social role of memory institutions, while simultaneously highlighting the need to accelerate digitization processes, simplify access, increase public visibility, and develop permanent mechanisms for evaluating user satisfaction. The chapter thus demonstrates that the future of access to documentary heritage depends equally on the quality of the services provided and on the capacity of institutions to attract and train new categories of users.

In the chapter General Conclusions and Recommendations, it was emphasized once again that access to documentary heritage constitutes an essential component of the right to information and of good governance, being closely linked to institutional transparency, democratic participation, and the exercise of citizens' rights. The historical analysis indicated that the regime governing access to documents has always reflected the nature of the political regime, democratic periods being associated with tendencies toward openness, and

authoritarian periods with restrictive practices and mechanisms for controlling collective memory. At present, Romania has a legal framework that recognizes access to documentary heritage; however, its use has identified the existence of vulnerabilities generated by legislative inconsistencies, differences in institutional practice, and the insufficient pace of digitization processes.

The results of the sociological research highlighted the existence of an overall positive level of satisfaction among documentary heritage users, the main resource appreciated being, however, the staff of the reading rooms, perceived as the principal mediator between the institution and the researcher, rather than the mechanism of the public service itself. Recurring dissatisfactions were identified in relation to administrative procedures, digital infrastructure, opening hours, and online access to documents. The research conducted among non-users demonstrated that the main problem is not a lack of interest in historical documents, but the insufficient visibility of memory institutions and the difficulty of accessing documentary resources. The existence of a latent public interested in documentary heritage represents one of the most important conclusions of the dissertation and provides strong arguments for reforming access policies.

Starting from these conclusions, the research formulates several strategic directions for development.

The first recommendation concerns the digital transformation of memory institutions. Digitization should no longer be regarded exclusively as a technical process of converting documents, but as a public policy of democratizing access. It is necessary to develop a national strategy for the digitization of documentary heritage, establishing clear objectives regarding digitization, archival description, and online access. From this perspective, the development of a genuine virtual reading room and of a national portal bringing together the resources of the main memory institutions would represent an essential step toward bringing Romania closer to established European models, such as PARES (Spain) or HUNGARICANA (Hungary).

The second direction concerns the orientation of the public service toward the user. The research results show that users particularly appreciate the professionalism of the staff, which makes it necessary to strengthen the role of the custodian as a cultural and scientific mediator. Permanent professional training programmes, the development of communication skills, and the establishment of uniform standards for interaction with the public are necessary. In parallel, administrative procedures must be simplified by reducing unnecessary formalities, making access hours more flexible, and eliminating practices that may generate perceptions of inequality or discrimination among users.

A third recommendation concerns the development of (a set of elements of an) archival culture and the formation of new generations of users. The research demonstrated that interest in historical documents exists, but that it is not supported by knowledge of the institutions that preserve them. Consequently, the documentary heritage must be more strongly integrated into educational programmes, through workshops, visits, digital resources, and interdisciplinary projects. The involvement of pupils and students in Digital Humanities projects can contribute simultaneously to the valorisation of heritage and to the development of the skills required for contemporary research.

Another important direction concerns strengthening the participatory character of access to documentary heritage. Memory institutions must develop mechanisms through which users become active partners in the process of valorising documents. Volunteering projects, crowdsourcing, and collaborative document description are effective tools for increasing accessibility and for strengthening the relationship between institutions and the community. In this way, documentary heritage can become a shared space for the production of knowledge and civic participation.

Finally, the most important recommendation concerns the normative framework. The research demonstrates the need to adopt a new Archives Law, harmonized with European standards and with the principles of Council of Europe Recommendation R(2000)13. The new regulation should clearly establish the relationship between access, data protection, and classified information; eliminate the possibility of arbitrary interpretations; and explicitly enshrine free and non-discriminatory access to documentary heritage as a fundamental principle of public administration. Alternatively, these objectives could be achieved through the elaboration of a Heritage Code integrating the legislation on archives, libraries, and museums into a coherent normative framework.

Overall, the research demonstrates that the major challenge for memory institutions is no longer the recognition of the right of access, but its transformation into a modern, efficient, and user-oriented public service. The future of documentary heritage depends on the capacity of institutions to combine the protection of memory with openness to society, so that documents may fully accomplish their function as cultural, educational, and democratic resources.