

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY
AND
VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY
VATICAN APOSTOLIC ARCHIVE**

This Memorandum of Understanding is entered into this 15th day of November 2024 between **National Library of Norway**, established under the laws of Norway (hereinafter “National Library of Norway” which expression shall include its successor in title), represented by Aslak Sira Myhre, Director of the National Library of Norway on the one part;

AND

Vatican Apostolic Library and Vatican Apostolic Archive, established under the laws of Vatican City State (hereinafter “Vatican Library and Archive” which expression shall include their successors in title), represented by H. E. Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Archivist and Librarian of the Holy Roman Church on the other part.

WHEREAS:

1. The National Library of Norway and the Vatican Library and Archive have a common goal in making the information and knowledge contained in their collections digitally accessible for the common good of humankind.
2. The National Library of Norway and the Vatican Library and Archive are interested in sharing technology and experience in the development of digital archives and libraries, and tools for digitization and the development of digital humanities in research and outreach.
3. The Vatican Library and Archive contain documents of crucial importance for the understanding of Norwegian history. The National Library of Norway wants to make these sources available for the Norwegian public for the National Jubilee in 2030 celebrating saint Olav through digitalizing, transcribing and translating them into modern Norwegian. The Vatican Library and Archive sees this as an important project to document a country’s early history by making the Vatican’s documents publicly available.

NOW THEREFORE, THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MoU) WITNESSES AS FOLLOWS:

1. Purposes

- 1.1 The purpose of this MoU is to codify the joint interest and intention of both parties for the realization of the abovementioned objectives.
- 1.2 Furthermore, this MoU sets out the scope of the collaboration and the framework for the mutual benefit of both parties, and may form the basis for further and more detailed agreements.

BACKGROUND FOR THE PROJECT FOR NORWEGIAN DOCUMENTS

The Vatican Apostolic Archives is one of the most important historical source repositories of the world. They contain unique documentation of Norwegian history before the Reformation, and also to a certain extent to the Counter-Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries. Many of these documents have only been partly transcribed and partly translated, and very few are accessible to the Norwegian public in modern Norwegian.

In the Vatican Archives we find documents regarding the history of Norway from the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros in the mid-twelfth century until the reformation of Norway in the sixteenth Century. The religious and political conflicts after the Reformation made the history of the Catholic Church and its institutions a lesser-known part of Norwegian history in the following centuries. This opens a possibility to use these sources to tell new history, to reinterpret the past and to expand the basis for research on and understanding of Norway's past.

Many of the sources regarding Norway in the Vatican were transcribed and translated in the nineteenth century; some more were registered in a Scandinavian project in the 1920's and 1930's. These are partly available in Norway today for those who read Latin or are very familiar with the archives. But the past century has shown that both transcriptions and translations from the nineteenth century can be flawed. In addition, few of the documents are translated in full, which means that the independent interpretation of these sources still is limited to very few.

In the 1990's Norwegian researchers gained access to the Apostolic Penitentiary Archives. This archive also contains documents of great value for the understanding of Norwegian history.

The Norwegian National Library wishes to digitize, transcribe and translate all documents specific to Norwegian history in The Vatican Apostolic Archives and make them accessible in both Latin and Norwegian, based on modern principles for digital libraries. This will give researchers, as well as the interested public, a unique opportunity to deepen their understanding of Norway's past and the important role played by the Catholic church. If the documents also can be digitized, a modern tool for research and debate will be available. This will serve as an international template for archives, libraries and universities on how sources can both be used to create a general interest in history and open the past for new research and interpretation.

The national jubilee in Norway in 2030, celebrating the amalgamation of state and church power that was the basis for the development of the medieval Norwegian state, and the jubilee celebrating Norway's own national saint, Olav, creates an opportunity of profound impact for such a project. The Norwegian National library will coordinate and fund such a project on the Norwegian side for six years from 2025 to 2030.

2. Responsibility of parties

Both parties shall exercise due diligence and good faith in the implementation of this MoU.

3. Relationship of parties

Each party hereto is an independent entity and nothing in this MoU shall entitle any of the parties to pledge the credit or incur any liability or obligation binding upon the other party except in so far as they may have expressly agreed.

4. Obligations and responsibilities

Without prejudice to anything set out herein, neither party shall derive rights or obligations under this MoU.


5. Governing Law and Settlement of Dispute

This MoU is governed by the laws of the Vatican City State. National Library of Norway elects as its legal domicile, for the purposes of this contract, the Chancellery of the Court of the Vatican City State. Any disagreement regarding the interpretation, validity, effectiveness or execution of this agreement shall be resolved by a panel of three arbitrators. Each party will appoint one arbitrator, and the third arbitrator, acting as President, will be appointed by the parties by mutual agreement. If necessary, the third arbitrator will be appointed by the President of the Vatican City State Court. The arbitrators will judge with an informal procedure, according to the rules provided for by the Vatican Code of Civil Procedure.


IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have hereunto set their hands on the day and year first above written.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY

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and
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Aslak Sira MYHRE
Director of the
National Library of Norway



✠ Angelo Vincenzo ZANI
Librarian and Archivist
of the Holy Roman Church

