

# REIGN

## Reconstructing the Ghent knowledge centre of the Counts & Countesses of Flanders, 11th-18th C

DURATION  
1/02/2023 - 1/05/2027

BUDGET  
€ 299 925

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The charter collection “Counts of Flanders” (1086-1559) conserved by the State Archives in Gent appeals to the imagination. Right from the early beginnings of the county of Flanders, the counts and countesses created and received documents that were carefully kept safe. They are part of the so-called Trésor de Flandre that continuously increased in the course of the Middle Ages. The charter collection indeed contained a much more varied panoply of documents than only charters, i.e. ordinances, contracts and international treaties. There were for example hotel invoices, tax rolls, inventories of goods, and even documents pertaining to the private life of the counts, countesses and their courtiers. For researchers, this collection forms an exceptional source of information, not only for the political, economic, social and cultural history of Flanders, but also with regard to the regions with which the Flemish counts and countesses were in contact for political, economic or dynastic reasons.

Thanks to the support of the Fonds Baillet-Latour the restoration of the charter collection of the Counts of Flanders was completed in the past years (2019-2021). The charters were cleaned, flattened, restored if necessary, and packaged to size. Over 4,000 documents were treated in total. In the next step, they were digitised at the National Archives in Brussels. Meanwhile, all documents have returned ‘home’ to the State Archives in Gent and are currently further opened up for research. The REIGN project is financed by BELSPO and is aimed at improving access to this particular ‘treasure’ of the political and administrative memory of the former county of Flanders and to make it known among the large public.

The charter collection has followed a complex history and itinerary which is reflected in the structure of the different archival fonds conserved today at the State Archives in Gent. Today’s arrangement of the archival fonds is partly the result of detours taken in the sixteenth century, through Rupelmonde, Lille, Paris, Vienna, Brussels and Gent. The historians and archivists who have studied these charters in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have put their name on the different sub-collections. The documents now spread across the “Fonds de Saint-Genois”, “Fonds Gaillard”, “Austrian Fonds” and “Chronological supplement Wyffels” formed an entity in the Middle Ages that had grown into an ensemble that was thematically sub-divided by those who worked on it at the time. The four archival blocks had never been studied from a combined archival and historical approach, which will now be remedied by the REIGN project.

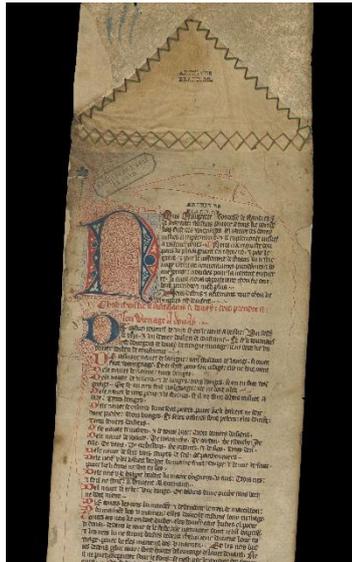
In addition, REIGN’s purpose is also to develop a digital access point to these collections in accordance with the norms of the 21st century, with a particular attention to the history of these archives and the archives creators. New archival descriptions are penned that shall enable users to search the collections faster and more easily and to access digital images. In addition, the project contributes to the improvement of the knowledge and insight into the administrative and political way of working of the county. It is also a test case for the implementation of the new international archival standard “Records in Contexts” (RiC-CM) that lays particular focus on the identification of relationships in the descriptions of archives.



Chirograph of the bishop of Thérouanne to mediate a dispute between the monks of Saint-Georges in Anchin and the canons of Saint-Martin in Hesdin from 1168 (State Archives in Ghent, Fonds Saint-Genois, 2).



# REIGN



Deed in which the bailiff of Aalst confirms that he has received a sum of 180 pounds, 1297 (State Archives in Ghent, Fonds Gaillard, 392).



Seal of Joanna of Constantinople, countess of Flanders and Hainaut, attached to a charter from 1218 (State Archives in Ghent, Fonds Saint-Genois, 12).



Fragment of a roll containing toll tariffs from 1271 by Margaret of Constantinople, countess of Flanders and Hainaut (State Archives in Ghent, Fonds Saint-Genois, 152).



Deeds concerning the leasing of land and the payment of annual rent from 1478 (State Archives in Ghent, Chronologisch Supplement Wyffels, 820-821).

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Coordinator

Joke Verfaillie  
State archives in Ghent  
[joke.verfaillie@arch.be](mailto:joke.verfaillie@arch.be)