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Estelle De Bruyn and Anne-Catherine Olbrechts



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Abbreviations:

AAFB: Association des Archivistes Francophones de Belgique

AWaP: Agence wallonne du Patrimoine

BSB: Blue Shield Belgium

C2RMF: Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France

CHrisis (project): Cultural Heritage in Crisis (project)

CIDH: Cultural Properties Working Group of the Interministerial Commission for Humanitarian Law

CIPAR: Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux

CRMSF: Commission royale des Monuments, Sites et Fouilles

DHJB-HWTB: Association royale des Demeures Historiques & Jardins de Belgique

FARO: Vlaams Steunpunt voor Cultureel Erfgoed

FEDERESCUE: Federal Rescue Strategy on Science and Cultural Heritage

FWB: Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles

ICOM BWB : ICOM-Belgique Wallonie-Bruxelles

KIK-IRPA: Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage

MSW: Musées et Société en Wallonie

NCCN: National Crisis Centre

RetEx report: 'Return of Experience' report

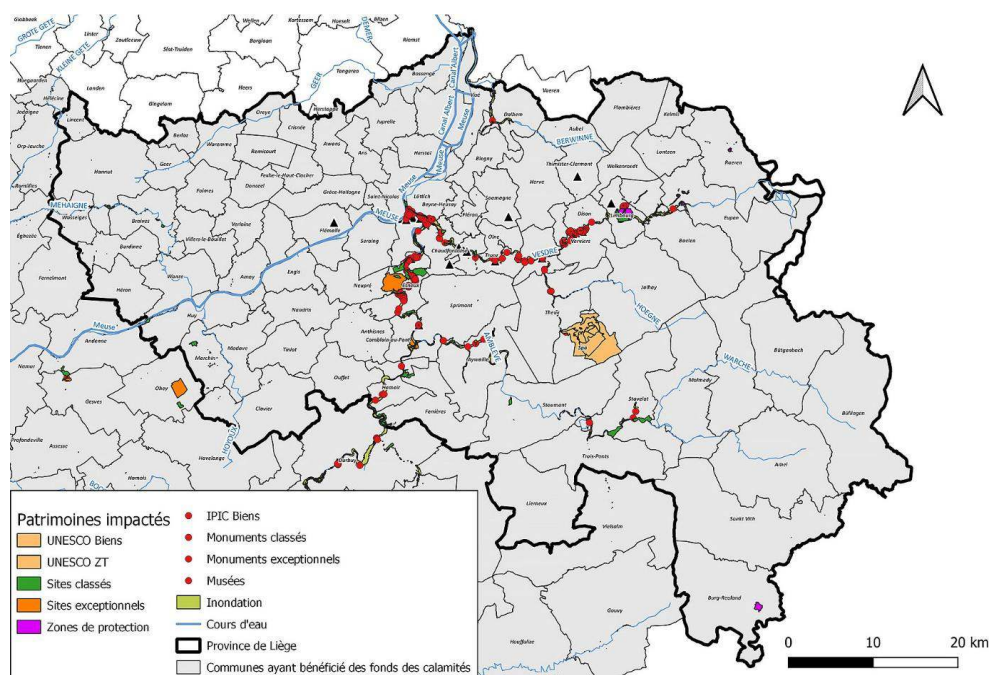
Introduction

- 1 In recent years, cultural heritage has undergone a paradigm shift in academic discourse and international policy, evolving from a foundation of societal identity and cohesion to a strategic resource for addressing global challenges.¹ This recontextualisation positions cultural heritage within conventions and frameworks of sustainable development, resilience, and disaster risk reduction, highlighting its critical role in mitigating climate change-related threats.² Although this emphasis on heritage as a tool for resilience and sustainability is relatively recent, it aligns with historical patterns where crises have underscored its unifying and stabilising role. In the current era of globalisation, environmental degradation, geopolitical instability, and escalating disaster risks, cultural heritage has gained renewed significance as a resource for sustainable development and societal well-being. Protecting cultural heritage has thus evolved beyond an ethical imperative rooted in our shared responsibility; it has become a vital means of supporting humanity.
- 2 Major heritage international organisations, both public and private, including UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and ALIPH, have significantly advanced cultural heritage, particularly in sustainability and disaster risk management. UNESCO has adopted an integrated approach, initially addressing cultural emergencies in conflicts and later expanding to disasters triggered by natural and man-made risks, emphasising culture's role in prevention and resilience. ICCROM's flagship programme, *First Aid and Resilience for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis (FAR)*, exemplifies this effort by training cultural first aiders, building networks, and informing policy to integrate heritage into disaster risk reduction, humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and climate action.³ Similarly, ICOMOS's 2021 Policy Guidance highlights cultural heritage's contributions to all United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), explicitly linking it to disaster resilience.⁴ At the European level, key initiative ProCultHer is designed to strengthen disaster preparedness and response for cultural heritage by integrating cultural assets into civil protection frameworks and developing specialised methodologies, tools, and training programmes.⁵ However, despite these intentions, critical questions remain regarding the practical implementation of international guidelines at the national level. For example, how effectively are these principles integrated into cultural heritage practices in Belgium? Are they embedded in ways that ensure disaster preparedness, particularly for events like floods?
- 3 In Belgium, the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) adapts international heritage safeguarding guidelines to the national context. Founded after World War II as a federal non-profit institution, the institute is dedicated to documenting, conducting scientific research, protecting, conserving, and restoring Belgium's cultural and artistic heritage, with a special focus on artworks, historical buildings, and objects of (art) historical and societal significance. Beyond its inventory mission, KIK-IRPA has developed risk management strategies for a long time. As early as 1948, its predecessor (the Archives centrales iconographiques d'Art national et Laboratoire central des Musées de Belgique (ACL)) trained civil protection services in heritage rescue operations and prioritised Belgium's cultural assets, influencing the design of Cold War-era atomic shelters. Since the July 2021 floods, KIK-IRPA has reinforced its crisis management role through regional and national projects led by its Sustainability

Unit, which was established in 2021. This unit fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and promotes sustainability within cultural institutions, ensuring long-term resilience.

- 4 By developing tools and providing guidance, the unit supports the integration of sustainability into daily practices, addressing key themes such as energy reduction, climate change adaptation, and emergency response.⁶ These efforts are particularly relevant in light of the catastrophic floods of July 2021 in Belgium,⁷ which affected over 250 heritage sites, resulting in the loss of irreplaceable archives, religious textiles, and significant artworks (fig. 1–3).⁸ This terrible event underscored the profound vulnerabilities of cultural heritage to climate-induced disasters and it highlighted the need for tailored approaches to disaster preparedness and response in Belgium's cultural heritage sector. Although unprecedented in scale, such events are becoming increasingly frequent due to anthropogenic climate change. European climate researchers estimate that the likelihood of extreme rainfall events, like those observed in 2021, has increased by a factor of 1.2 to 9.⁹ These escalating risks illustrate the growing challenges of safeguarding cultural assets and reinforce the urgency of implementing robust and effective disaster risk management frameworks.

[Fig. 1]



Map of sites affected by the July 2021 floods in Liège Province. The affected sites are situated along waterways that overflowed their banks. The map illustrates that heritage sites were impacted across several hundred kilometres, with Liège Province being the hardest hit.

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[Fig. 2]



Photograph of a regional archive in Liège Province, illustrating the devastating impact of the July 2021 floods on archival collections.

Photo: State Archives in Liège.

[Fig. 3]



A photograph documenting the severe impact on religious textiles shows floodwaters rising inside the cabinet and receding, leaving most of the formerly white garments still hanging in place but completely saturated with mud. Churches were among the institutions most affected by the floods, suffering extensive damage to their collections and interiors.

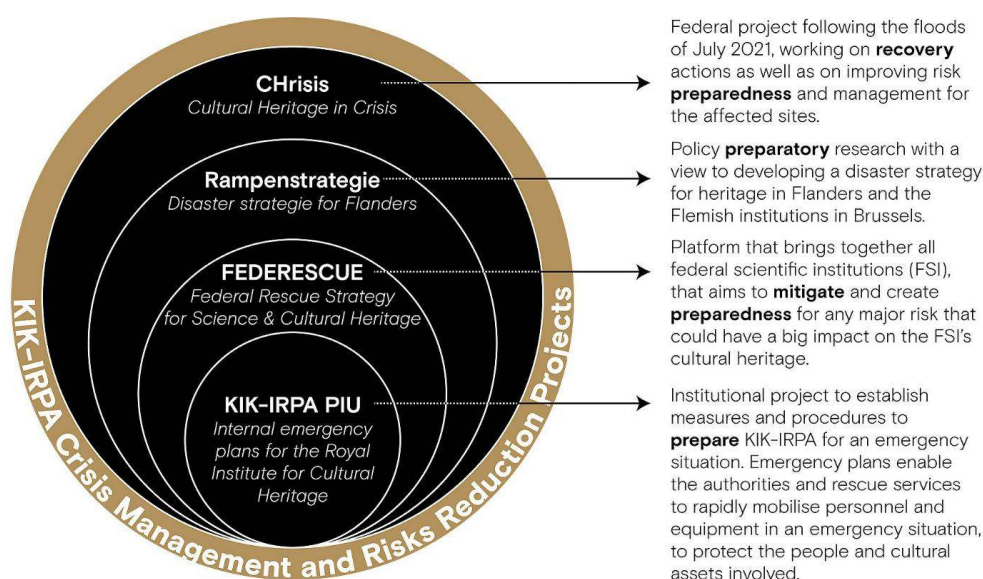
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- 5 Among other institutions described later, KIK-IRPA played a pivotal role during the 2021 floods by collaborating with local communities, governmental bodies, and international organisations to salvage and restore affected heritage sites. These efforts extended beyond immediate recovery through the Cultural Heritage in Crisis (CHrisis) project (2022–2024), which aims to evaluate methodologies and crisis management tools, positioning cultural heritage as a cornerstone in building resilient societies that can address climate-related risks.
- 6 This paper, part of the CHrisis project, focuses on lessons learned from the 2021 floods to enhance disaster risk management for cultural heritage in Belgium. It examines the alignment between global disaster risk reduction frameworks and their implementation, drawing on contributions within this bulletin that explore conservation, restoration, and risk assessment initiatives. By integrating these insights, the paper aims to develop actionable recommendations for preventing and mitigating major risks, equipping the cultural heritage sector to better prepare for future floods.
- 7 Ultimately, this work highlights the dual role of cultural heritage as both a vulnerable asset and a vital resource for resilience, recovery, and hope. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative practices, the cultural heritage sector can inspire sustainable, community-centred solutions, reinforcing its importance in the face of an increasingly uncertain climate future.

Methodology

- 8 This paper is grounded in insights from the ‘Return of Experience’ (RetEx) report, a central component of the CHrisis project that analyses and evaluates the cultural heritage sector’s response to the crisis.¹⁰ Concurrently, this paper draws on the expertise developed through various projects coordinated by KIK-IRPA’s Sustainability Unit, including Rampenstrategie, FEDERESCUE (see later), and the Internal Emergency Plans initiative. These projects respectively assess crisis preparedness within the cultural heritage sector in Flanders and Brussels, the Federal Scientific Institutions, and KIK-IRPA itself (fig. 4). They incorporate additional case studies, benchmarking efforts, and collaborations with crisis management and cultural heritage experts, enriching the analysis presented here. This article synthesises findings from these combined efforts, leveraging KIK-IRPA’s 2021 crisis archive, which includes meeting minutes, site visit reports, lists of affected heritage sites, and semi-structured interviews and discussions with heritage colleagues and crisis management experts.¹¹ The data sources also encompass retrospective analyses and reports from humanitarian crisis management authorities and third-party evaluations.¹² The vocabulary used in this paper aligns with international disaster risk management terminology.¹³ This includes prevention (measures to avoid new or existing disasters), preparedness (building capacity to respond effectively when a disaster occurs), response (actions taken during the disaster), recovery (restoring systems with a *build-back-better* approach), and evaluation (assessing the response and identifying areas for improvement).¹⁴

[Fig. 4]



Overview of the projects coordinated by the KIK-IRPA Sustainability Unit.

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- 9 The analysis is structured around risk models, namely the risk cycle¹⁵ and helix diagram,¹⁶ which outline six fundamental phases of crisis management: prevention (risk mitigation, assessment, raising awareness), preparedness (ensuring readiness through training, procedures), response (intervention during the crisis), recovery (actions required to return to normalcy), and evaluation (assessing the effectiveness of crisis management efforts). These models are widely recognised and used by crisis management experts in the heritage field worldwide,¹⁷ and are well implemented among Belgian authorities, offering a systematic framework for analysing crisis situations.¹⁸ The adoption of these models ensures effective communication between heritage professionals and emergency response teams, bridging gaps between heritage management and crisis management.
- 10 The findings from the study are benchmarked against several key reference points, including the recommendations from the RetEx report developed within the CHrisis project and Belgium's national crisis management policies.¹⁹ International frameworks are also considered to identify actionable recommendations tailored specifically to the preservation and protection of cultural heritage in Belgium.²⁰
- 11 This research investigates three primary questions. First, it examines the pre-flood context and the organisation of the response: what was the state of preparedness within the cultural heritage sector before the 2021 floods, how did the sector react, and what forms of assistance were provided by external partners? Secondly, it evaluates the crisis response, identifying which aspects were effective and which areas exhibited deficiencies requiring improvement, both in the immediate aftermath and the longer-term recovery phases. Finally, it explores how actionable recommendations from international conventions can be adapted to the Belgian context and aligned with existing national crisis response mechanisms to enhance disaster preparedness and response for cultural heritage sites.

Context: The 2021 Floods in Belgium and Their Impact on Cultural Heritage

Insufficient Prevention and Preparedness within the Heritage Sector

- 12 Disaster preparedness and crisis management in Belgium are mainly²¹ structured across three administrative levels: communal, provincial, and national. This tiered system is designed to escalate based on the severity of the disaster and the resources required for mitigation.²² Within this framework, cultural heritage lacks dedicated representation within security cells at any level. Heritage protection is often treated as a secondary concern by emergency services, whose understandable priorities are to save lives and protect critical infrastructure. Consequently, cultural heritage is rarely incorporated into formal crisis management discussions. The responsibility for safeguarding heritage typically falls to cultural actors.
- 13 Heritage responsibilities in Belgium are divided among at least seven authorities, primarily operating at the regional and community levels. Both the German-speaking Community and the unified Flemish Region and Community are responsible for managing immovable, movable, and intangible heritage. A similar situation exists in Brussels, where the responsibility for local and bi-cultural heritage lies with the Brussels-Capital Region, while the remainder is managed by the Flemish or French Communities, depending on the linguistic community and the specific nature of the heritage. In Wallonia, immovable heritage is primarily the responsibility of the region, while movable and intangible heritage fall under the purview of the French Community. The federal government oversees a limited number of cultural institutions, focusing mainly on federal collections, which are mostly managed by the Federal Scientific Institutions (fig. 5).²³

[Fig. 5]

	Competent Authorities for Heritage in Belgium				
Type of heritage	Federal	Wallonia	Brussels	Flanders	German community
Immovable	Federal Building Agency	Walloon Region – Agence wallonne du Patrimoine (AWaP)	Brussels – Capital Region – urban.brussels*	Flemish Region – agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed (AOE) & local administrations	German-speaking Community – Ministry of the German – speaking Community

Movable	Federal Public Planning Service Science Policy (Belspo) – Federal Scientific Institutions	French Community – Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles	Brussels-Capital Region – urban.brussels*	Flemish Community – Departement Cultuur, Jeugd en Media (DCJM)	German-speaking Community – Ministry of the German – speaking Community
Intangible	N/A	French Community – Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles	Brussels-Capital Region – urban.brussels*	Flemish Community – Departement Cultuur, Jeugd en Media (DCJM)	German-speaking Community – Ministry of the German – speaking Community

- 14 *with the exception of some Flemish and Walloon heritage on the Brussels ground, managed respectively by the Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC) or the Commission communautaire française (COCOF)

Overview of the competent authorities for heritage in Belgium, categorised by type: immovable, movable, and intangible.

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- 15 Notably, there is no hierarchical relationship between these authorities; they function independently and at the same level. Each authority employs different instruments to encourage, facilitate, or, in some cases, mandate that heritage institutions and owners prepare for local crises, such as implementing internal emergency plans. However, none of these authorities have developed a comprehensive crisis management strategy for large-scale disasters requiring coordination beyond local levels. Moreover, there is no unified approach to managing cross-regional disasters or emergencies that span multiple jurisdictions.
- 16 At the national level, three primary actors engage in crisis management for cultural heritage in Belgium: Blue Shield Belgium (BSB), the Cultural Properties Working Group of the Interministerial Commission for Humanitarian Law (CIDH), and the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). BSB and CIDH have tried enforcing heritage protection under international conventions.²⁴ In particular, Blue Shield Belgium, an association established in 2000 and operating entirely on a volunteer basis until 2021, undertook significant efforts to raise awareness within the heritage sector. These initiatives included conferences, advocacy efforts with regional governors based on a survey,²⁵ publications, and training sessions for military personnel.²⁶ KIK-IRPA, established in 1948 to study and preserve Belgium's cultural heritage, has historically played a pivotal role in heritage protection, particularly in the aftermath of World War II and during the Cold War.²⁷ Its involvement in disaster preparedness and response has been *ad hoc*, addressing specific needs within particular contexts and relying on pre-existing networks and collaborations. However, since 2020, with the renewed emphasis from its director on enhancing internal and external crisis

preparedness, KIK-IRPA has actively developed comprehensive disaster management strategies to improve the readiness of Belgium's cultural heritage sector (fig. 4).

- 17 The BSB, CIDH, and KIK-IRPA promote a systematic approach to disaster risk management, addressing gaps in Belgium's preparedness to protect cultural assets. While their efforts deserve acknowledgement, these initiatives have been largely underutilised prior to the 2021 floods and require better integration into both the heritage sector and broader crisis management frameworks.
- 18 In Flanders, there has long been a vision to assist heritage institutions in networking locally and receiving support from specialised organisations. Archives, museums, and libraries have benefited from FARO Vlaams Steunpunt voor Cultureel Erfgoed (FARO), which initiated the ECCE! Program (2007–2015) to train and support institutions in first aid intervention. Although local disaster risk management networks were established, they have gradually declined despite efforts to revitalise them.²⁸ Today, FARO provides first aid training, maintains an incident database,²⁹ operates a regional calamities think tank, and offers a portal with emergency planning guidelines.³⁰ For immovable heritage, depots formed an emergency network in 2015 to provide mutual support and storage during crises. This network has been active since 2015, stimulated by the policy of immovable heritage.³¹
- 19 In the Brussels capital, stakeholders in heritage are concentrated, with various initiatives and networks in place; however, they operate independently. Since 2019, following the expansion of the region's responsibilities regarding movable and intangible heritage,³² Brussels has been compiling inventories of its heritage assets and has recognised crisis preparedness as a crucial area of focus.³³ A Flemish network, managed by Erfgoedcel Brussel, emphasises training and knowledge sharing, although not exclusively on crisis management; they did organise a workshop on creating internal emergency plans. Additionally, the Federal Rescue Strategy on Science and Cultural Heritage (FEDERESCUE), launched in 2020 and formalised in 2021, aims to protect personnel, visitors, buildings, and collections during crises in Federal Scientific Institutions in Brussels, coordinated by KIK-IRPA.³⁴ Most of these institutions are located in Brussels, with the exception of the AfricaMuseum, and they operate under Belspo's oversight.
- 20 In Wallonia, there is significant potential for improving disaster preparedness, given the numerous field actors in the region, including cultural operators from the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWB), agents from the Agence wallonne du Patrimoine (AWaP), and various heritage associations.³⁵ However, these networks have not consistently prioritised crisis prevention and disaster management. Moreover, many of these actors operate independently, although efforts have been made to foster stronger collaboration.³⁶ A similar issue exists with the heritage inventories and mappings in Wallonia, which remain decentralised and are not consistently accessible online.³⁷ In summary, prior to 2021, disaster management measures were limited, despite some stakeholders raising concerns.³⁸ However, it is important to note that, at that time, some Walloon governors were considering integrating heritage protection into the mission of their security services, a move that has since led to tangible developments, which are further explored later in this paper.
- 21 In summary, Belgium lacked a cohesive strategy for heritage protection before, during, and after the disaster, with regional differences in preparedness despite some important actions and initiatives. During the July 2021 floods, none of the 250 heritage

institutions affected had an internal emergency plan suited to a disaster of this magnitude. While previous experiences with localised flooding led to informal practices, such as relocating collections to higher ground when a flood alert was triggered, these measures proved insufficient given the scale of the July 2021 floods, which overwhelmed existing preparations. Additionally, existing training and support initiatives were inadequate to address large-scale flood risks, and there was considerable uncertainty regarding roles and responsibilities during the crisis. As a result, some organizations acted without a clear mandate, leading to an organic response that, while effective in some areas, also highlighted critical areas for improvement. These actions are discussed in further detail below.

During the Crisis: A Fragmented and Reactive Flood Response

- 22 The humanitarian crisis management response began between 10 and 12 July 2021, with authorities monitoring severe weather forecasts. Despite early warnings, preventive measures were limited. By 13 July, the Be-Alert system issued evacuation advisories, prompting local crisis cells to activate. However, as water levels rose rapidly on 14 July and the Vesdre River overflowed, municipal and provincial authorities struggled to coordinate efforts effectively.³⁹
- 23 During the July 2021 floods, the heritage sector operated independently as crisis authorities prioritised saving lives and protecting critical infrastructure amidst this highly complex disaster. Additionally, limited pre-existing collaboration between the heritage and crisis management sectors hindered an integrated response. Initially, heritage response efforts were fragmented.
- 24 Starting on 15 July, site managers, heritage professionals, and organisations such as CIPAR, AWaP, BSB, and KIK-IRPA initiated first-response actions independently while collaborating with local communities and authorities. The BSB quickly established a central hotline on 16 July to coordinate volunteer efforts and support these activities. A key initial step in aiding heritage institutions was to gather an overview of the situation to prioritise their interventions. However, identifying and prioritising impacted sites proved challenging due to the lack of standardised damage assessment tools, limited available information, and difficulties in accessing the sites, as emergency services were still managing the immediate crisis. Infrastructure damage further impeded mobility, with routes, bridges, and train lines obstructed. As the situation developed, safety concerns arose, particularly regarding the insurance coverage of volunteers assisting on-site under often hazardous conditions, such as working in caves filled with mud and unknown substances.
- 25 The broader emergency context intensified these difficulties. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, had weakened societal resilience, restricted social and cultural activities, and placed limits on gatherings, even during the floods. Furthermore, the disaster struck during the summer holiday period, decreasing staff availability in essential services, including those in heritage institutions, thereby further delaying and constraining response efforts.
- 26 Over time, coordination improved with the establishment of the Crisis Committee for Heritage ('Crisis Committee'), formed shortly after the July 2021 floods to streamline response efforts and unite key organisations involved in cultural heritage conservation. Proposed and coordinated by KIK-IRPA, the committee

included stakeholders such as Blue Shield Belgium (BSB), Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWB), Musées et Société en Wallonie (MSW), Agence Wallonne du Patrimoine (AWaP), Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux (CIPAR), Commission royale des Monuments, Sites et Fouilles (CRMSF), Association royale des Demeures Historiques & Jardins de Belgique (DHJB-HWTB), Association des Archivistes Francophones de Belgique (AAFB), FARO, Monumentenwacht Vlaanderen, ICOM-Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles (ICOM BWB), ICOM Belgium Flanders, and ICOMOS Wallonie-Bruxelles.

- 27 The committee's key objectives were to share information, assess the crisis situation, and implement coordinated actions to protect cultural heritage. It also aimed to raise public awareness, support disaster victims, inform stakeholders, and secure funding for restoration and reconstruction. While task distribution evolved organically, some key roles were outlined: KIK-IRPA and BSB took on strategic and operational coordination, with on-site intervention and damage evaluation were handled by CIPAR, BSB, KIK-IRPA, AWaP, and other volunteers and private partners (e.g., IPARC, Art Salvage) (see fig. 6). Communication and dissemination efforts were supported by ICOM, ICOMOS, MSW, and AAFB, while fundraising was managed by ICOM, BSB, and KIK-IRPA, thanks to a partnership with the King Baudouin Foundation.

[Fig. 6]



An example of a coordinated response effort at a church in Fraipont is illustrated, where BSB, KIK-IRPA, and CIPAR collaborated closely. The photograph highlights designated treatment areas for drying both church archives and textiles.

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA.

- 28 The crisis exposed the lack of a centralised mechanism for assessing damage to heritage sites. KIK-IRPA, with ICCROM guidance, developed an online evaluation tool to address this gap.⁴⁰ However, the tool experienced limited adoption.⁴¹ Instead of using

the tool for systematic assessments, a simpler approach was employed: maintaining a shared list of affected sites and recording whether they had been visited. Crisis Committee members maintained individual lists, which were periodically consolidated into a master Excel file managed by KIK-IRPA⁴².

- 29 Subgroups were formed to address specific challenges, such as securing insurance for volunteers, managing communication regarding heritage damage, and organising crowdfunding, which raised over 7,000 euros for restoration efforts.
- 30 Once the immediate response phase ended, the committee ceased regular meetings, and individual members shifted focus to the recovery phase. The final meeting in November 2021 included presentations from site managers, marking the conclusion of the committee's direct crisis management involvement (fig. 7).

[Fig. 7]

Response of the Heritage Sector: Summary and Timeline

Immediate Actions (15–20 July 2021)

- 15 July: Initial emergency response by heritage site managers; BSB received calls for assistance from museums in Liège and Verviers. A call for professional help (e.g., conservators/restorers) was issued to its members.
- From 15 July: Individual, uncoordinated assistance by heritage experts, including staff from KIK-IRPA, FARO, State Archives, Royal Museums of Art and History, and private conservators, working voluntarily.
- From 16 July: a coordinated response was initiated by BSB, which included the establishment of a central emergency number for requests and volunteer coordination.
- Building Safety Assessments: Municipal and city stability engineers began evaluating buildings early because of concerns about collapse, but often overlooked the heritage value of sites.
- Emergency Interventions: Heritage experts from BSB, KIK-IRPA, CIPAR, AWaP, and private companies like IPARC prioritised immediate interventions. The lack of a standardised methodology limited formal evaluations of affected sites.
- 19 July: KIK-IRPA issued invitations to form a crisis committee, leveraging its network to unite heritage organisations and experts.
- 20 July: The first meeting of the crisis committee took place.

First Months

- Crisis Committee: Coordinated actions included sharing information about affected sites, organising volunteers, planning rescue missions, fundraising, and managing communications.
- Access Challenges: Obtaining critical information such as site accessibility, needs, and contact points proved difficult, along with sourcing intervention materials like protective equipment and packaging supplies. The initial resources were provided by KIK-IRPA and the State Archives, and later supplemented by BSB, Monumentenwacht, and other organisations.
- Site Security: Many sites lacked proper security, resulting in risks of theft and unauthorised access. Collaboration with KIK-IRPA, CIPAR, and BSB ensured the safe relocation of movable heritage to secure depots.
- Heritage Assessments: Formal evaluations commenced, although limited personnel restricted systematic assessments. Remote evaluations (via phone and surveys) became the primary method.
- Collaboration: Organisations such as CIPAR and AWaP shared assessment data with the crisis committee.

January to June 2022

- **Restoration Efforts:** Selected artworks were restored using funds from a dedicated fundraising campaign. Other heritage items were included in the CHrisis project for conservation studies and restoration protocols.
- **Funding Opportunities:** The Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles launched calls for projects aimed at supporting the conservation and restoration of artworks, as well as community recovery initiatives.
- **Volunteer Support:** BSB continued to deploy expert volunteers to assist site managers with rescue operations.
- **Field Schools:** BSB co-organised field schools for conservation-restoration students from UAntwerp and ENSAV La Cambre, continuing through 2023.

November 2022

- **Launch of the CHrisis project and RetEx evaluation (2022–2024).** Interventions focused on rescue missions and monitoring the evolution of damage.

Until June 2023

- **Continued on-site interventions by BSB, CIPAR, and KIK-IRPA.**

Timeline of the heritage sector's response during the July 2021 floods and afterwards, based on Beyl, De Bruyn, and Boschloos 2025.

Recovery

- 31 In the context of disaster management, response and recovery are two distinct phases that follow a disaster event.⁴³ While the response phase focuses on immediate actions to address the damage, risk assessment, and emergency rescue of heritage, the recovery phase concentrates on the conservation and restoration of heritage, along with support for the long-term recovery and resilience of heritage sites.
- 32 The July 2021 floods in Belgium exposed critical financial vulnerabilities in the cultural heritage sector's disaster response. A major challenge identified by the Crisis Committee was the absence of emergency funds for both heritage first aid and recovery efforts. This gap left response efforts dependent on *ad hoc* donations, delaying crucial interventions and disproportionately affecting smaller institutions, such as independent churches without public support. Heritage response, therefore, extended well beyond the initial emergency phase. The scale of the disaster revealed the prolonged nature of secondary damage, including mould, salt deposits, and structural issues, which required sustained attention. Organisations such as BSB, CIPAR, and KIK-IRPA continued their interventions for years, particularly focusing on reorganising rooms and storage areas to minimise future flood risk for collections. This highlights the urgent need for more resilient, long-term strategies in heritage risk management.
- 33 In terms of scientific and conservation outcomes, the CHrisis project addressed several urgent conservation challenges faced by heritage objects and buildings following the July 2021 floods. A key focus was developing treatment methods for materials damaged by floodwaters, particularly mud, which introduced complex contaminants into the affected collections. Research explored treatment methods for monuments, ceramics, metal, and textile artefacts, with some results presented in this issue.

Evaluation and Long-Term Mitigation

- 34 The July 2021 floods marked a pivotal moment for cultural heritage protection in Belgium, driving significant progress in preparedness and crisis response. While official evaluations of the floods predominantly focused on humanitarian concerns, cultural heritage was often excluded from the analysis. In response, KIK-IRPA launched a post-crisis analysis under the CHrisis project, which aims to identify critical gaps in preparedness, coordination, and funding. The goal is to develop recommendations for both the heritage and crisis management sectors to better prepare for future disasters. This review builds on a broader range of actions taken by various stakeholders, including targeted training programmes, structural reforms, and collaborative initiatives – though this list remains far from comprehensive.
- 35 In Wallonia and Brussels, ICOM Wallonie-Bruxelles and MSW, in collaboration with the Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France (C2RMF), trained 25 museums between 2022 and 2023 to develop tailored emergency plans.⁴⁴ It may seem surprising that international assistance was sought, but museums expressed a clear need for training in emergency plan development, and C2RMF offered a well-established training programme that had previously been implemented in France. This initiative, which incorporated input from cultural experts (including KIK-IRPA and BSB), as well as authorities and first responders, was extended to archives in 2024 through a collaboration between BSB and AAFB.
- 36 The Diocese of Liège has established a new department dedicated to preserving and protecting religious heritage, addressing long-standing challenges. Simultaneously, CIPAR has broadened its support network by appointing a security and safety advisor to assist regional custodians. In response to vulnerabilities revealed during the floods, institutions like the AWaP archaeological depot in Verviers and IKOB in Eupen have started restructuring their storage facilities and planning new, disaster-ready infrastructures.
- 37 On a broader scale, KIK-IRPA has spearheaded initiatives such as CHrisis (2022–2025) and Rampenstrategie (2023–2025) (see fig. 4), aiming to strengthen disaster management for cultural heritage across Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels. Enhanced collaboration with the National Crisis Centre (NCCN) has led to significant advancements, including the integration of KIK-IRPA into Paragon. This crisis management software enables emergency services, authorities, and partners to prepare for and coordinate responses during emergencies. It allows KIK-IRPA to add new organisations for specific incidents, exercises, or events, manage access, upload internal emergency plans, create and manage emergency channels, and utilise available tools. Additionally, KIK-IRPA can be involved in cases initiated by emergency services, gaining real-time access to crisis information. This platform improves communication with security services and ensures that the cultural heritage sector actively participates in crisis management. Moreover, a crisis management training session was held for federal scientific institutions in collaboration with the NCCN and KIK-IRPA, helping to bridge gaps in intersectoral collaboration. Efforts are underway to explore further solutions for disseminating the scientific outputs of the CHrisis project. Although KIK-IRPA is now recognised by the NCCN as the single point of contact for the cultural heritage sector, integrating heritage into national and regional crisis

management regulations remains a work in progress, requiring ongoing advocacy efforts.

- 38 KIK-IRPA is also investigating how the institute can serve as a long-term safety net and act as a bridge between all stakeholders when a crisis exceeds the boundaries of a community or region. In partnership with BSB, KIK-IRPA has engaged with provincial and municipal security cells to present the cultural sector's initiatives for heritage protection during crises. These efforts include contributions to specialised training for security services, delivered either on demand or integrated into existing programmes such as the *Certificat inter-universités en gestion anticipative et interdisciplinaire des risques et des crises* (UCLouvain). The growing awareness among local authorities is reflected in the increasing number of collaborative exercises between emergency services and cultural heritage stakeholders (e.g., Services du Gouverneur du Brabant Wallon ARTEX).⁴⁵ This includes the development of methodologies aimed at integrating heritage protection into municipal crisis management strategies.⁴⁶
- 39 The July 2021 floods also served as a catalyst for formalising agreements between BSB and the provinces of Walloon Brabant, Namur, and Luxembourg. These conventions integrated BSB into Discipline 4 of the emergency services, positioning it as a logistical resource for evacuating heritage and providing first aid to affected cultural assets. With increased funding, the association has strengthened its operational capacity by appointing a manager for its permanent secretariat and expanding its volunteer network. Training sessions are held to maintain the readiness of this network and ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts. Further details are provided in the BSB's paper within this publication.⁴⁷

Analysis

- 40 The July 2021 floods in Belgium served as a critical test for the cultural heritage sector's capacity to respond to large-scale crises, highlighting both strengths and areas needing improvement. Belgium's cultural heritage sector benefits from a solid foundation of expertise in crisis management, with professionals now adept at navigating the entire risk cycle of prevention, preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and evaluation. Organisations such as KIK-IRPA, BSB, and CIPAR, along with heritage support organisations and private entities, played pivotal roles in addressing the crisis. The floods also acted as a catalyst for enhancing the practical experience of heritage professionals, site managers, and volunteers, who adapted swiftly to the challenges posed by the disaster. A notable achievement was the formation of the Crisis Committee, which proved instrumental in fostering communication, coordination, and information sharing among stakeholders. This initiative laid the groundwork for more structured and collaborative responses to future emergencies.
- 41 The ability of KIK-IRPA and BSB to operate at a national level underscores their potential as key players in managing large-scale crises that cross regional boundaries. Their coordination of efforts across Belgium was a critical factor in responding to the floods. Additionally, the adaptability of heritage professionals ensured that technical support could be quickly deployed to areas in need, even in the absence of formal coordination mechanisms. Volunteer mobilisation emerged as a key strength, with initiatives such as BSB's volunteer coordination and insurance programme providing structure, legal protection, and ensuring the safety of those involved in rescue

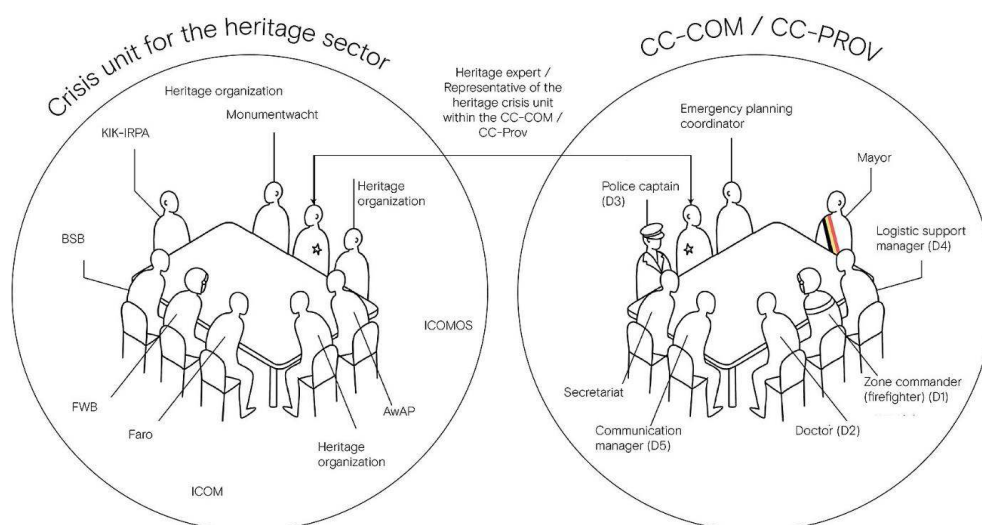
operations. The crisis further motivated conservation professionals to join the response network, thereby strengthening the sector's capacity to address future challenges.

- 42 Despite these achievements, significant gaps became apparent during the crisis. Collaboration between the cultural heritage sector and security services was non-existent. Unlike other sectors, such as transport, which have established sectoral crisis cells interfacing with emergency services, cultural heritage remains largely excluded from Belgium's broader disaster risk management frameworks. This lack of integration left the heritage sector unprepared to collaborate effectively with emergency services. It hindered the proper representation of cultural heritage in the emergency coordination meetings led by crisis management authorities. As a result, heritage was not recognised as a critical issue during the flood crisis, nor were its unique safeguarding needs addressed.
- 43 The absence of a central coordinating authority or consortium with the mandate to oversee and unify response efforts led to fragmented actions and inefficiencies, particularly during the initial stages of the disaster. The lack of operational coordination among organisations outside the Crisis Committee further exacerbated these challenges, as municipal services and insurers were often unaware of the efforts undertaken by heritage experts. This misalignment resulted in delays and redundant interventions at certain sites, revealing a need for improved communication and collaboration.
- 44 Insufficient preparation at the institutional, regional, and national levels compounded the difficulties faced during the floods. The absence of accessible heritage mapping and an inventory of the affected area further hampered efforts to identify and prioritise vulnerable sites during the crisis. The inadequate reporting systems for damage assessment and limited practical experience in crisis response left the sector vulnerable. Heritage professionals also struggled with restricted access to essential information, such as the locations of flooding and the accessibility of affected sites, as well as necessary resources like evacuation vehicles, temporary storage facilities, and intervention materials. These limitations impaired their ability to respond effectively to the crisis.
- 45 The lack of a structured approach to damage assessment contributed to inefficiencies, with some areas receiving inadequate support due to the absence of systematic evaluation methods. Resource distribution during the crisis was often unequal, with rescue efforts disproportionately focused on sites with better access to materials and support, leaving less prominent locations underserved. Funding mechanisms for immediate rescue and recovery operations were another concern, as efforts to mobilise financial resources proved slow and inadequate. The crowdfunding initiative, while valuable, failed to meet the sector's needs.
- 46 Perhaps the most glaring issue was the absence of a comprehensive post-crisis strategy. There were no structured processes in place to evaluate the impact of the floods, draw lessons from the experience, or plan for future crises. Although KIK-IRPA, with federal support through the CHrisis project, initiated actions related to conservation and evaluation, these efforts were far from adequate to address the broader recovery needs of the sector. Post-crisis recovery and evaluation should not rely solely on supplementary funding but must be embedded within a sustainable framework for long-term resilience.

Recommendations

- 47 This paper proposes a framework based on the lessons learned from the July 2021 floods and international best practices to enhance Belgium's disaster risk reduction for cultural heritage. Further consultation with stakeholders is crucial for refining and implementing these proposals, promoting a resilient approach to safeguarding Belgium's cultural heritage.
- 48 The crisis highlighted several strengths, including the dedication of local institutions, often supported by their communities, to protecting affected heritage, even when they themselves were personally impacted by the floods. It also showcased the adaptability of professionals from heritage-support organisations and volunteers, who prioritised the recovery of heritage sites and mobilised on a massive scale through BSB. Additionally, the Crisis Committee played a pivotal role in coordinating efforts.
- 49 However, the analysis also revealed areas needing reinforcement. Drawing from the lessons of the July 2021 floods, several key recommendations emerge to enhance cultural heritage protection in future crises. In January 2025, these considerations were still ongoing and still pending. Nevertheless, to advance the discussion and initiate more in-depth talks between KIK-IRPA and its various partners, a first draft is proposed below.
- 50 First, enhancing collaboration between the heritage and emergency management sectors is crucial, as stated in international studies.⁴⁸ Integrating cultural heritage considerations into municipal, provincial, and federal emergency response plans would foster stronger partnerships between heritage institutions and first responders. Such integration would enable a more comprehensive and effective approach to crisis management, ensuring heritage assets are prioritised and adequately protected.
- 51 Secondly, establishing centralised coordination and adaptive crisis management for cultural heritage protection is essential. Specifically, creating a central reporting point (Single Point of Contact, or SPOC) and formalising a permanent Crisis Committee for Heritage – building on the temporary committee formed during the July 2021 floods – could significantly enhance the speed and effectiveness of crisis responses (fig. 8). This committee would consist of trained experts responsible for clearly communicating roles and responsibilities within the heritage sector, enabling efficient collaboration among stakeholders during emergencies. Centralising these efforts would address the fragmentation observed during the July 2021 floods and notably improve overall response effectiveness. Tailored crisis organisational charts must be developed to define roles and responsibilities, adapting to the scale and locality of each emergency. These organigrams should leverage existing networks – both formal and informal – while addressing regional specifics across Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels, and the German-speaking community. Despite these regional differences, a central coordinating body, similar to the National Crisis Centre (NCCN), is necessary to ensure ongoing efforts, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and maintain effective coordination during large-scale or cross-border crises.

[Fig. 8]



A diagram illustrating how the Crisis Committee for Heritage can be integrated into the coordination committees at the communal and provincial levels ensures the presence of a heritage expert in crises that affect heritage. The heritage expert is delegated by the Crisis Committee for Heritage and will be the sole point of contact with emergency services, responsible for ensuring a smooth flow of information. This expert does not make decisions on behalf of others but can identify who should make the decisions and connect emergency services with the relevant *ad hoc* services.

- 52 Operational coordination must be significantly improved for a more effective crisis response. Building on the foundations laid by BSB during the July 2021 floods, establishing a structured framework for operational interventions is crucial to minimising redundancies, reducing delays, and ensuring equitable resource allocation across affected heritage sites.⁴⁹ This requires the development of a centralised mapping and inventory system for cultural heritage assets, which would provide real-time data on site locations and conditions during crises. This measure would allow for accurate prioritisation of interventions and optimise resource distribution. Implementing a unified damage assessment and reporting system would further streamline response efforts by enabling stakeholders to establish priorities and address needs systematically. Existing frameworks, such as the ProCultHer system or ICCROM's *ad hoc* assessment tool developed during the crisis, provide comprehensive damage assessment for movable, immovable, and intangible elements.⁵⁰ However, since these were not implemented in 2021, they require testing before being considered for adoption in Belgium.
- 53 Fourth, investing in preparedness through tailored training and capacity-building programmes for heritage professionals is essential. These programmes should be integrated into local networks, such as those in Flanders or FEDERESCUE, to ensure their continuity and effectiveness. By equipping cultural heritage managers with the necessary skills for effective crisis response, the sector can proactively mitigate risks and strengthen resilience. Additionally, training should extend to emergency service personnel to raise awareness of the specific needs and vulnerabilities of heritage assets. Embedding these training initiatives within established local networks, specialised in disaster preparedness or broader heritage challenges, will facilitate ongoing collaboration and the exchange of best practices.⁵¹

- 54 Fifth, establishing emergency material reserves and temporary storage facilities would significantly enhance response capabilities. Creating a centralised stockpile of essential supplies – such as evacuation equipment, packaging materials, and climate control solutions – would enable swift and effective interventions, particularly during large-scale disasters that overwhelm local resources. These reserves should be integrated into the internal emergency plans of cultural institutions and broader regional disaster preparedness networks.
- 55 Lastly, it is essential to establish pre-arranged funding mechanisms that can be quickly activated during a crisis. Efficient funding channels would eliminate delays in emergency actions and post-crisis recovery efforts, reducing the risks of irreversible damage to cultural heritage.⁵² Adding structured post-crisis evaluation frameworks would ensure that lessons learned are systematically integrated into future planning and response strategies.⁵³
- 56 In implementing these recommendations, Belgium's cultural heritage sector would not only address the weaknesses exposed by the July 2021 floods but also build a more resilient framework capable of safeguarding its invaluable heritage in the face of increasing risks driven by climate change.

Strengthening Disaster Preparedness and Coordination for Cultural Heritage: The Role of KIK-IRPA and Future Actions

- 57 The July 2021 floods in Belgium revealed critical gaps in the cultural heritage sector's preparedness and response to large-scale disasters, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced coordination and strategic planning. Institutions like KIK-IRPA, BSB, CIPAR, and MSW are well positioned to play a pivotal role in enhancing the resilience of the Walloon heritage sector during times of crisis, based on the critical contributions they made during and after the July 2021 floods. However, the involvement of other key actors, including those in the Crisis Committee, should also be further explored and discussed to ensure a more comprehensive and coordinated approach.
- 58 Looking ahead, KIK-IRPA could envision a federating role in improving disaster preparedness, coordination, and response by leveraging its scientific expertise, networks, and experience in crisis management. By fostering stronger connections between heritage and crisis management institutions, KIK-IRPA can help build a more resilient cultural heritage sector, better equipped to cope with the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters.
- 59 The recommendations outlined in this paper require further dialogue and collaboration between cultural heritage institutions and crisis management bodies. Given the specific organisation of the heritage sector, a collaborative approach is essential, with clear lines of communication between heritage organisations, emergency services, and both regional and federal crisis management entities, such as the NCCN. The goal is to establish operational frameworks that incorporate heritage protection into broader disaster management systems and translate them into national and regional regulations. This necessitates ongoing advocacy efforts, a clearer definition of the sector's role and capabilities, and effective communication of these action plans to the relevant administrations, which can then incorporate them into policy. The division of

heritage competencies adds complexity to this process, as efforts must be coordinated across multiple levels of government and federated entities. However, the projects described in this article, led by KIK-IRPA and its partners, are paving the way for lasting improvements. These efforts will ensure that heritage institutions are fully integrated into crisis responses, contributing not only to the protection of cultural assets but also to the preservation of the social and cultural identity they embody.

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NOTES

1. European Commission 2018.
2. United Nations 2015.
3. Tandon 2018.
4. Labadi *et al.* 2021.
5. ProCultHer 2021.
6. KIK-IRPA Sustainability Unit undated
7. Copernicus Climate Change Service 2021.
8. Marique and Collanges 2025 (unpublished source).
9. Tradowsky *et al.* 2023.
10. Marique and Collanges 2025 (unpublished source).
11. The colleagues involved in these initiatives mostly from: Agence wallonne du Patrimoine (AWaP), Association des archivistes francophones de Belgique (AAFB), Association royale des Demeures Historiques & Jardins de Belgique – Koninklijke Vereniging der Historische Woonsteden & Tuinen van België (DHJB-HWTB), Blue Shield Belgium (BBS), la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWB), Musées et Société en Wallonie (MSW), Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux (CIPAR), Commission royale des Monuments, Sites et Fouilles de la Région wallonne (CRMSF), École supérieure des arts (ESA) Saint-Luc, het Vlaams Steunpunt voor Cultureel Erfgoed (FARO), Monumentenwacht Vlaanderen, ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles (ICOM BWB), ICOM Belgium Flanders (ICOM BF), ICOMOS Wallonie-Bruxelles, IKOB, Museums of Verviers, National Archives and State Archives in the Provinces (State Archives), National Crisis Center (NCCN), Royal Museums of Art and History (KMG-MRAH), Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), University of Liège (ULiège).
Marique and Collanges 2025 (unpublished source); Beyl, De Bruyn and Boschloos 2025 (unpublished source).
12. Parlement wallon 2022; Zeimetz *et al.* 2021.
13. UNDRR Terminology undated.
14. *Loc. cit.*
15. Pursiainen 2017.
16. Boshier, Chmutina and van Niekerk 2021.
17. Tandon 2018; UNESCO 2010.
18. Schmitz *et al.* 2023; NCCN Risicocyclus undated.
19. Schmitz *et al.* 2023.
20. Tandon 2018; De Masi *et al.* 2021; ProCultHer 2021; European Commission 2021; European Commission 2022; Boccardi 2023.
21. At the regional level, the *Centre de Coordination des Risques et de la Transmission de l'expertise (CORTEX)* and the *Crisiscentrum van de Vlaamse overheid (CCVO)* can also activate their coordination structures to provide support within their areas of expertise. Koninklijk Besluit van 26 april 2024.
22. Koninklijk Besluit van 26 April 2024.
23. De Clippele 2020.
24. Most of these are listed in CIDH 2007. We will only cite a few notable or more recent examples not included in the above-mentioned publication, which are further developed below in the bibliography. On the international level, the 1972 UNESCO Convention, the Hague Convention and its two protocols (1954, 1999), the Namur Declaration and Appeal of 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda stand out. On the national level, we have the Law of 10 August 1960 (Hague Convention) and the national Law of 10 April 2022 (FARO Convention).
25. BSB 2011 (unpublished source).

26. Serck-Dewaide 2020. For further details on the BSB, please refer to the article by Ceulemans, Hanse and Boschloos included in this issue.
27. Brussels, KIK-IRPA, Archives (1942–1945); Coremans 1946; Coremans 1964.
Ministère de l’Instruction Publique and Ministère de l’Intérieur 1953; Coomans 1991.
28. A 2023 survey revealed that only three emergency networks remain active in Flanders, with significant coverage gaps. The decline in networks for movable heritage is primarily attributed to the loss of cultural competencies by the provinces after the 2014 elections and insufficient institutional support in general (from the provinces and the local heritage cells), highlighting the need for renewed policy efforts to rebuild and sustain these critical structures. Olbrechts 2019; Beyl, De Bruyn and Boschloos 2025 (unpublished source).
29. FARO DICE undated.
30. FARO Erfgoedwijzer undated. Olbrechts 2020; Beyl, De Bruyn and Boschloos 2025 (unpublished source).
31. Flanders 2013.
32. Ministère de l’Instruction Publique and Ministère de l’Intérieur, Order of 25 April 2019.
33. Leroy 2020.
34. Belspo FEDERESCUE undated. De Bruyn, Hertenweg, Marique and Nevens 2023.
35. Such as MSW, CIPAR, CRMSF, DHJB-HWTB, AAFB, ICOM BWB, and ICOMOS Wallonie-Bruxelles.
36. Chevalier 2020.
37. Wursteisen 2023 (unpublished source).
38. Delplancq 2020; Jacquet 2020.
39. Parlement wallon 2022.
40. For more information about the tool, see the article by Françoise Collanges within this issue.
41. It is unclear why this form was not used. One possible hypothesis is that it required too many adjustments to the operating procedures of the on-site organisations, which were already developing *ad-hoc* methods to assess needs and respond. Alternatively, they may have believed that a thorough evaluation of each affected site was unnecessary.
42. This point is explored in depth in the article by Françoise Collanges in this issue. For further details, we direct the reader to her work.
43. Tandon 2018.
44. MSW 2024.
45. Leherde 2023; Bolinne 2024.
46. Bertand and Moureau 2024.
47. For further details, please consult the article by Ceulemans, Hanse, and Boschloos included in this issue.
48. De Masi *et al.* 2021; ProCultHer 2021; Boccardi 2023, p. 39; European Commission 2022, p. 9.
49. Schmitz *et al.* 2023, p. 39.
50. ProCultHer 2021, p. 132-150.
51. Schmitz *et al.* 2023, p. 39.
52. Minguez Garcia 2023.
53. European Commission 2021, p. 519.

ABSTRACTS

The July 2021, floods in Belgium highlighted the vulnerability of cultural heritage to climate-related disasters and the urgent need for improved disaster risk management. This article, developed within the CHrisis project (2022–2024), analyses lessons learned from this disaster and their application in building heritage resilience. The study identifies key gaps in preparedness and coordination between heritage professionals and emergency services. The absence of an integrated management framework and a central point of contact resulted in a fragmented response. Thanks to the initiative of the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK–IRPA) and its partners, significant progress has been made, including the establishment of the Heritage Crisis Committee and the gradual integration of the heritage sector into national crisis management mechanisms. The article presents recommendations to enhance resilience, including strengthened intersectoral coordination, the development of adapted methodologies, and the implementation of emergency funding mechanisms. The ultimate goal is to improve the capacity of the cultural heritage sector to respond effectively to future crises in the context of increasing climate risks.

Les inondations de juillet 2021 en Belgique ont mis en exergue la vulnérabilité du patrimoine culturel face aux catastrophes liées au climat, ainsi que la nécessité urgente d'un renforcement de la gestion des risques de catastrophe. Cet article, rédigé dans le cadre du projet CHrisis (2022–2024), analyse les enseignements tirés de cette catastrophe et leur application dans le renforcement de la résilience du patrimoine. L'étude met en évidence des lacunes majeures en matière de préparation et de coordination entre les professionnels du patrimoine et les services d'urgence. L'absence d'un cadre de gestion intégré et d'un point de contact centralisé a conduit à une réponse fragmentée. Grâce à l'initiative de l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (IRPA) et de ses partenaires, des avancées significatives ont été accomplies, notamment la création du Comité de crise Patrimoine et l'intégration progressive du secteur patrimonial dans les mécanismes nationaux de gestion de crise. L'article présente des recommandations pour renforcer la résilience du secteur, telles que l'amélioration de la coordination intersectorielle, le développement de méthodologies adaptées et la mise en place de mécanismes de financement d'urgence. L'objectif final est d'accroître la capacité du patrimoine culturel à répondre efficacement aux crises futures dans un contexte de risques climatiques croissants.

De overstromingen van juli 2021 in België hebben de kwetsbaarheid van cultureel erfgoed voor klimaatgerelateerde catastrofes aangetoond en de dringende behoefte aan een beter rampenrisicobeheer benadrukt. Dit artikel, opgesteld in het kader van het CHrisis-project (2022–2024), analyseert de lessen die uit deze ramp zijn getrokken en de toepassing ervan bij het opbouwen van de veerkracht van het erfgoed. De studie identificeert belangrijke lacunes in de paraatheid en de coördinatie tussen erfgoedprofessionals en hulpdiensten. Het ontbreken van een geïntegreerd beleidskader en een centraal aanspreekpunt resulteerde in een gefragmenteerde respons. Dankzij het initiatief van het Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium (KIK) en zijn partners is er belangrijke vooruitgang geboekt, met name door de oprichting van het erfgoedcrisiscomité en de geleidelijke integratie van de erfgoedsector in het nationale crisisbeheer. Het artikel bevat aanbevelingen om de veerkracht te vergroten door middel van versterkte intersectorale coördinatie, de ontwikkeling van aangepaste methodologieën en de implementatie van noodfinancieringsprocedures. Het uiteindelijke doel is

om de cultureel-erfgoedsector beter in staat te stellen effectief te reageren op toekomstige crises in de context van toenemende klimaatrisico's.

INDEX

Trefwoorden cultureel erfgoed, crisisbeheer, overstromingen in 2021, veerkracht, paraatheid bij rampen

Mots-clés: patrimoine culturel, gestion de crise, inondations de 2021, résilience, préparation aux catastrophes

Keywords: cultural heritage, crisis management, 2021 floods, resilience, disaster preparedness

AUTHORS

ESTELLE DE BRUYN

Estelle De Bruyn is the Head of the Sustainability Unit at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), where she spearheads efforts to integrate sustainability into cultural heritage practices, focusing on crisis management strategies, energy reduction, climate change, and social relevance. Previously, she led the NEMO Working Group on Sustainability and Climate Action (2023–2024). With practical experience in preventive conservation at ICCROM and the Canadian Conservation Institute, Estelle holds a master's degree in Art Conservation from École nationale supérieure des arts visuels de La Cambre (ENSAV-La Cambre).

ANNE-CATHERINE OLBRECHTS

Anne-Catherine Olbrechts graduated in 1994 with a degree in Art History from KU Leuven. She subsequently obtained certificates in the restoration and conservation of polychromy, paintings, and paper. Since 2012, she has developed expertise in crisis management for cultural heritage, initially serving as a policy officer for collections at the Province of East Flanders and, from 2016, as a conservation and management advisor at FARO, the Flemish Support Centre for Cultural Heritage. From 2022 until the end of 2024, she has served as a coordinator for cultural heritage crisis management projects at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA).