

Short report Blue Shield Netherlands
Flooding Netherlands July 2021
Angela Dellebeke
12 August

a) Extent of damage

The committee has no overall information on damage to cultural property.
That is not unusual: see D lessons learned.

What we do know:

- several museums have been (partially) evacuated by commercial organisations (there are contracts between parties)
 - there are several archival institutions with damage as well as libraries.
- However, none of the damage is as bad as in Belgium and Germany

Action taken by the committee

*ICOMOS NL/ICOM have been asked by their Blue Shield representatives to do an inventory of damages; there are archeologists posting about damage to roads and some sites on Facebook. We know that several larger museums have evacuated collections, most of them with the help of professional salvage companies (they have contracts).

BSNL have offered help to the contacts we have.

No parties have come forward with direct requests to our committee.

*On behalf of ICA we have asked the provincial archivist in the affected area about damages and have offered assistance.

*BSNL have offered assistance to BS Belgium

* BSNL have forwarded request for specialist aid within our NL network, also via de LinkedIn page and via BS NL website

* In cooperation with the Netherlands UNESCO committee we have made available information for private persons in regards to wet materials like photographs and documents (which otherwise might not be lost), via BS NL website, and UNESCO twitter account.

*BS NL have shared this conservation information with the local media, i.e. L1 which is the regional radio, tv and social media to get the word out.

L1 is also the emergency radio in the area.

*We have been following them closely to be updated on the situations and needs that we might help meet.

b) Current situation

The Government is talking about reparations (financial) to private persons, entrepreneurs etc. and about conducting research on how all this could have happened. This might help with reparations and with lessons learned.

In regards to cultural property, there is talk about a national inventory of damage to cultural property that is not insured to see of it is part of the reparations: it is not clear by whom and what the scope is.

c) Lessons identified for the future

*There is a lot of (local) support and capacity building in the moment, not only in affected areas but also elsewhere.

*The role of BS NL is more behind the scenes than in the affected area itself at this time. The reason is that it is a rather crowded cultural heritage field with a lot of players. That means there are many initiatives, which is good, but it is not so easy to have an overall analysis of what is done/needed etc.

* This is one of the things we have been addressing for some time; this current disaster might move that forward. In these cases, it is not evident that "culture cannot wait" - you have to recognize that politics are in play and that you have to find a way to 'go with that flow' to actually get stuff moving.

At times when nothing major is happening the need to get organized does not necessarily hold its ground on the political agenda and there is a very short window of opportunity to get things moving in the aftermath of an incident.

*Give people/organizations in the affected area time to collect themselves to be able to state what they need at the time they need it. You might want to be there straight away but it is also helpful to let them know you are there when/if needed. That we feel an urgency to do something does not always mean that you have an active role.

* It helped BS NL to have good relationships with different types of organizations in order to get information from all sides and to be able to define what type of assistance we could offer. It is clear to us that we have to look at each disaster in some sort of framework: what is actually happening, who do we know or need to contact to inform about what we can do, what don't we do because it is already being done by others etc.

It is important to think about that and not wiggle your way in the crisis because you must be seen doing something. This is critical – actions must be well considered and measured, and social media should not be used just to give the impression an organization is leading all activity. A lack of posts does not mean a lack of useful action.

We are sharing these photographs as they provide a sense of community:

1. Fire department helps evacuation of Cloister library St. Odilienberg (17 July 2021)
© L1 (L1Limburg)



2. Vicar of St Odilienberg on his way to check damages.
© Geert van Helden (Instagram)

