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User Strategy and Access Policies

Emmanuelle Moscovitz and Nurit Davidson - YV

Anna Ullrich- IfZ

Marius Cazan- INSHR-EW

Wolfgang Schellenbacher- MUA

Mike Bryant- KCL

Rene van Horik and Elly Dijk - KNAW-DANS

Julia Parfiniewicz- ZIH

Reto Speck- KNAW- NIOD

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Contact Person	Emmanuelle Moscovitz, Emmanuelle.moscovitz@yadvashem.org.il
Abstract (for dissemination)	This Deliverable outlines EHRI's access policy for all services offered both online as well as in person. It defines the access rules, procedures and modalities that are based on established best practice in the domain and conformant with the EC's European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures. The DL also includes a detailed user strategy for the future EHRI RI.
Management Summary	

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1. Introduction

Since its beginning in 2010, EHRI has promoted trans-national research on the Holocaust by overcoming dispersal and fragmentation of Holocaust archives as well as expertise across the globe. EHRI's core mission is to improve access to Holocaust documentation, thereby overcoming the enormous fragmentation and dispersal of the relevant source material and initiating new trans-national and comparative approaches to Holocaust research. EHRI stakeholders include collection holding institutions who have provided data on their collections for access as well as a growing body of research users from a variety of backgrounds.

As EHRI is now preparing to become a permanent research infrastructure in the form of an ERIC, this deliverable will lay out the main elements of its user and access strategy. The proposed strategy is based on EHRI's experience of offering both virtual and in-person access services to users in the context of the EHRI-1, EHRI-2 and EHRI-3 projects, and a review of the access policies of existing and emerging ERICs, particularly E-RIHS - The European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science; INSTRUCT-ERIC - Structural Biology European Research; and ACTRIS- Aerosols, Clouds and Trace gases Research Infrastructure. As is usual for ERICs, EHRI's access policy is based on an integrated access point for all user services no matter whether they are delivered centrally or distributed. This deliverable will define access rules, procedures and modalities that are based on established best practice in the domain and that are conformant with the EC's European Charter on Access to Research Infrastructures.¹ Our user and access strategy specifies the rules and obligations between EHRI and its users as well as between the EHRI Central Hub and distributed National Nodes in regard to user access and service provisions.

2. EHRI Services

Our experience suggests that a combination of both online and in-person services is beneficial and enables users to overcome the challenges associated with the dispersal of Holocaust related sources by providing access to tools and resources including integrated data, training, trans-national access opportunities, and methodological expertise. In addition, these services offer knowledge transfer as well as a place for exchange among users dealing with similar research or professional themes. EHRI grants access to a comprehensive set of services that provides users with a single-entry point to traditionally highly fragmented and dispersed Holocaust-related resources and expertise. They enable research, innovation and scientific breakthroughs as well as opportunities for learning and knowledge and expertise transfer.

As a high proportion of Holocaust-relevant resources is currently not digitized, EHRI provides access to virtual and physical services as follows:

Virtual access is provided through the *EHRI Virtual Observatory*, an integrated set of digital services which currently includes the EHRI Portal, the Document Blog, the Online Editions, Digital Tool Guides, EHRI Research guides, and the EHRI Online Courses. Additional services are continuously being developed and integrated into the Virtual Observatory.

Physical access is currently facilitated through two services. The *Conny Kristel Fellowship Programme (CK Fellowship)* grants users trans-national access to facilities and resources

¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/78e87306-48bc-11e6-9c64-01aa75ed71a1/>

available at EHRI partner institutions and cooperating partners which constitute the most important Holocaust-relevant collection-holding institutions and centres of excellence. It allows users to access the geographically dispersed resources and expertise they need to complete high-quality research. *Training Seminars and Interdisciplinary Workshops* enable users at different career stages to expand their networks, and to acquire the skills they need to excel in the digital world, and to open up new inter-disciplinary, trans-national and other innovative research avenues.

3. EHRI User Community

3.1 Users profile

Since 2010, EHRI has provided its users with a variety of services offered both in-person and online. During the preparatory phase among the tasks of work package 5, User Access and Training Strategies, was to define EHRI's user community both in terms of its size and composition (disciplinary background, location, career status). An analysis of the user profiles for EHRI services, both online and in-person, provided useful information on the professional and geographic backgrounds of existing EHRI users.

The main user groups have been academic researchers at all levels (PhDs, postdocs, established/senior researchers) and collection professionals (archivists, librarians, curators).

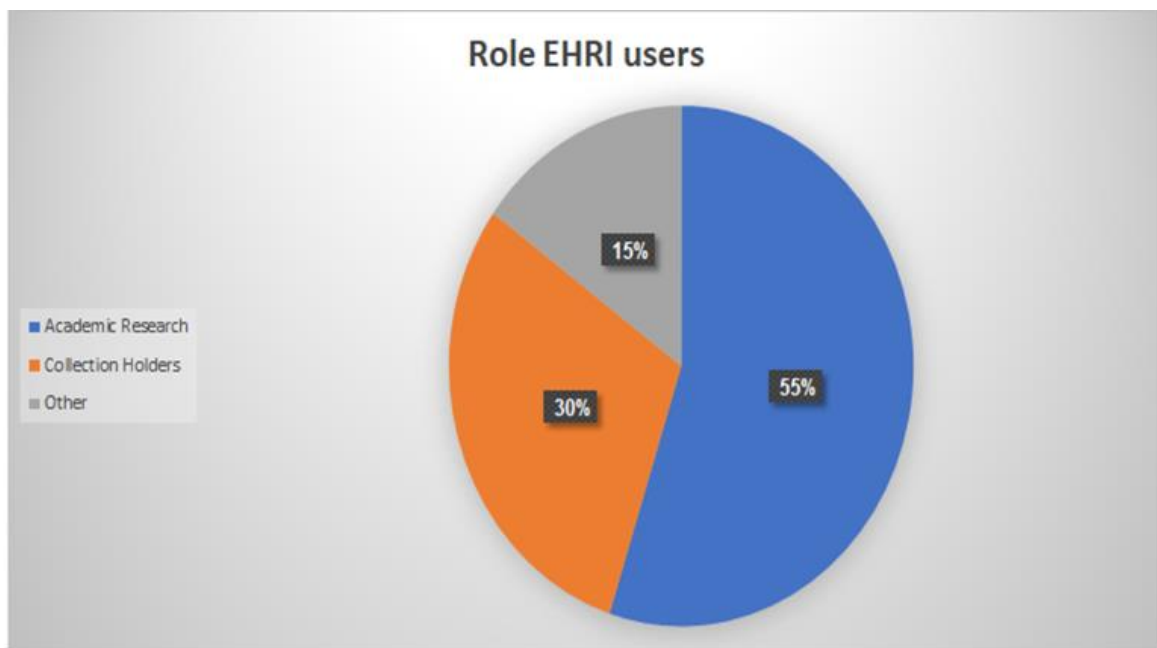


Chart showing percentage of EHRI user groups, 2016-2020²

Furthermore, a survey conducted together with Work Package 6 (Research and innovation strategy), "The User Needs and Innovation Strategy" and distributed in January 2020 to employees of EHRI partner institutions, provided useful information on user groups of

² Using the data available on user profiles for existing EHRI services, both online and in-person, the following chart shows percentage of EHRI user groups See DL.5.1 <https://www.ehri-project.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/D5.1%20-%20User%20Needs%20Analysis.pdf>

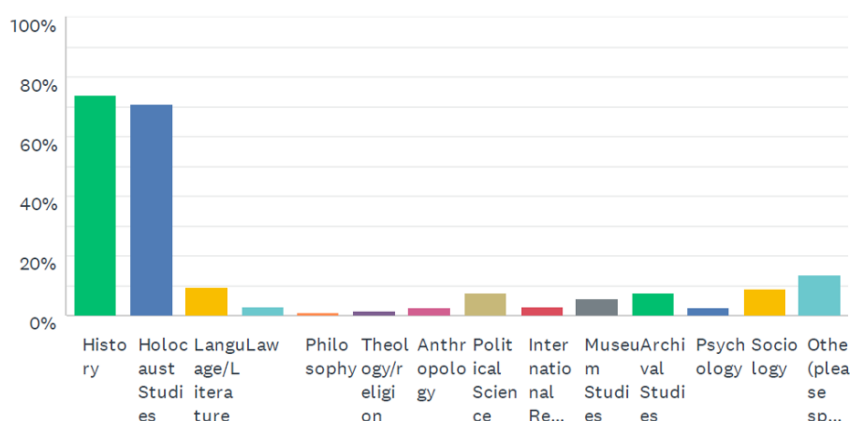
Holocaust related institutions as well as research trends. Both sources of information enabled the identification of EHRI's intended user community which include:

Academic users, collection holders and digital humanists are core user groups of EHRI. M.A. research, students, educators, media professionals, and the general public were identified as potential future users.

As for research disciplines of EHRI's scientific community, through a survey distributed in March 2021, EHRI User Access and Training Strategies Survey³ several disciplines were identified.

Q5 Research discipline, please indicate all which apply:

Answered: 124 Skipped: 5



Research disciplines of EHRI users, identified in the "The User Needs and Innovation Strategy" Survey

While most respondents identified History and Holocaust Studies as their research disciplines, 74% and 70% of respondents respectively, various disciplines outside history were identified. Among the most prevalent: close to 10% of respondents studied in Language/Literature, 7% Political Science, 6% Museum Studies, 7% Archival Studies, 9% Sociology. Among the other disciplines indicated: Education, Communication, Gender Studies, German Studies, Jewish Studies. Moreover, many EHRI users adopt interdisciplinary approaches in their research as has been shown in a foresight study conducted by WP6 Research and Innovation.⁴

3.2 Size of EHRI's user community and geographical distribution

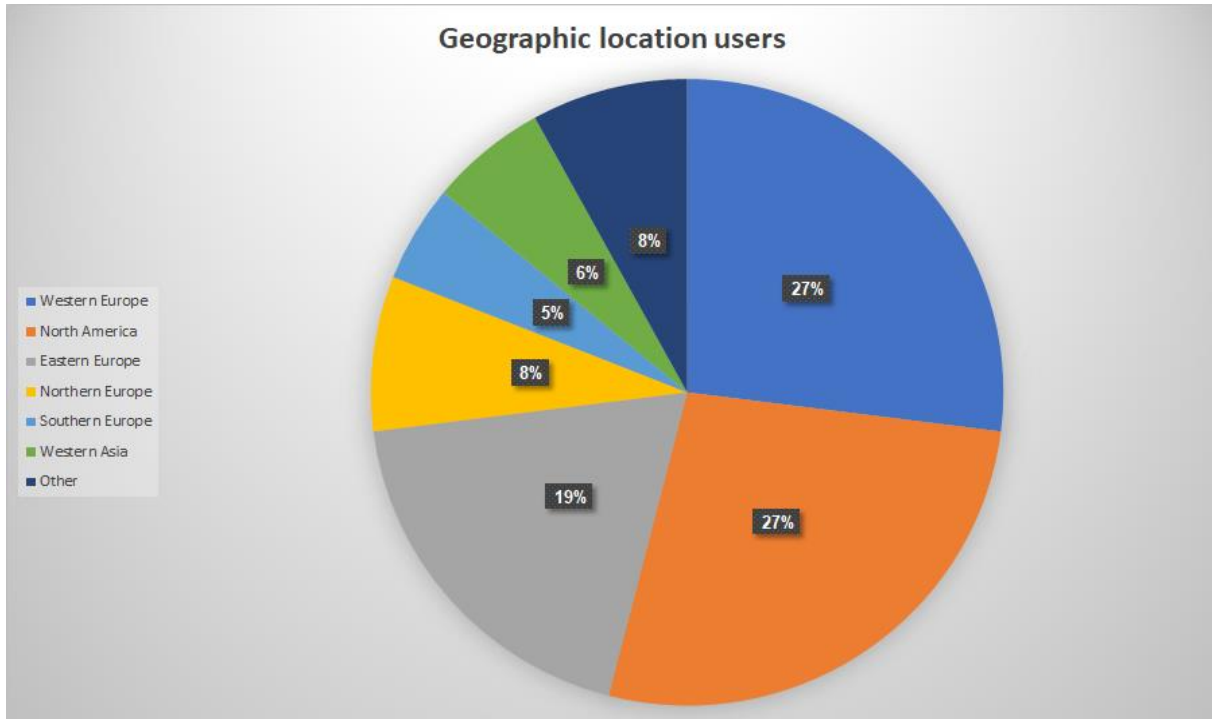
EHRI already possesses a sizeable and committed user community. In 2020, the online activity for all services provided was an average of 23,105 monthly sessions or 277,263 sessions for the year. The in-person access services provided during EHRI's second phase average about 288 participants a year. The number of participants and events held is determined by the initial budgetary planning and work package objectives.

Generally, the geographical distribution of EHRI's users show a higher use in Western Europe and North America than Eastern/Southern/Northern Europe. The overall use of EHRI services has consistently increased year-on-year while Western Europe has remained the most

³ The survey was distributed among current and potential future users of a variety of professional backgrounds. A total of 129 responses were received. <https://www.ehri-project.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/D5.1%20-%20User%20Needs%20Analysis.pdf>

⁴ DL 6.2 Foresight Study 2

dominant region for use of the various services. The following graph shows the distribution of use of EHRI services both online and in-person from 2016-2020, as analysed through the data on google analytics as well as the data available on use of in-person programmes and the portal registrations. ⁵



Geographic distribution of users EHRI users, online and in person, 2016-2019.

4. EHRI-ERIC as a Distributed Research Infrastructure

The EHRI-ERIC will be a distributed research infrastructure with a Central Hub. At the heart of EHRI stands an integration of existing national, regional and local RIs into a permanent distributed European RI composed of a coordinating Central Hub and linked National Nodes. The integrated RIs consist of the major Holocaust archives, libraries, museums, memorial sites and research institutions that constitute the main centres of excellence in Holocaust research and documentation. The EHRI Central Hub establishes a pan-European structure across these existing RIs to develop unified services, realise synergies, promote transnational and inter-disciplinary exchange and innovation and maximise the impact at a European level. Thereby, EHRI ensures that European Holocaust researchers have access to state-of-the-art facilities irrespective of their place of origin, and that Europe as a whole offers support to Holocaust research that is consonant with the importance of the social, cultural and political importance of the event.

4.1 The Role of the Central Hub in Providing Access

The EHRI Central Hub will coordinate the activities, those offered as physical in-person programmes as well as those offered in an online format. The Central Hub will host the virtual services provided through the EHRI Virtual Observatory. All online services will be centralized and access will be enabled through a single-entry point for access which will be managed by

⁵ For more information see DL 5.1 User Needs Analysis <https://www.ehri-project.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/D5.1%20-%20User%20Needs%20Analysis.pdf>,

the Central Hub. In addition, all technical capacities to maintain the services will be managed by the Central Hub as will any inquiries made through the help desk.

The services offered physically will be centrally managed by the Central Hub. The application process for access to services offered in person will be administered by the Central Hub while access to the services themselves will be distributed among partner institutions. In the case of Trans-national Access Programmes, partner institutions will offer Fellowship places at their institutions and Training Seminars/Workshops will be hosted by partner institutions.

5. Access Modalities and Procedures

The following section will lay out the access modalities and procedures for both online and in-person services and detail common principles for all services.

5.1 Common Principles

Access modalities and procedures differ between services delivered virtually and physically. Nevertheless, all access is based on a set of common principles as follows:

Single entry point: all access services are coordinated by the EHRI-ERIC Central Hub which thereby provides a single entry point to users. A Service Registry offers prospective users with one-stop information about all available services.

Advertisement: in order to reach the widest possible user communities, all access opportunities are widely and regularly advertised both by the Central Hub and National Nodes. In accordance with EHRI's Scientific Strategy, particular user communities and regions might be specifically targeted.

Monitoring and feedback: the quantity and quality of access provision is subject to regular monitoring, and user feedback is actively sought. Monitoring feeds directly into the continuous improvement of access services.

Non-discrimination: EHRI is fully committed to an equal opportunity environment, and thus does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation or disability when granting access.

Free of charge: Access to physical EHRI-ERIC services is in principle provided free of charge to the user. However, in case of demand for access to in-person EHRI services for the purpose of either proprietary or commercial research, a market-driven access model may be developed in the future.

5.2 Virtual Services

In addition to the common principles above, the following modalities and procedures apply to all virtual access services.

Access Units and Quantity of Access Offered

The access unit is one web session, and there is no limit to the quantity of access offered. The quantity of virtual access provided will continuously be monitored and measured against relevant Key Performance Indicators.

Access Modes

The access mode is "wide" that is to say unrestricted, free and open to anyone. There is one potential exception to this rule. In the past, EHRI offered parts of the Online Course in Holocaust Studies as an interactive course, where a tutor guided participants through the syllabus. In case EHRI were to offer similar interactive training courses again in the future, quotas would be introduced and an "excellent driven" access policy would be developed.

Excellence-driven in the case of the online courses would be dependent on the professional fit of the participant with the course.

Conditions of Access

The only condition of access to the services other than the guided online course is acceptance of EHRI's relevant policies (available at <https://portal.ehri-project.eu/data-policy>) which govern data use and re-use.

Some virtual services offer registered users advanced functionality and access to additional data. Registration is open to all users.

EHRI encourages users to acknowledge the contribution of using EHRI virtual services in their research outputs. To facilitate citation tracking, users have access to guidelines on how to cite EHRI online resources and data.

Support Measures

Users have access to online documentation. Users may also contact the EHRI Helpdesk with queries about the information content of services, the underlying physical collections, technical problems, or any other question relating to EHRI. Queries can be made in several languages and are answered within one week.

5.3 Physical Services

In addition to the common principles above, the following modalities and procedures apply to all physical access services.

Access Units and quantity of access offered

For all physical access services, the access unit is one week of access. The quantity of physical access provided will continuously be monitored and measured against relevant Key Performance Indicators.

The total quantity of access offered depends on available funding and on the number of participating institutions.

We currently expect to offer around 125 weeks of access per year through the CK Fellowship Programme. Each fellowship lasts between 1 and 6 weeks and can include stays at multiple hosting institutions.

We currently expect to offer around 20-24 weeks of access per year to Training Seminars and Interdisciplinary Workshops. These events last 0.5 – 1 week and are attended by around 12 participants.

Access Modes

The Access mode is excellence-driven. Access to the CK Fellowship Programme is granted based on the excellence of the proposed research and/or professional development project and its merit, as evaluated and accepted through external peer review. For Seminars and Workshops, participants are chosen based on the fit of topics of the Seminar or Workshop to their research profile and/or professional development ambitions, and as evaluated by internal EHRI-ERIC peer review.

Conditions of Access

Any user or user team with a project that falls within the scope of EHRI's Scientific Strategy may apply for access to physical services.

All users are required to submit a report detailing the results and the impact of their access on their research and/or professional development, and evaluating the quality of the access

provided. If applicable, users may further be encouraged to report the results of the access in a contribution to the EHRI Document Blog.

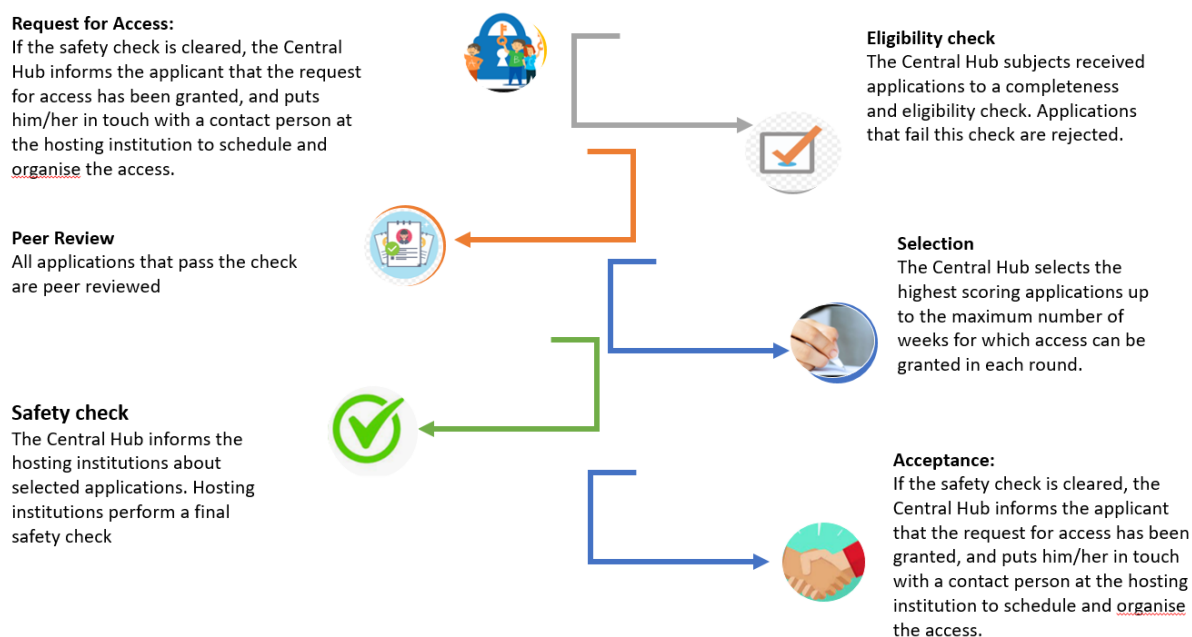
CK Fellows are required to inform EHRI about any research output enabled through the fellowship and to duly acknowledge EHRI therein. Multi-lingual guidelines on how to acknowledge EHRI will be made available to users.

All users are encouraged to deposit such outputs in the EHRI Open Access publication repository or in any other public Open Access repository, and/or in public Open Research Data repositories that conform to the FAIR principles.

Hosting institutions may require CK Fellows to present their research in the form of a lecture, paper or similar.

Process and interactions

1. Calls for applications for any physical access opportunities are advertised widely and clearly indicate eligibility criteria, application procedures, deadlines, and selection criteria.
2. The Central Hub subjects received applications to a completeness and eligibility check. Applications that fail this check are rejected.
3. All applications that pass the check are peer reviewed. Applications for the CK Fellowship Programme are peer-reviewed by a pool of external experts; applications for the Training Seminars and Interdisciplinary Workshops are peer-reviewed by experts from the EHRI-ERIC Central Hub and/or National Nodes. Reviewers assess and rank proposals according to a predefined selection grid.
4. The Central Hub selects the highest scoring applications up to the maximum number of weeks for which access can be granted in each round.
5. The Central Hub informs the hosting institutions about selected applications. Hosting institutions perform a final safety check.
6. If the safety check is cleared, the Central Hub informs the applicant that the request for access has been granted and puts them in touch with a contact person at the hosting institution to schedule and organise the access



Support Measures

Participants of physical services may receive a stipend to cover their cost of travel, accommodation and subsistence. Depending on the ratio of high-quality proposals in relation

to available weeks of access, the stipends might be tailored to the individual circumstances of applicants in order to ensure that a maximal number of eligible applicants are granted access. Thus, applicants that already possess funding for travel and subsistence might be granted access without receiving a stipend.

Participants receive assistance to deal with logistical and administrative matters through the Central Hub and will be put in touch with a contact at the host institutions for specific details about their research stay. While on site, the participants have access to the expertise available at the hosting institutions (reference archivists, research staff, collection specialists).

Those participating in Training Seminars and Workshops are provided with expert scientific support by those providing lectures at the host institution.

Further support measures may be developed including a user network for ongoing contact with peers as well as strengthening engagement with EHRI.

6. User Strategy of Future EHRI-ERIC

EHRI-ERIC's user strategy is a plan of actions that aims to continuously improve the experience of all users accessing EHRI services. EHRI's user strategy is composed of four main elements: A service development strategy, a user engagement strategy, a user experience strategy, and a user acquisition strategy.

6.1 Service Development Strategy

A user needs analysis conducted in March 2021⁶ has helped us in assessing the needs of our user community in terms of services, access, and training. The survey was distributed among current and potential future users of EHRI services from a variety of backgrounds. The survey had a good response rate, with a total of 129 responses from 26 countries. The survey provided us with an indication of the needs of current and potential future users of EHRI services. The main conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- The surveys showed that the current services provided by EHRI are being used by the user community and are of interest for potential future users.
- Questions relating to access were important overall in various user groups. The possibility to access descriptions of archival material as well as access to archival material itself were revealed as important for users of various backgrounds and disciplines.
- The survey pointed to the need of users for more networking possibilities
- Respondents requested more concise information on what services EHRI offers
- Respondents requested an increase in archival descriptions available on the portal
- The survey also revealed that most respondents are looking forward to a return to physical access, meetings and events, post pandemic.

EHRI-ERIC will continue to observe and retain relevant programs and services to its user community. The EHRI-ERIC will guarantee that the Holocaust archival and research communities continue to have access to an expanding set of advanced services and resources that bridge over the traditionally highly fragmented and dispersed archival materials. Several of the requests made by users are being addressed within EHRI-PP or EHRI-3, these include the development of a service registry, an action plan to keep EHRI users connected, and increased outreach to micro-archives within EHRI-3 in order to increase the quantity of archival descriptions available on the portal.

⁶ DL 5.1 User needs analysis: <https://www.ehri-project.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/D5.1%20-%20User%20Needs%20Analysis.pdf>

User needs are dynamic and constantly evolving, thus the user strategy should be regularly updated. EHRI-ERIC will continue the dialogue with its users through periodic user needs analyses. In addition, a User Advisory Board (UAB) is being developed by WP5, which will enable EHRI-ERIC to be in constant consultation with its user community. The members of the UAB will reflect the diversity of EHRI's user community and include researchers, collections holders as well as educators and media professionals, and be balanced with regards to the geographical location and gender of users. The UAB will provide feedback and ideas on EHRI existing and potential services from core user groups.

6.2 User Engagement Strategy

User engagement is an important way to not only understand whether users find value in EHRI activities, but also whether EHRI will continue to be relevant for them after participating in an EHRI activity such as training events or trans-national access programmes. Users who value EHRI programmes and find the infrastructure relevant for them long term are more likely to continue to be active, recommend EHRI to colleagues and peers, and credit EHRI in their academic work while continuing to use EHRI services and apply for programmes. As stated, the importance of networking and establishing connections was expressed by Users as a vital need.

Throughout EHRI's previous integrated activities several elements were put into place to facilitate user engagement. These included the Newsletter, the follow-up after participation in EHRI Fellowships, contributions to the EHRI Blog as well as the establishment of focus groups. An action plan to keep EHRI users engaged was developed specifically for EHRI in-person services which included additional suggestions for long-term user engagement⁷:

- Establishing a dedicated position for User Engagement in the EHRI-ERIC organisation
- Focus-groups of common professional and/or disciplinary backgrounds
- Initiating Alumni groups allowing for continued and long-term contact among participants of Transnational Access Programmes.
- Guidelines and support for Acknowledgment of EHRI in publications
- Academic connection, providing ways for PhD candidates to connect with more senior academics/mentorships
- Book Club for users to share information on recent publications

6.3 User Experience Strategy

The EHRI-ERIC user experience strategy will ensure that the overall user experience is positive and will aim to facilitate broad use of EHRI services. A service registry is being developed and will be composed of an integrated online registry containing a catalogue of services offered by EHRI. This will assist users in finding and accessing EHRI services and ensure seamless interoperability of all EHRI-services.

The EHRI help desk will continue to be available for users with queries about the information content of services, the underlying physical collections, technical problems, or any other question relating to EHRI. Queries can be made in several languages and are answered within one week.

⁷ DL 6.3 Action plan on keeping EHRI users connected <https://www.ehri-project.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/Deliverables/D6.3%20-%20Action%20plan%20for%20keeping%20EHRI%20users%20connected.pdf>

For in-person services, contacts with the host institutions will be made to assist the user in preparing their fellowship or workshop/seminar participation. EHRI-ERIC will periodically evaluate the services by requesting feedback forms from participants of trans-national access programmes. Currently, EHRI Fellows are requested to hand in a report on their fellowship which includes information on the quality of the service. For virtual services, online questionnaires that enable users to rate the services will be posted periodically for user feedback.

6.4 User Acquisition Strategy

EHRI-ERIC's user acquisition strategy is aimed at a steady increase of its core group of academic users as well as collection holding institutions, professionals and digital humanities experts. In addition to these user groups, EHRI partner institutions have identified M.A. research students, educators, media professionals and the general public as further users and will increase outreach to these additional groups.

Moreover, efforts to increase in particular in-person use of services in wider geographic locations across Eastern, Southern and Northern Europe will continue in order to further extend the geographical reach. Increasing participation from these locations for in-person programmes will also ensure increased use of online services as these services are often presented notably during Workshops and Seminars.

Tools for communication will include the use of social media, the EHRI website, outreach to alumni as well as targeted mailing to key user groups. In addition, at the national level workshops may be organised by the various national nodes increasing engagement as well as dissemination on EHRI offerings.