

Country Name: **BELGIUM**

Looted Judaica and Judaica with Provenance Gaps in Country		Yes.
Existing Projects	<p>http://www.combuysse.fgov.be/, last accessed on 3 September 2008.</p> <p>As part of the work carried out by the Study Commission on Jewish Assets, a database with information on about 70,000 individuals was created, the so-called Mala Zimetbaum Databank (MZDB). The database is not publicly available.</p>	
Overview	Looted Cultural Property Databases	
	Publications	<p><i>Library Markings</i> <u>Source:</u> (1) Dratwa, Daniel. "Note sur les fonds Yiddish dans les bibliothèques belges à thèmes juifs." <i>Les Cahiers de la Mémoire contemporaine</i>. Nr. 8, 2008, pp.233-240.</p> <p>The article reproduces library stamps of books that were looted during World War II.</p> <p><i>Looted Cultural Objects</i> <u>Source:</u> (1) Herman, Dana. <i>Hashavat Avedah: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.</i> PhD thesis, Department of History, McGill University, Montreal, October 2008. (2) Email exchange with Daniel Dratwa, May 2015.</p> <p>Belgium received 824 books from the JCR after World War II. The Jewish Museum holds several JCR objects, however, no research has been carried out on these objects as of May 2015.</p> <p><i>Restitutions from Russia</i> <u>Source:</u> (1) Vermote, Michel. Lust, Jacques. "Belgium: Papieren Bitte! The Confiscation and Restitution of Belgian Archives and Libraries (1940-2003)." <i>Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues</i>. Grimsted, Patricia Kennedy et al. (ed.) United Kingdom: Institute of Art and Law, 2007, pp 191-240.</p> <p>Between 1944 and 1967 the Office de Récupération Économique (ORE) became the official Belgian service for the discovery, identification, and restitution of cultural goods on an international level. Among other responsibilities, the ORE was also entrusted with auctioning off objects, even if the previous owners were obvious due to book markings, etc. Vermote and Lust note that "in some cases the ORE – unnoticed and uncontrolled – took auctioning a step too far. For example, 565 Hebrew books were discovered in the depository of Neder-Over-Heembeek near Brussels. Although it was perfectly clear to all the agencies involved that these books had been plundered and were of Jewish origin, the Ministry of Finance and its liquidation agency, the Third Bureau decided to sell them. (...) Given the special character of the merchandise, the Jewish Consistory would be the only interested buyer. Without any reservations and second thoughts the Ministry of Finance sold the books for 3,000 Belgian francs to the</p>

		<p>Central Jewish Consistory of Belgium in 1948. Even this official Jewish organization did not voice a complaint.” (p. 209)</p> <p>In May 2002, 40 fonds of Belgian provenance looted during the Second World War were returned from Moscow. However, there may be additional fonds of specifically Belgian Jewish provenance in Moscow’s archive. For example, while the papers of Niko Gunzburg (a pre-war Jewish Community leader) were partially recovered, no separate fond for Mr. Gunzburg was returned from Moscow.</p>
	Information from Other Sources	<p><u>Source:</u></p> <p>(1) Email exchange with Daniel Dratwa on March 29, 2012 and on November 7, 2013.</p> <p>The Ministry of Economic Affairs, which took over objects from the Office de Récupération Économique (ORE) still holds a dozen of Hebrew books which are thought to have been stolen during World War II. These books are expected to be handed over to the Jewish Museum of Belgium soon.</p> <p>After the recovery of one book (Theodor Herzl’s <i>Der Judenstaat</i>) in 2012, which was sent to Belgium by the JCR, no further books could be identified. Little to no provenance research is being conducted on Jewish cultural and religious objects that might have entered Belgium during the war or in the years following, such as by shipment from the JCR.</p>
	Historical Commission	<p>In 1997 by Royal Decree the Belgian government appointed a commission to locate property confiscated from Jewish Holocaust victims. Following the final report of the Study Commission on Jewish Assets of July 12, 2001, the Belgian government introduced an Indemnification Bill in Parliament proposing the formation of an Indemnification Commission. This passed and became an Act of December 20, 2001 for the indemnification of the Belgian Jewish Community’s assets that were plundered, surrendered or abandoned during the Second World War. Claimants were entitled to compensation for “Personal Belongings,” which possibly included claims for Jewish cultural, religious and ceremonial objects (€400). There were only two object restitutions: two artworks were returned by Belgian Cultural Institutions to their original owners.</p> <p>The Jewish Museum of Belgium conducted full provenance research in 2002 in conjunction with the country’s Historical Commission.</p>
Selected Bibliography		<p>→ Please note that the general literature may also contain information on the specific country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dratwa, Daniel. “État de la question des biens spoliés et recherches sur la provenance au Musée Juif de Belgique et dans les collections publiques belges.” <i>MuséOn</i>, no.4, December 2012, pp. 37-47. ▪ Dratwa, Daniel. “The Plunder of Jewish-Owned Books and Libraries in Belgium”. <i>Vitalizing Memory. International Perspectives on Provenance Research</i>. Washington: American Association of Museums, 2005, pp 143-145. ▪ Dratwa, Daniel. “La question de la spoliation des biens juifs dans les musées belges.” <i>L’invitation au musée</i>, Nr. 25 (2011), pp.25-29. ▪ Dratwa, Daniel. “Note sur les fonds Yiddish dans les bibliothèques belges à thèmes juifs.” <i>Les Cahiers de la Mémoire contemporaine</i>. Nr. 8 (2008), pp.233-240 ▪ <i>Office de Récupération Économique: Répertoire d’œuvres d’art dont la Belgique a été spoliée durant la guerre 1939-1945</i>. Bruxelles, 1948.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study Commission on Jewish Assets (Commission d'Études des Biens Juifs), 1997-2001 (the report is publicly available at: http://www.combuysse.fgov.be) – French and Flemish (Commission d'étude sur le sort des biens des membres de la communauté juive de Belgique spoliés ou délaissés pendant la guerre 1940-1945) ▪ Vermote, Michel. Lust, Jacques. "Belgium: Papieren Bitte! The Confiscation and Restitution of Belgian Archives and Libraries (1940-2003)." <i>Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues</i>. Grimsted, Patricia Kennedy et al. (ed.) United Kingdom: Institute of Art and Law, 2007, pp 191-240.
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