

---

# Colonies of Benevolence (Belgium, Netherlands) No 1555rev

---

## 1 Basic information

### States Parties

Belgium  
Netherlands

### Name of property

Colonies of Benevolence

### Locations

Antwerp province  
Flemish Region  
(Belgium)

Drenthe and Fryslân provinces  
(Netherlands)

### Inscription

2021

### Brief description

Founded from 1818 onwards by the Society of Benevolence, the Colonies of Benevolence is a trans-national serial site composed of three component parts illustrating a model of social reform that was highly influential in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, now known as the domestic agricultural colony. Located in the rural areas of the Netherlands (now the Netherlands and Belgium), they were created with the aim of transforming the poorest into “industrious” citizens, and “uncultivated” farmland into productive land. The property includes the colonies of Frederiksoord-Wilhelminaoord and Veenhuizen (Netherlands); and Wortel (Belgium), and is also inscribed as a cultural landscape. The colonies were designed as self-sustaining agricultural settlements with residential buildings, farms, churches and other community facilities in an orthogonal grid pattern. A distinction is made between “free” colonies established for families and “unfree” colonies established for groups of destitute people, which are differentiated by their modes of supervision and accommodation as well as by the typology of their landscapes.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2023

## 2 Issues raised

### Background

The property was originally nominated without a buffer zone, as the States Parties considered that the existing spatial regimes in the surrounding areas and the confined nature of the colonies made the establishment of such a zone unnecessary. However, ICOMOS, in its evaluation of the 2021 nomination, considered that buffer zones were necessary, not only to offer protection to the immediate environment of the colonies, but also to constrain or even prohibit certain types of activities. The evaluation therefore recommended the establishment of buffer zones, which would be delineated in such a way as to take into account the specific measures to be put in place in terms of planning and protection policies.

The World Heritage Committee approved the inscription of the property in its Decision 44 COM 8.25, recommending that the States Parties establish “a buffer zone, in order to ensure the protection of the component parts from any potential threats, through a minor boundary modification process, to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2023”.

### Modification

The request for a minor boundary modification to establish a buffer zone for each of the property's component parts follows the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee.

The proposed buffer zones are delineated in such a way as to integrate the immediate environment of the component parts and to control their development, in order to reinforce their protection, and to preserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The boundaries follow, where possible, the sub-plots of agricultural areas or natural areas immediately adjacent to the component parts, as agriculture and livestock farming are an integral part of the landscape and the historical development of the colonies. In some places, development areas have also been added to the proposed boundaries, including villages, recreation areas and areas with social and economic functions. As for the Wortel component part, it should be noted that the northern part of the property coincides with the border between Belgium and the Netherlands. This part of the proposed buffer zone, which corresponds to a nature reserve, is therefore cross-border with the Netherlands.

Finally, in terms of protection, the request provides a detailed inventory of the different types of protection and legal provisions and their implications in force for each of the identified areas (agricultural area, natural area, villages, recreation area, scenic agricultural area, nature reserve, social and economic functions) in the proposed buffer zones.

ICOMOS considers that the buffer zones will provide an additional layer of protection for the property as a whole,

as they will ensure that development projects in the immediate vicinity of the components parts of the property that could have a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value are controlled.

ICOMOS considers, however, that it would have been useful to give more details on the nature of the existing modern development elements and in particular those located in the recreational areas or those with social and economic functions in Frederiksoord and Veenhuizen, in order to better appreciate the relevance of their inclusion in the proposed buffer zones.

### **3 Recommendations**

#### **Recommendations with respect to inscription**

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed for buffer zones for the Colonies of Benevolence, Belgium, Netherlands, be **approved**.