25/07/2016

Report on Archiving initiatives for Archaeological Sites in Europe

Elizabeth Fentress, with Edeltraud Aspöck, Kate Fernie and Holly Wright

The Excavation, Monuments and Survey data SIG organized a survey of archiving practices in order to understand the treatment of archaeological data in Europe, and its availability, online or otherwise. The survey took place between May and July of 2016. Responses were received from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the UK, France, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Netherlands, Ireland, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland and a partial response from Spain. Considerable effort was made to ensure all European countries were represented, but no responses were received from Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal or the Slovak Republic and, outside the EU, Albania, Bosnia-Herzogovina or Macedonia.

The number of responses mean that the sample is fairly large and worth analysing, subject perhaps to further modification.
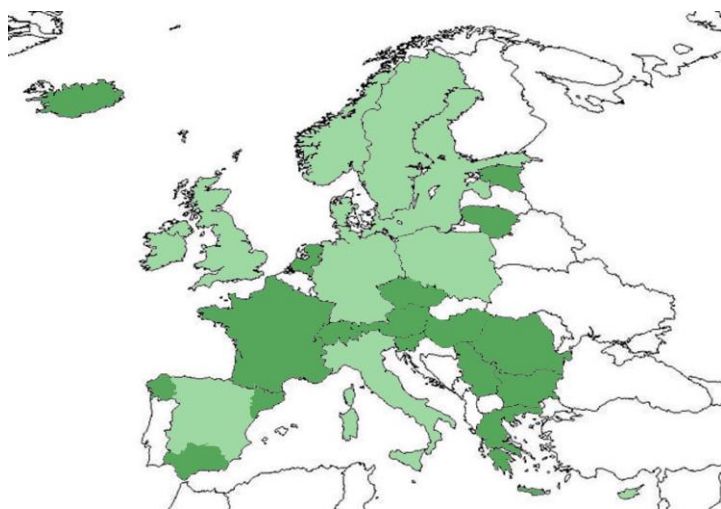
Obligatory Reporting of Excavation Data

Figure 1: Countries who responded are shown in green, and those shown in dark green have obligatory reporting to a centralized archive. For Spain, only Galicia, Andalusia and Catalonia are included.

The first question regarded basic reporting: was there a central institution responsible for collecting and archiving excavation data? Was reporting obligatory? Fig. 1 shows the countries that responded, and the countries in which it is obligatory to submit a report to a national institution whose responsibilities include archiving.

Among the countries where reporting is obligatory, those in Eastern Europe predominate. France is included because all rescue excavations are archived by INRAP (who also carries them out), but it is not clear where reports on excavations conducted by universities are deposited. Austria has a

centralised database, but there is currently no plan to make this available to the public.

Spain and Germany are special cases, as all excavation, both for research and rescue, is the responsibility of individual regions, while centralised bodies – CSIC and DAI – have only consultative power. Thus for Spain we have, for example, the case of Galicia, where, under the Cultural Heritage Act of Galicia, all reports are deposited with the Galician repository, and made available to the public.   Some of the other states are known to have similar policies, notably Catalonia, Asturias and Andalusia. Germany's 16 *länder* have equally various approaches.

In Italy, the 50 *soprintendenze* collect all reports, but implementation can be inconsistent, and there is no central institute responsible for registering the existence of a project. There are also regions – Sardinia, Sicily and Alto Adige – that manage their own archaeology: at one point, when asked, the Sicilian official responsible for culture remarked that his office had no way of knowing what excavations took place there.

As a whole, the centralised archiving of excavation data seems to depend on the strength of state institutions as opposed to other sponsors of archaeological projects – universities, in particular. However, even those systems where, on paper, rules about depositing excavation reports are clear, it is subject to fairly serious limitations. For example, in Iceland the National Museum requires interim reports after every season with registers of context, finds and so on, but it is not always obvious that archaeologists will comply as the delivery process and data standards are not clearly defined. Interim Reports have to be handed in, in hard copy and digital form, and with the registers (of contexts, finds, photos, etc.) uploaded to the National Museum database SARPUR.[1] But as access to SARPUR is restricted to paying users and the public can only see pictures of artefacts with brief descriptions, reporting is naturally less popular with archaeologists.

Elsewhere, as in Hungary and Slovenia, only paper copies of excavation reports are required; if discs are submitted this takes place only sporadically. Finds and scientific reports are not centrally collected. Thus there is a clear problem about reporting even in countries where there are centralised archives.

Online Reporting of Excavation Data

Archaeological Archiving, Grey Literature and Short Reports

Here we must distinguish between

- Archives, containing data on finds, stratigraphy and scientific reports
- full reports, with finds and figures, and
- short reports which act in effect as a public registry of excavations. The first two cases merge into the issue of grey literature, and its public accessibility.

Figure 2 shows that there is a sharp contrast between countries that make their grey literature available online compared to those with centralised data collection (shown in Figure 1). By and large those countries with the most extensive data available online are those without centralised, obligatory archives. DANS, in the Netherlands, is an exception to this rule, in that deposit of excavation information in its online database is obligatory. DANS's EASY database has been in place for almost 10 years, with excellent results: full documentation for over 4000 excavations are stored, as are 21,000 individual reports.[2] Over 80% of these

---

[1] http://sarpur.is/.
[2] https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/home

are available online and there is a move to open up the rest. Hungary has recently established a database, developed in conjunction with the ARIADNE project, which is moving in the same direction, this allows archaeological projects to upload their reports and any data they wish to an online registry.[3] Archeodatabase is bilingual in Hungarian and English, at least for searches, and gives the option of uploading everything from a simple registry option to full documentation.

The ADS in the UK is another example, there is no legislative requirement for archaeologists to deposit grey literature or digital archives with them, but grant funding for excavations and local practice has ensured that a significant number of grey literature reports from British excavations and other fieldwork are included in their database.[4] The deposit of a full digital archive is a rather expensive process for the excavations, but the expense is increasingly being built into projects budgets.

The ADS has been archiving and disseminating grey literature from England and Scotland in its Library of Unpublished Fieldwork Reports since 2008. Whether to make participation obligatory or recommended is determined by local heritage authorities, typically at county level. The cost of archiving and disseminating the reports by ADS is paid for by national heritage authorities, who work with the local heritage authorities to promote the reporting system. There is no additional cost to archaeologists for creating the reports. The number of reports in the Library now exceeds 38,000, with approximately 500 new reports being added each month. The information is mostly available on-line, and no user registration is required.[5]
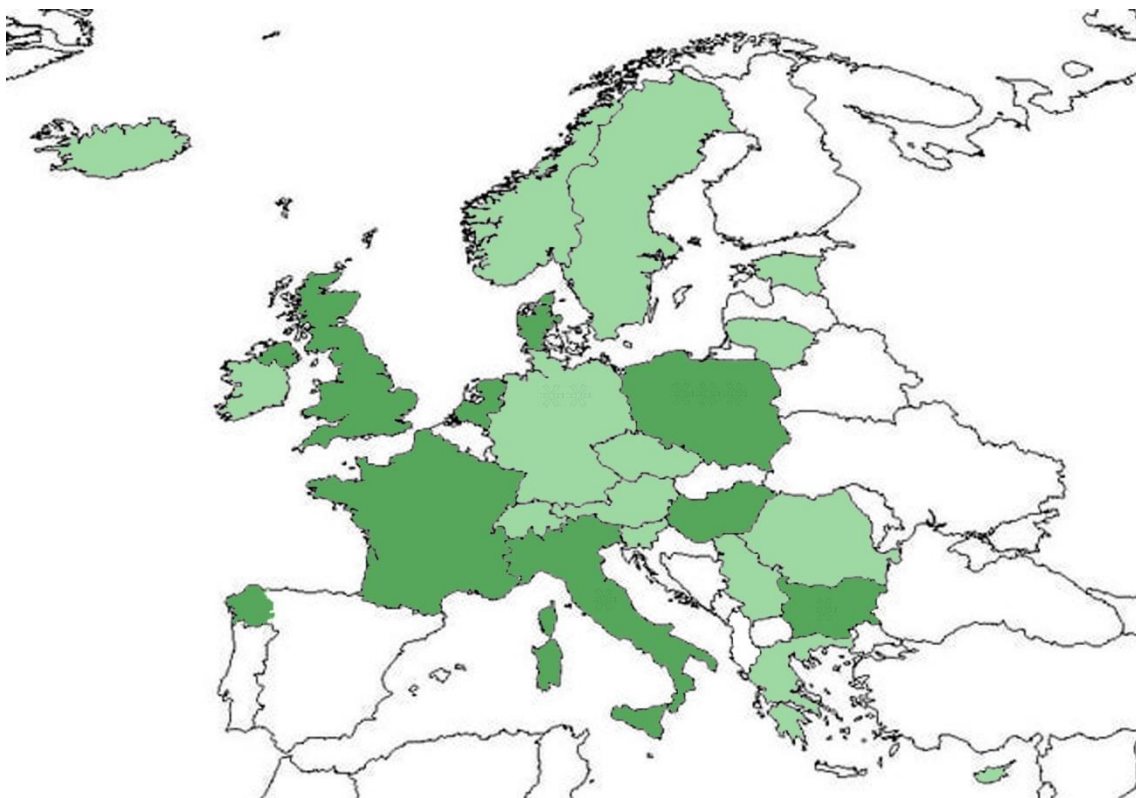

Figure 2: Countries in dark green make at least some portion of their archaeological grey literature publically available online. Interestingly, the majority are different countries to those with a centralised mandate for archiving.

[3] http://archeodatabase.hnm.hu/en
[4] http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/
[5] http://www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/.

Since 2011, The DAI has been working on the IANUS project[6] with the aim of establishing a national research data centre for archaeology and ancient studies with central funding. Reporting will be entirely voluntary, but the centre will provides researchers with the opportunity to deposit their research data and for it to be professionally archived and curated by the organization, on the model of the ADS.

Elsewhere the availability of grey literature online, is more patchy:

- In the Czech Republic there is a National Repository of Grey Literature from scientific and cultural institutions, however [7]only 29 archaeological reports have actually been deposited there.
- In Poland a database for grey literature covers all subjects[8] .
- The Danish MUD database[9] is a national system dependent on the museum network: its use for the deposit of excavation data appears to be just getting underway. The user interface for MUD is almost entirely in Danish, which limits use by foreign researchers.
- In Estonia the two main universities, at Tartu[10] and at Tallinn[11], each have their own online archives; the Tallinn archive is available only in Estonian. These are both general deposits of grey literature, and seem not yet to be searchable by subject.
- There does not yet seem to be a national policy in France of making grey literature on excavations available online, although Brittany requires that the Regional Archaeological Service be given a copy of all excavation reports and makes these available online.[12]
- In Lithuania, the Society of Lithuanian archaeology[13] published a partial list of reports that can be viewed online.
- In Slovenia, the Center for Preventive Archaeology CPA ZVKD has collected grey literature in a deposit of excavations since 2009 but this is not publically accessible.
- In Italy, city-based projects such as SITAR in Rome[14] and MAPPA in Pisa[15] provide very detailed archaeological data with a GIS interface, useful for both research and planning, but neither is yet available to the general public. Both of these are very complex and complete, which is perhaps only possible on the scale of a city rather than a large country.

Elsewhere in Europe open access to archaeological grey literature is in the planning stages:

- The Discovery Programme is establishing itself as an aggregator for archaeological data in Ireland. It is working with the Digital Repository of Ireland[16] to provide a central access point for dispersed archaeological data. A current initiative with the Transport Infrastructure Ireland will provide access to several hundred rescue reports. However, nothing is yet available.
- In Norway, too, an online database for grey literature is being discussed.
- In Sweden a digital repository for archaeological data, primarily reports and primary fieldwork data, should be online by the winter of 2016. The proposal is that deposition becomes obligatory

[6] https://www.dainst.org/forschung/forschung-digital/ianus,
[7] http://www.nusl.cz/
[8] www.rcin.org.pl
[9] http://www.udgravningsdata.dk/
[10] http://datacite.ut.ee/en/news.php, http://dspace.ut.ee/?locale-attribute=en
[11] http://www.etera.ee/
[12] http://bibliotheque.numerique.sra-bretagne.fr/share/page/
[13] http://www.lad.lt/index.php?option=com_ladreports&Itemid=71
[14] http://archeositarproject.it
[15] http://mappaproject.arch.unipi.it/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Mappa_vol-1_en_intero.pdf
[16] www.dri.ie

after the repository is in place. Grey literature has been uploaded since 2013, and will be shortly transferred to the new system.

- Switzerland has preliminary plans for the online publication of research data in the future. As in Germany, responsibility is divided between the various Swiss *länder*.

Registries and Short Reports

In all of the cases discussed above the aim is to provide relatively full documentation, where possible. There are also a number of projects that publish short summaries and metadata rather than aiming for full online availability of the results. France's ADLFI[17] and Dolia[18] are examples: rescue excavations publish a short summary in openly accessible databases, although unfortunately there is no map interface for either and it is challenging to understand the relationship between the systems.

Fasti Online (www.fastionline.org) includes results from a number of countries. Fasti is GIS-based and provides an illustrated summary available to the public, in both English and the national language, with sufficient information to make it possible to contact the excavators or the institutions responsible for the project. For example in the following countries:

- In Italy, submission of a Fasti record is required for excavations for which the Ministry of Culture is not directly responsible. There is an on-line journal, *Fasti Online Documentation & Research* (*FOLD&R Italia*) for the publication of longer interim reports.
- In Bulgaria, perhaps 80% of all excavations from 2004 onwards are represented in the Fasti, and over 700 are online. (There is also a national database for both survey and excavation reports, the Archaeological map of Bulgaria,[19] although access to this is restricted.)
- In Spain participation is still extremely patchy.
- It is hoped that Romania, where summaries of all excavations are held centrally, will return to publishing them on the Fasti.

The key to Fasti Online's success has been the ease of compiling the short summaries, and the availability of an English translation, which creates useful publicity for the excavation directors. It takes time for the practice of regularly submitting reports to become rooted in archaeological culture. Unfortunately, changes in the people responsible for archaeology can result in a change in this practice and as in some countries (Malta, Albania, Ukraine) this can result in a departure from the project.

Archaeology of Greece Online[20] works on the same basis as Fasti Online, with short illustrated summaries of excavation reports and a map interface. In Greece it is the institutions involved (the British and French Schools in Athens) that take the lead in collecting and compiling the information. There is no publication in Greek.

Elsewhere, online publication of archaeological reports is patchy at best. In Denmark, various actors collect reports and some of them publish on line, but the practice does not seem to be general. In Spain, apart from the Fasti Online, Andalusia has a good, university-based, database of excavations, Arca;[21] however it is password protected. Galicia is moving towards and open-access version. Slovenia has made an attempt

---

[17] http://adlfi.revues.org/
[18] http://multimedia.inrap.fr/Dolia/p-17038-Accueil.htm
[19] http://www.naim-bas.com/akb/.
[20] http://chronique.efa.gr/
[21] http://institucional.us.es/arca/

with ARKAS[22] but access is currently password-protected, and the site is only available in Slovenian. In Romania there is a centralised online database of all excavations (RAN)[23] but the descriptions are generally of one or two lines. The Czech Republic also has a maintained a large database since the 1980s, in Czech, although this is not currently available online.[24]

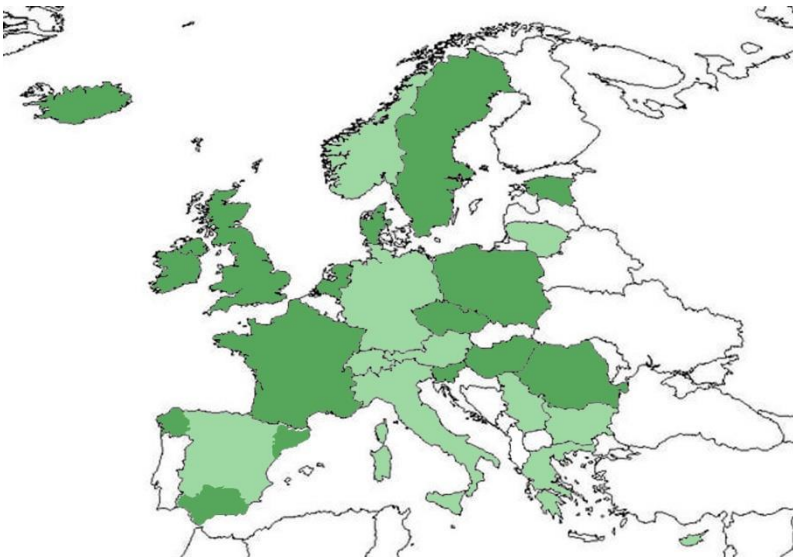**Sites and Monuments (SMR) Databases Online**

Here the picture is somewhat more positive: most countries register their standing buildings and sites of any antiquity, and some have had online databases of these for some time (Figure 3). The Polish INSPIRE digital management system is an example of a comprehensive recording system, which includes over 12,000 documents, with 7,767 archaeological sites listed on the map-based data register, which also includes numerous recent buildings. It is, however, difficult to use, and various search terms failed to elicit results; the map is not apparently clickable.

Figure 3: Countries with online sites and monuments registers are shown in dark green.

The view for SMRs from other countries is noted listed below. Some are making the positive step of including survey data, moving from standing monuments and known archaeological sites, to areas with archaeological potential.

- Austria: an online database is planned for the future, but there is no concrete timeline.
- Czech Republic: website of the National Heritage Institute with significant archaeological sites.[25]
- Denmark: SMR as well as collections data on the Agency for Culture and Palaces.[26]
- Estonia: National Registry of Cultural Monuments.[27]
- France: on the National Geographic Information Portal[28] and on the Heritage Atlas of the Ministry of Culture and Communication.[29] The difference between these two is obscure.
- Germany: the IANUS project (see above) is also working on an integrated national online SMR catalogue.
- Greece: An SMR catalogue exists, but is not online.

[22] http://iza.zrc-sazu.si/En/Arkas.html
[23] http://ran.cimec.ro/
[24] http://www.arup.cas.cz/
[25] http://isad.npu.cz/index_en.php
[26] http://www.kulturarv.dk/fundogfortidsminder
[27] http://register.muinas.ee/public.php?lang=en
[28] http://www.geoportail.gouv.fr/accueil
[29] http://atlas.patrimoines.culture.fr/atlas/trunk/

- Hungary: The catalogue of archaeological data run by the national museum also serves as an SMR registry.[30]
- Iceland: Although legally required to submit survey data, only 6000 sites have found their way into the Heritage Agency georeferenced database.[31] This is, however, a splendid initiative with .PDFs of survey reports being made available through the same source.
- Ireland: Sites and Monuments Record, through the National Monuments Service.[32]
- Italy: No national SMR, although the Istituto Nazionale del Catalogo e della Documentazione holds online catalogues of many monuments and objects.
- Lithuania: No national SMR.
- Malta. The National Inventory Register of the Maltese Islands is password protected.[33] The initiative was comprehensive, however, the Malta Authority has its own database that integrates SCH information with its own landscape archive databases.[34]
- Netherlands: apart from EASY, there is a Map of Archaeological Monuments created by the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency: this is also part of Archis.[35]
- Poland: INSPIRE, as described above. There is also a project for the creation of a GIS database for the archive of the Polish Archaeological record, based on field survey since the 1980s. This, the AZPgeo-pilot project is not yet online. The system is accessible by password, and the databases treated as internal projects.
- Romania: The RAN database (see above) contains SMR data and areas with archaeological potential known from fieldwalking.
- Serbia: No national SMR database.
- Spain: various regional initiatives, for example, for Andalusia.[36]
- Slovenia. The Slovenian Heritage Agency has an open access registry,[37] and a second SMR registry with a GIS interface called ARKAS.[38] There is also a registry of early medieval sites in Slovenia, Austria, Croatia and Northern Italy.[39]
- Sweden: SMR data is registered,[40] fieldwork and monuments inventory surveys are to be added in future. Some of the SMR data is also available from the Swedish National Data Service. Roughly 4000 databases from a former fieldwork unit are also available to browse by arrangement at the archives division of the Heritage Board.
- Switzerland: SMR data is variously available by Canton.
- UK: SMR data is available online for England[41], Northern Ireland[42] Scotland[43] and Wales.[44] Excavation indexes are also available.

---

[30] http://archeodatabase.hnm.hu/en
[31] https://www.map.is/minjastofnun/
[32] http://www.archaeology.ie/archaeological-survey-database.
[33] http://chims.datatrak.ws/gengisnet/main.aspx
[34] http://mapserver.mepa.org.mt/frame.php?site=malta_internet&lang=en&group=public&resol=2
[35] http://archeologieinnederland.nl/bronnen-en-kaarten/amk-en-ikaw.
[36] http://www.iaph.es/patrimonio-inmueble-andalucia/frmSimpleArqueo.do
[37] http://giskd6s.situla.org/giskd/
[38] http://arkas.zrc-sazu.si.
[39] http://zbiva.zrc-sazu.si
[40] http://www.fornsok.se/
[41] http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk (cross-searches over 60 local and national registers)
[42] http://apps.ehsni.gov.uk/ambit/
[43] http://smrforum-scotland.org.uk/her-contacts/ (Links to the individual sites within Scotland)

Conclusions:

After looking at the availability of grey literature reports, excavation registers and sites and monuments registers online from across Europe, it seems that online provision of archaeological data is hardly a given. While desirable it does not seem to be a priority in many EU countries. This should not be the case, as the public generally pays for archaeology, particularly rescue archaeology, so a successful online national archive should allow transparent access for all. Smaller countries (Slovenia, Holland, Denmark) have a slightly easier job of compiling SMR databases, but what seems to make the most difference is a national archaeological institute.

SMR databases are, of course, not archives, though they can act as the key to archives providing links to further documentation and grey literature. Although not SMRs, the ADS catalogue, EASY and the Hungarian Archaeology Database also function as registers providing a links to archives. Linking obviates the need for all archives to be held in the same place, or to be aggregated together to allow cross-search. Holders of archaeological data should only need to submit the links to their material, as is the case with the Fasti Online. This sort of two-level access - short and simple documentation on the registry, with links to detailed documents and bibliography for those who need to know more, is probably the ideal, in that it avoids the need to create complete documentation before basic information can be made available. Users can pick and choose from the national registry for sites dedicated to tourists – castles or palaces. However, the difficulty with this approach is that long-term curation of and access to the data is not assured; in the end, the availability of a curated archive for this material is vital.

How to create, and, more importantly, maintain such a system is another question entirely. The models are certainly there.

Contributors:

This report was made possible by the people who filled in the country questionnaires:

Edeltraud Aspök (Austria), Nikola Theodossiev (Bulgaria), Sorin Hermon (Cyprus), Irena Blažková (Czech Republic), Carsten Meinertz Rissiger (Denmark), Mari-Liis Posti (Estonia), Kai Salas Rossenbach (France), Felix Schaefer and Reinhard Foertsch (Germany), Despoina Tsiafakis (Greece), Attila Kreiter (Hungary), Oddgeir Isaksen (Iceland), Evie Monaghan and Anthony Corns (Ireland), Ingrida Vosyliute (Lithuania), Maxine Anastasi (Malta), Hella Hollander (Netherlands), Espen Uleberg (Norway), Arkadiusz Kołodziej and Agnieszka Oniszczuk (Poland), micle dorel (Romania), Sanja Stojanović and Stefan Pop Lazić (Serbia), Benjamin Štular (Slovenia), César Gonzalez-Perez (Spain), Marcus Smith (Sweden), Phillippe Della Casa (Switzerland), and Holly Wright (UK).

---

[44] http://www.archwilio.org.uk/.