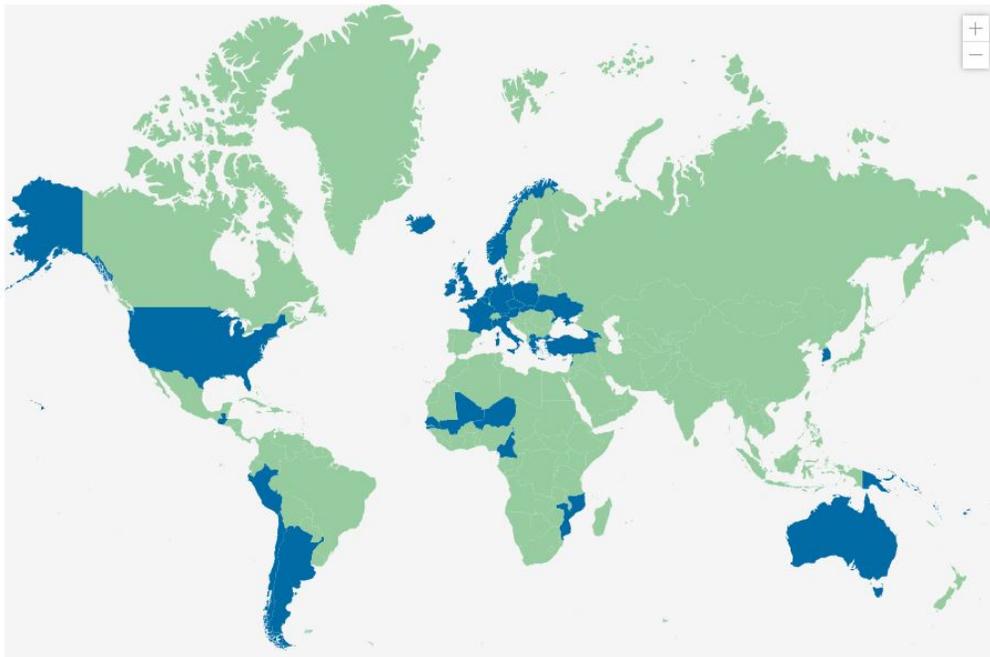


Blue Shield National Committees Annual Reports and Action Plans 2021

- Blue Shield International Report -

NATIONAL COMMITTEES AROUND THE GLOBE



<https://theblueshield.org/about-us/around-the-globe/>

1.0 Overview

As of August 2021, Blue Shield International have received 20 annual reports for 2020 and Strategic plans for 2021. These are from: Australia, Curaçao, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece (Hellenic), Iceland, Ireland, Korea, Macedonia, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Senegal, UK and USA.

Reports are outstanding for Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Guatemala, Lebanon, Pasifika (although most of these committees have been in touch to discuss this).

Mali and Turkiye received accreditation in 2021, and will begin reporting in 2022.

The following report summarises the activities and plans of the national committees according to the six areas of activity, and the challenges they face. There is a considerable amount of overlap between the six areas, and for ease of collation and standardisation in this report, some activities might be in different sections to those in the submitted reports.

It should be noted that no attempt is made to compare committees or committee activities: both are highly variable. Given this, no summary statistics are provided, as this may obscure the variation in committees.

2.0 Co-ordination and Building Connections

The majority of activities concerned the building and strengthening of connections, nationally, regionally, and internationally. This includes, among other examples, Curaçao's initiative to establish a regional emergency group: the Caribbean Heritage Emergency Network (CHEN); both Georgia and Poland's cooperation with their national societies of the Red Cross; Senegal's negotiations with the Ministries of Culture and Tourism of Senegal for the development of the Senegalese cultural passport; the Hellenic Committee's long-term collaboration with the NGO Heritage & Museums and participation in the Mediterranean Online Forum "Circle the Med"; Norway's contact with FORK (The Forum for Risk Preparedness); and the Netherland's cooperation with CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries). These examples show the breadth of topics within cultural heritage on which Blue Shield national committees (NCs) are seeking to build partnerships.

Many NCs worked to increase collaboration with their national armed forces on the presence of considerations for cultural property protection. Some examples include: Ireland's three-day course on Cultural Property Protection (CPP) for Peacekeeping Deployment; Poland's co-organisation and development of workshops and trainings with the Ministry of National Defence; the USA's Leader Professional Development sessions offered for various Military units and with NATO; the Netherland's contact with the Ministry of Defence, section Cultural Affairs & Information; Denmark's relationship building with the Danish Military Academy; and the UK's link to the British Army Cultural Property Protection Unit.

This also includes other related work, such as the USA's work on developing no-strike lists (or inventories) of sensitive cultural sites, continued with a focus on sites in Ukraine.

In the area of cooperation with law enforcement, the UK committee has cooperated on investigations relating to cultural property trafficking and theft. Similarly, Norway participated in a working group on the prevention of cultural crime with the Norwegian Ministry of Culture.

3.0 Education, training, and capacity building

A large percentage of activities concerned awareness-raising on the work of the Blue Shield and NCs and the importance of cultural property protection. This could be considered within the area of activity relating to training, and capacity building. (Specific training and capacity building activities under other areas of activity are discussed there).

Many NCs carried out work related to raising public awareness, taking advantage of social media to reach audiences virtually, such as Denmark's social media awareness-raising campaigns and Germany's "TRA(ff)CKING CULTURE" campaign. Korea produced a booklet that introduces BSI and its activities distributed to relevant institutions to raise awareness and build potential partnerships. Peru also raised public awareness through efforts to identify monuments with the Blue Shield emblem as part of a public activity with the Municipality of Arequipa, and to carry out activities with heritage volunteers and school children.

Awareness raising activities also included NC presence at various conferences and other events, giving interventions ranging from keynote addresses to educational lectures. Examples include: the Czech Republic's series of lectures on cybersecurity; France's symposium "Bouncing back after the tragedy: heritages and resilience"; North Macedonia's Forum: "Packaging and transport of cultural goods", offered for museum workers; and the Netherland's panel discussion on collection security, panel discussion on water damage to paper collections.

In Georgia, within the ALIPH funded project "Planning for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage of Gori", a 2-day training was conducted on preventive conservation and handling of materials. This training targeted museum professionals from all regional museums from the Shida Kartli region (12 museums) and included 20 participants.

Korea has also assisted the BSI Board with enabling future training through supporting the development of the Accreditation for Training Courses document.

Many NCs engaged with students and universities in this work. Germany's "TRA(ff)CKING CULTURE" campaign is one example. Senegal participated in the training of UGB students of UFR CRAC (Civilizations, Religions, Arts and Communications) through the Heritage Trades Department (MDP) on the heritage profession and on the various UNESCO Conventions. A course was also given by the Secretary General of the HCBS (A.Zervaki) to the School of National Security regarding the international protection of Cultural Heritage. These are just a few examples, as many national committees participated in providing such training and lectures.

National committees were also involved in producing publications, such as two editions of The Journal of the Blue Shield and the book "Legal Protection of the Macedonian Cultural Heritage: views on the Protectionist Awareness in the Post-Socialist Period" by Jovan Ristov from North Macedonia's National Committee.

Tools were also published, including France's "Health Watch, Safety and Security in Containment Situations" to support managers of heritage collections, and Czech Republic's revised edition of the Manual on preventive measures and rescue work in emergency and afterwards for library collections and support activities. Further, many NCs carried out translation work to make existing tools more usable in their national contexts.



4.0 Proactive protection and risk preparedness

Many training and awareness raising activities concerned risk preparedness and reduction. Australia shared resources and information on natural disasters to member associations and the general public through their website.

One major activity of Blue Shield France is an initiative to improve fire safety, in response to the Notre Dame fire. This including a study on the fire risk in heritage buildings, a study on prevention / prediction / operations measures used in France and abroad, as well as studies, research and full-scale tests on tools for the protection of heritage works when they are exposed to the risk of fire. This information is being used to create a guide for the safety of old buildings, intervention plans, and a national symposium. France is also involved in similar preparedness work concerning flooding through the Heritage and Flooding Mission.

Additional training and capacity building in this area can be seen carried out by Germany's participation in a workshop with the German Archaeological Institute on first aid mechanism for the support of cultural heritage during and after disasters, and Curaçao's presentations on disaster emergency response in regional Caribbean heritage networks.

5.0 Stabilisation and post-disaster recovery

Blue Shield national committees worked in national and regional networks to assist in post-disaster recovery throughout the year.

Blue Shield Iceland worked in collaboration with the Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management and the Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management on recovery to the Technical Museum following a mudslide in Seyðisfjörður.

In terms of information-gathering, BS Australia conducted a survey to quantify the impact of the bushfires and extreme weather events experienced across Australia in the end of 2019 through to 2020 to give insight into the impact on cultural heritage institutions from these events.

In response to the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, the USA carried out initiatives which included organising a webinar for the Armenian scholarly and heritage community, and carrying out satellite imagery monitoring and analysis of Nagorno-Karabakh region. USCBS further engaged in ongoing collaboration with heritage professionals in Syria and Afghanistan, including a partnership with the Prince Claus Fund which provided funding for the Afghan National Museum to salvage damaged collections in Ghazni. USCBS members also contributed to recovery following the Our Lady Church fire at Sans Souci, Haiti, with Quisqueya University (with support from Prince Claus Fund, and members engaged with the US Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee (US CHCC) to provide emergency assessments following natural disasters in Puerto Rico and the Bahamas.

During the period of civil unrest experienced in Peru in 2020, the national committee worked with various groups of civil volunteers for the protection of sculptures, public ornaments and cultural heritage in (unnamed) cities.

Other work seeks to build capacity in this area. For instance, Ireland was invited to draft guidelines for first responders to emergency situations which included cultural property or a heritage site. These have been drafted and will be formalised in 2021. Korea has carried out work to survey and list cultural heritage that needs priority protection in emergencies

6.0 Law, policy development and implementation

All national committees stated their work or their ambitions to build on their work in an advisory capacity on implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols and other relevant conventions, including the 1970 Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

This was the highest priority for the UK Blue Shield committee in 2020. For example, attendance at the cross-Government CPP Working Group and links with the Civil Service and politicians worked towards encouraging and supporting better UK implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention. The UKBS also responded to several Calls for Evidence in various UK government consultations on relevant topics.

Australia also engaged in this way, providing a submission to the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the Parliamentary Inquiry into the destruction of 46,000 year old caves at the Juukan Gorge in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

USCBS led a coalition of heritage associations and organisations in support of the U.S. process for conducting an international loan of cultural objects. USCBS members gave presentations to allied professional associations on topics in law and policy of cultural heritage preservation.

Poland took steps to encourage Government to adopt the Council of Europe Nicosia Convention and the UNIDROIT Convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects.

Georgia held an interagency roundtable meeting in conjunction with the project “Planning for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage of Gori” funded by the ALIPH Foundation. This meeting included a discussion on the needs for developing detailed policies and guidelines for the emergency services on how to deal with CP during disasters.

7.0 Challenges in 2020

Of course, the greatest challenge in 2020 was institutional closures and disruptions to work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many national committees had to deal with the cancellation of their planned events, or the rapid necessity for virtual events to be planned in their place.

One example of how national committees responded to the COVID-19 pandemic is the publication of the *Closed by COVID-19 – Checklist for GLAMs and Historical and Heritage Sites* by the Australian National Committee. This provided guidance in closing collections of movable cultural heritage in collecting organisations.

Additional ongoing challenges relate to the lack of funds, including the inability to fundraise without established bank accounts and the inability to establish a website due to lack of funds. Further, almost all national committees rely on volunteers, and many find it difficult to balance Blue Shield engagement with their professional commitments.



Georgia has found a lack of qualified and motivated specialists to be their main challenge, while Norway found the small size of their committee created a great need to build stronger partnerships.

8.0 Looking Forward: Strategic Plans for 2021 and beyond

8.1 Engagement with Armed Forces

Many national committees look to develop partnerships in the coming year and in the upcoming period (2022-2026). The majority of national committees remark on their ambition to build stronger ties to national armed forces and develop training in cultural property protection.

For example, Korea has the ambition to further develop long-term partnership with their Ministry of Defence, and cooperate with armed forces to conduct CPP exercises, as does the UK. Norway also plans to organize biannual workshops with the Norwegian Defence Department on topics including World Heritage Places in Norway.

Poland also plans to continue cooperation with the armed forces, including through the Military Training Centre for Foreign Operations in Kielce, within the framework of the *training of experts in the protection of cultural heritage*, co-organized with the Minister of Culture, National Heritage and Sports.

8.2 Cooperation and Partnerships

Czech Republic mentions work to enhance cooperation with the owners of private collections, spreading the information and outputs from the collaboration among private owners to ensure better protection of cultural property. Denmark also seeks to build partnerships that work towards developing risk and crisis management plans for national, state owned, accredited and non-accredited museums and heritage sites in Denmark.

Germany, and many others, will seek to strengthen partnerships with civil society and higher education, such as with the German Red Cross and German universities and other research institutions.

Ireland is also seeking out strengthening diverse partnerships, such as with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media (DTCAGSM), DHLGH, and the Heritage Council. North Macedonia will seek partnerships with the national society of the Red Cross and UNESCO. The Netherlands has similar plans, developing long-term partnerships with the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Caribbean.

Building partnerships is essential for France to build capacity towards achieving their long-term goals, which include Prevention of Major Risks, and Emergency Response. Capacity building includes developing partnerships with French research institutions and international heritage organisations, and by developing their volunteer strategy to help volunteers across France engage actively in the Committee's work.

The UK also intend to continue to build relationships with the National Trust, and other partners, and investigate the potential to partner, or work with more closely, the British Red Cross and UK National Commission for UNESCO.

8.3 Engagement in Policy and Implementation

Further, many National Committees seek out to strengthen their engagement in policy and implementation, seeking to support and advise their national government during the ratification process of conventions such as the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols, the UNIDROIT Convention, and the Council of Europe Nicosia Convention. The USCBS intend to attempt to open discussions concerning ratification of the Hague Convention Second Protocol, and the status of the USA and UNESCO.

Norway intends to engage in policy at a national level, such as through encouraging revision of the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act to comply with the 1954 Hague Convention, UNESCO 1970 Convention, UNIDROIT 1995, and the Valetta Convention. Peru also plans to encourage completion of a national law concerning risk management, and push for it to include specific responses when dealing with Cultural Heritage in Emergencies.

8.4 Education and Training

Training is also a key area in future plans. Among many education and training plans, Poland plans to implement the project "Cross-sectoral challenges: specialist in the protection of cultural properties in the event of a crisis and war - development of a postgraduate study program, dedicated to employees operating on the borderline of fields" - financed under the EEA Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021.

Norway plans to develop training courses with the Norwegian Universities and establish research collaboration with the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Denmark also seeks to give introductory lectures about Blue Shield for students of conservation and tourism.

Iceland will deliver the symposium: *Protecting Cultural heritage in Iceland with emphasis on disaster planning in cultural institutions -situation today and future goal* in 2021 and will work to prepare a course in how to rescue wet material in case of emergency.

In their education strategy, Georgia also includes the element of identifying existing educational materials, translating them into Georgian language and adapting them into specific national materials for education and training.

8.5 Awareness-Raising

Some committees wish to establish a great web presence. Curaçao plans to develop materials to reach citizens, such as an educational pack on cultural heritage aimed at youth. Greece also seeks to establish a greater web presence and host a webinar series to raise awareness for the protection of cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) in emergency situations in 2021.

Korea plans to organise a series of public workshops to raise awareness on issues relating to cultural property protection.

Australia will continue informing their membership through identifying and adapting materials into national context, such as those concerning complex and other disasters and domestic emergencies, looting and illicit trafficking.

8.6 *Emergency Preparedness and Response*

Georgia will continue work on the project “Planning for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage of Gori” funded by the ALIPH Foundation, including drafting the first-ever disaster risk management plan for Gori Museum of Ethnography and History.

North Macedonia will work extensively to resolve the lack of appropriate lists and categorizations of this cultural heritage in the country. Senegal, too, plans to build capacity for cultural property protection through working to support applications for “Enhanced Protection” status for endangered African heritage, organising training of border officials (police and customs) on the illicit trafficking of cultural properties, and establishing of a corps of cultural heritage volunteers in Africa.

The Netherlands seeks to support proactive protection and risk preparedness, for example by setting up a national contact point for expertise on emergency preparedness and hazard mitigation. Similarly, Peru and Georgia seek to establish networks of national first responders for cultural heritage in emergencies.

The USCBS plans to continue work with national partners during armed conflict, disaster, and domestic / national emergencies to carry out the specific roles and responsibilities already identified as appropriate for the national Blue Shield committee to aid in emergency response.

Several national committees mentioned increased work around climate change and national disasters. Australia will continue encourage research into Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Recovery and Cultural Property Protection, and host/organise seminars, workshops, and conferences. UKBS intends to engage in COP26 in late 2021.

9.0 *Summary*

While COVID-19 was a challenge for all NCs, some were more affected than others, indicating NCs that depend mostly on planned events (panels, talks) for the bulk of their activity.

Denmark was one such example - their activity over the last year has mostly concerned social media engagement, as in-person events were cancelled, and they struggled with the capacity of their members to dedicate time to the committee. A similar issue was faced by Norway.

NCs all have different capacity, which renders comparison difficult. Peru's NC engaged in multiple activities, but they all had more to do with public awareness-raising at a smaller scale than the work of other committees. However, this appears to be a lot of activity in relation to their level of capacity. The situation was seen in Senegal. Some NCs, like Georgia and Iceland, based all activity around mostly one project. However, Georgia had a wide range of activity associated with their project at the Gori museum, while Iceland had limited engagement with recovery of the museum at Seyðisfjörður.



The United States is perhaps the most active committee, but counts the activity of all their members, many of whom seem to be working in joint capacities with well-resourced institutions and organisations which they represent. One example is satellite imaging of Nagorno-Karabakh, by members affiliated with Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (CRI) and Virginia Museum of Natural History Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab.

Overall statistics cannot be quantified as neither committees nor projects are comparable. Perhaps a fifth of committees give the impression of being “very active”, whilst a fifth have been relatively inactive, in no small part due to COVID. Some NCs have conducted only a single project, but that project can be considerable. Awareness-raising constitutes the bulk of activity, but is often linked to other activities. The overall impression is that the majority of NCs are focussing more on activities related to emergency / disaster preparedness and response, rather than conflict but there is increasing attention focussed on conflict related activities.