

Editorial

The implementation of the Valletta Convention – better known as ‘Malta’ – has caused drastic changes in the Dutch archaeological world in the past decade, and it is to be expected that the same will take place in Flanders in the near future. The convention implied the introduction of contract archaeology by ‘commercial’ companies, changes in the tasks of government services, from archaeologists performing excavations to supervisors, and an explosive growth in the number of archaeologists to over a thousand. The number of reports they publish is at least double that figure on an annual basis. As for the recording of the many archaeological remains that are disappearing in ever more large-scale digging operations this is a tremendous improvement on the previous situation, in which archaeology had virtually no legal status and emergency excavations were dependent on goodwill, ad-hoc regulations and subsidies.

Besides all the positive aspects there is however also severe criticism. The constantly growing ‘grey literature’ of reports published in small editions has been likened to a ‘cemetery’ of inaccessible information, and the scientific depth of most of the reports is limited. The digital DANS program is now however making the reports more accessible. A special fund of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research under the heading of ‘The Malta Harvest’ encourages synthetic analysis. At the same time, however, opportunities for publication have decreased due to the termination of the journal *Helinium*, in which Dutch and Belgian archaeologists cooperated, and the *Proceedings of the State Service for Archaeological Investigations in the Netherlands* as a result of the service’s changed tasks.

The Journal of Archaeology in the Low Countries has been established as a means to stop the recently formed gap and counter the aforementioned criticism. It offers all archaeologists working in the Netherlands and Flanders an opportunity to publish information and conclusions worthy of being presented to an international public. The journal is emphatically open to anyone desiring to participate in scientific debates, working for companies, heritage-management or university institutes. The only criterion for the acceptance of contributions is scientific quality, which will be assessed by the editors and external peers. I hope that the Journal of Archaeology in the Low Countries will be a showcase of the very best that archaeology in the Netherlands and Flanders has to offer.

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