

Short report of the Belgian Blue Shield Committee
Flooding Belgium July 2021
Christina Ceulemans, secretary
15 August 2021

General introduction

The flood that affected mostly the Walloon Region was the result of the heavy rains on the 14th and the 15th of July.

Already on the 20th of July a crisis committee (see the Bulletin below) was set up by the KIK-IRPA and the BS (Françoise Collanges and other personnel of KIK-IRPA are also BS members which was a great opportunity for an efficient approach). The various institutions and governmental and private organizations, working in the field of cultural heritage, were invited to work closely together (this was initially not so easy but one positive result is that now everyone knows each other better) to coordinate their activities and to counter the problems together. Through this platform, data was exchanged, and the situation was adjusted weekly (meeting via TEAMS each Tuesday).

Working groups were created on several items:
 Volunteers/ insurance/ communication/ fundraising...

This committee has succeeded in quickly setting up a donor fund to help the affected cultural heritage thanks to the positive interaction with the King Baudouin Foundation.
<https://donate.kbs-frb.be/actions/GC-PIEO>

a) Extent of damage

KIK-IRPA and BS tried to get an overview putting the data in an excel table and on a map. Blue Shield is increasingly present in the field as more people call on us.

Last information edited in the press: [See online article of 20210813 RTBF](#)

“It is too early to make a full assessment of the damage, but the actors on the ground are gradually beginning to have a more complete picture of the situation. According to the Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage (IRPA), 65 heritage sites have been affected. This includes museums, churches, and archives. Unfortunately, there is a risk that this number will further increase. "We are still told about ten each week," says Françoise Collanges, a scientific collaborator at IRPA.

To this must be added a hundred listed buildings (the majority in the Province of Liège), as well as sites classified as banks of rivers that are of landscape interest, or remarkable trees. The so-called "bien pastillé (properties included in the regional inventory but not classified) which have suffered damage have not yet been listed. In all, according to the crisis committee, we can already count that 200 places of all types have been hit by the floods.”

b) Action taken by the Belgian committee

- 15th of July: Blue Shield was alerted by the Directors of the Museums of Liège and Verviers.
- 16th of July: a member of the Board proposed to be our SPOC (telephone).
- End of July: an [online form](#) was available on the BS website to both recruit the volunteers and collect the [questions for intervention](#).

A fast intervention was possible thanks to the personal commitment of some of our members.

First report on the intervention of BS volunteers from July 17 to August 13*

- Namur, CCE (Centre de Conservation et d'étude de biens archéologiques wallons) in Saint-Servais – 1 to 8 volunteers, 10 days
- Namur, University Library - 1 to 2 volunteers, 3 days
- Jambes (dry depot space provided by the army) - 1 to 2 volunteers, 6 days
- Verviers Folklore Museum – 1 to 2 volunteers, 2 days
- Museum of Fine Arts – 3 to 4 volunteers, 2 day
- CIPAR (Centre interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts) – Intervention 04-08-21, 1 volunteer, 1 day

*Although most of these sites belong to the official authorities, the responsible personal understood after some days that additional support from our volunteers was needed.

The insurance of the volunteers is actually negotiated with a company offering its assistance for free (sponsoring). Before this situation, BS Belgium had no idea about the amount for civil liability, insurance against physical accidents and other problems. We also needed to establish a contract with each volunteer to ensure safety and security (vaccinations...) and to ensure our deontological code. We were pleased to learn that in some cases the host institution offers insurance for the volunteers, as most of them are attached to civil services.

Equipment: Blue jackets have been ordered for our members who are working on site. Other equipment is mostly offered by the guest institution.

Tools related to correct treatment and rapid on-site intervention needs to be more accessible; ICCROM gave advice (Aparna Tandon via Teams) about a form that records correctly the problems (available online). Some services already use this tool. ICCROM will also be asked for advice about the sometimes hostile attitude of the affected population (more common in the second phase of the crisis).

c) Current situation

BS Belgium is very pleased with the great response of the volunteers. The operation has begin to run smoothly but is very labour-intensive. The insurance situation is still not completely clear and sorted. In particular, members of the Board are undertaking extensive voluntary work, which is not tenable in the long term. In the meantime, the search for financial support is continuing; we are

preparing a project on the management of the actions with the volunteers to submit to the government. BS Belgium and the KIK-IRPA continue to work together to identify the affected sites and define the needs so that the assistance can be adequately delivered where it is needed. In the meantime, contact with the volunteers must be maintained so that their interest is kept going via e-mail messages.

d) Lessons identified for the future

BS is looking at this crisis as an opportunity; it taught us a lot about how

- to build a stronger association with structural support from the government
- to prepare a SPOC that is quickly accessible
- to prepare a fast intervention unit
- to develop and strengthen the network of our volunteers
- to make BS better known and we have used to that strengthen its image
- to professionalize the actions and the quick tools for intervention
- to increase awareness for prevention and the need for an emergency plan



Verviers, Musée des Beaux-Arts © M.-C. Claes



[Report on the situation during the first days in the archaeological Depot in Namur](#)

First bulletin of the Crisis Committee

Inondations juillet 2021

Points de contact pour le patrimoine sinistré et appel aux bénévoles

À la suite des terribles inondations qui ont principalement frappé la Wallonie, toutes les organisations compétentes s'engagent ensemble à soutenir le sauvetage des biens culturels sur les sites sinistrés.

Notre comité de crise, composé d'institutions, d'administrations culturelles, d'associations et d'organisations non gouvernementales du secteur patrimonial, se mobilise pour lancer l'alerte sur l'impact de ces événements sur le patrimoine culturel belge.

De nombreux sites ont été gravement endommagés par les crues et les vagues de boues. Le bilan actuel, qui ne cesse de s'alourdir, s'élève déjà à plus de 50 sites touchés (source : IRPA) et des centaines de bâtiments listés en Wallonie (source : AWaP). Les détenteurs et gestionnaires de musées, de maisons historiques, de châteaux, d'églises, d'archives et de bibliothèques privées ou publiques mettent tout en œuvre pour sauver leurs collections.

Nous souhaitons appeler à la vigilance et à la prise en compte des besoins spécifiques du patrimoine sinistré. Il est essentiel que cette aide soit fournie et encadrée par des professionnels.

- **Vous êtes un professionnel du patrimoine, un propriétaire privé ou une association et vous souhaitez signaler un bien patrimonial sinistré ?** Vous trouverez ci-dessous des adresses de contact et des informations sur les premiers secours.
- **Vous souhaitez contribuer à venir en aide au patrimoine culturel en tant qu'expert ou bénévole ?** Contactez le Comité belge du Bouclier Bleu : blueshieldbelgium@gmail.com. Nous rassemblons et enregistrons toutes les demandes de bénévolat afin de déployer toutes les ressources disponibles de manière optimale.

Au nom du comité de crise pour le patrimoine :

IRPA (Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique),

BBB (Comité belge du Bouclier bleu),

FWB (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles),

MSW (Musées et Société en Wallonie),

AWaP (Agence wallonne du Patrimoine),

CIPAR (Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux),

CRMSF (Commission royale des Monuments, Sites et Fouilles de la Région wallonne),

DHJB (Association royale des Demeures Historiques & Jardins de Belgique asbl),

AAFB (Association des Archivistes francophones de Belgique),

FARO (Vlaams Steunpunt voor Cultureel Erfgoed),

Monumentenwacht,

ICOM B/WB (International Council of Museums Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles), et

ICOMOS Belgique (International Council on Monuments and sites Belgique)

Patrimoine sinistré – inondations juillet 2021

Points de contact, informations et enregistrement des bénévoles

➤ Vous avez besoin d'aide ou de conseils ?

WALLONIE	
Vous êtes gestionnaire d'un bien patrimonial culturel en Wallonie ou propriétaire d'un patrimoine mobilier classé	FWB inondationspatrimoineculturel@cfwb.be
Vous gérez un musée ou des réserves muséales	MSW Questionnaire: dégâts/Fermetures suite aux intempéries – Musées et Société en Wallonie (msw.be) Enquête optimisée par Webropol : Le tourisme wallon après inondations (webropolsurveys.com) Romain Jacquet Romain.jacquet@msw.be 081 42 00 58
Vous possédez un bâtiment classé (église, château, ferme, moulin, maison ou autre bâtiment)	AWaP https://agencewallonnedupatrimoine.be/news/les-degats-causes-par-les-intemperies-ont-touche-votre-bien/ 081 20 58 30 (du lundi au vendredi, entre 9:00 et 16 :00) info@awap.be
Vous appartenez à une fabrique d'église	CIPAR (Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux) info@cipar.be
Vous êtes propriétaire privé de patrimoine bâti et/ou parc situés en Belgique	HWTB-DHJB (Kon. Vereniging der Historische Woonsteden & Tuinen van België vzw - Association royale des Demeures Historiques & Jardins de Belgique asbl) 02 644 50 05 administration@demeures-historiques.be
Vous possédez des archives, bibliothèques et collections documentaires	AAFB Onze steun na de overstromingen (mailchimp) 081.39.04.67 (du lundi au vendredi, sauf le mardi) secretaire@archivistes.be Vous pouvez directement remplir le formulaire suivant : https://forms.gle/Pa1zS1x5NdQjrwwb6
Vous ne savez pas à qui vous adresser	Comité belge du Bouclier Bleu blueshieldbelgium@gmail.com
FLANDRE	

Vous êtes gestionnaire d'un bien patrimonial culturel en Flandre	FARO (Vlaams Steunpunt voor Cultureel Erfgoed) Wateroverlast: Blauwe Schildcomité in actie FARO. Vlaams steunpunt voor cultureel erfgoed vzw · algemeen directeur: Olga Van Oost (olga.vanoost@faro.be) · erfgoedzorg behoud en beheer: Anne-Catherine Olbrechts (anne-catherine.olbrechts@faro.be), Tine Hermans (tine.hermans@faro.be) en Anne Milkers (anne.milkers@faro.be)
Vous possédez un bâtiment classé en Flandre	Monumentenwacht www.monumentenwacht.be
Vous ne savez pas à qui vous adresser	Comité belge du Bouclier Bleu blueshieldbelgium@gmail.com

- Vous êtes archiviste, conservateur-restaurateur, architecte, ingénieur structure, historien... et vous souhaitez vous porter bénévole ou contribuer au soutien des organisations actives dans cette crise ?

Contactez le Comité belge du Bouclier Bleu : blueshieldbelgium@gmail.com

- Vous souhaitez que votre patrimoine soit enregistré dans la liste des sites sinistrés créée ou engager votre organisation dans notre comité de crise ?

Contactez l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (IRPA), Cellule de conservation préventive : francoise.collanges@kikirpa.be & wivine.roland-gosselin@kikirpa.be