



Topics

1. [Two new donor centres opened!](#)
2. [Bloedserieus](#)
3. [Climate change and CEBaP](#)
4. [HILA & Organ transplantation](#)
5. [Launch of first aid app](#)
6. [Mental health first aid](#)
7. [Ten Miles: changing approach](#)
8. [Every cent counts](#)
9. [Volunteers who listen](#)
10. [FABL - First Aid Blended Learning](#)
11. [First lifesaving ad break](#)
12. [Helping helps](#)
13. [Scientific Advisory Board](#)
14. [Pierre Zachée in Laos](#)
15. [Totally social](#)
16. [13,340 helping hands](#)
17. [Youth manual](#)
18. [Long hot for Belgian Red Cross-Flanders](#)
19. [Blood collected 128 times from workplaces!](#)
20. [10,385 new plasma donors](#)
21. [397,576 successful donations](#)
22. [Almost 1 in 2 blood donors under 35!](#)
23. [670,557 safe blood product supplied](#)
24. [Playmobil volunteer breaks record!](#)
25. [Everyone deserves a holiday](#)
26. [45,406 people took a first aid course](#)
27. [671 volunteers building bridges](#)
28. [730 library service volunteers](#)
29. [250 guardianship cases opened](#)
30. [830 extra emergency shelter places provided](#)
31. [1,389 employees gave their best every day](#)
32. [Belgian Red Cross-Flanders & science ...](#)
33. [Restoring Family Links: 50 missing persons traced](#)
34. [Active in 17 countries](#)
35. [733 people took an international humanitarian law course](#)



Two new donor centres opened!

You may have read about it in the press: we opened two new donor centres in the autumn of 2019! The new centre in Roeselare has been operational since October, and in November we opened our doors in Sint-Niklaas. Both centres are close to the stations, to help persuade commuters to come and donate blood or plasma.

Plasma, because that is something we really need. Not just because the yellowy stuff saves lives, but also because the federal government has asked us to increase our plasma collection by 5% year-on-year.

Plasma is used to help patients with severe clotting disorders or major blood loss, among other things. Newborn babies with severe jaundice need plasma, and it's also used to make a lot of lifesaving medicines. When you give blood, you're also giving plasma - we get red blood cells, platelets and plasma from your donation. If you're planning to call in at Roeselare or Sint-Niklaas soon, or one of our other donor centres or mobile collection units ... we thank you in advance for your donation! ❤️



**BLOED
SERIEUS**

Bloedserieus

Students. Often associated with partying and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. But the students in Bloedserieus prove otherwise!

Bloedserieus means blood collections for and by students. In every student town or city, our students organise, promote and support blood collections twice a year. It's successful too: this year, 11,869 students gave blood in Antwerp, Brussels, Diepenbeek, Ghent, Kortrijk and Leuven. Among them were 4,633 new donors!





The impact of climate change on our work

The appearance of giant ticks, tiger mosquitoes getting closer and closer to our country, heatwaves, hurricanes and other extreme weather conditions: we've felt the effects of climate change more than once in the past year.

This change doesn't only have consequences for our living environment. The impact on aid organisations like ours should not be underestimated either. We feel the consequences of climate change on one of our main activities: providing first aid. Our Centre for Evidence-Based Practice (CEBaP) has carried out a scientific analysis that sets out all existing risk classification models for mass events (music concerts, festivals, sporting events etc.). These models predict the number of patients arriving at first aid posts and the number of patients subsequently taken to hospital from there. The models also detail the factors that influence these numbers. For example, the higher the temperature and air humidity, the higher the influx of patients to first aid posts and the more patients need to be taken to hospital.

Based on our own analyses of 45,535 interventions at music festivals, the Belgian Red Cross-Flanders aid service calculates that for every degree increase in temperature, there are an additional 93 treatments per day. This means climate change will increase the burden on aid services during mass events and therefore also demands greater deployment of resources.

But did you know that the warming of the climate also has an effect on our blood stocks and our international aid services? [Read more about it here \(DUTCH\)!](#)



HILA & organ transplants

The Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Laboratory (HILA), where all tests relating to organ and stem cell transplants are carried out, was ten years old in 2019. So we celebrated this on 1 May with a grand conference to mark the technical and medical evolution of the lab. After all, over the last ten years, HILA has developed into a key player in the development of personalised matching advice in organ and stem cell transplantation and transfusion.

Project around parameters in kidney transplantation

In 2019, there was a lot of attention in the national and international world of transplantation for TEMPLATE, the scientific project run by HILA and KU Leuven studying the critical parameters in the rejection and survival of the transplanted kidney. The results were published in leading professional publications and one of the articles was selected as a top 10 article by the prestigious *American Journal of Transplantation* (see also [Senev et al. 2019 \(Dutch\)](#)).



First aid in your pocket!

First aid advice has been available in your pocket since 1 April, as you can now download our first aid app! The app gives it to you straight: what's the best way to treat a cut? Or if your best friend has been stung by a jellyfish, should you ... pee on it?*

The app can also help with more serious issues such as loss of consciousness or cardiac arrest.

100,000 downloads

Not only is the app a useful resource for providing first aid, you can also learn first aid from it or refresh your knowledge with the help of handy lessons, quizzes and videos. Of course, you won't get a certificate but you will gain some awareness of first aid. And that's obviously a popular idea, because our app was downloaded no fewer than 100.000 times in eight months! Belgium got a little safer and more self-reliant in 2019. 🤔👍

*Please don't pee on it. Pour warm water on it and remove any spines. Unless you want to end up in this situation: <https://youtu.be/C2aVAKD2mx0> 😬.



Mental health first aid

One in four people in Flanders will suffer from mental health problems at some point. Talking about it is a major step for many. People around them are often unsure of how they should react when someone has mental health problems. That's because, in contrast to physical ailments, it isn't always easy to know what you can do to help if someone is struggling mentally. For this reason, we got together with nine partners to develop a Mental Health First Aid training package.

This package targets the wider population: anyone wanting to learn how to help others who are not feeling well. We want to help people to feel comfortable supporting those around them.

This is also why we have written a book with 31 concrete tips that can help you to offer first aid in almost any situation. Each tip is clearly explained and we provide specific sentences that you should or shouldn't use. For twelve specific situations (such as stress, bereavement, anxiety, suicidal thoughts etc.) these tips are further refined and elaborated on specific to the situation.





Forewarned, forearmed ...

During the 2018 Antwerp Ten Miles & Marathon, the temperature went through the roof. Lots of runners struggled with the heat. In order to be better prepared in 2019, we reviewed our approach to the running event. For example, first aiders were given an extra briefing on hyperthermia (overheating). The communication structure was improved to ensure our cooperation with police, fire and ambulance services went smoothly and the aid post at the Grote Markt was expanded. This could then easily be put to use as a Forward Medical Post in the case of a major increase in patients.

Finally, we did as much live registration as possible, which enabled us to know how many patients were in our aid posts at any time. It made it easier to intervene faster and scale up where necessary. We also made two mobile emergency teams available by providing them with an ambulance.

This year again, more than 100 Red Cross volunteers were ready to assist runners and their supporters in cases of emergency. Are you thinking of taking part in the Antwerp Ten Miles & Marathon? Then we'd like to offer [these tips \(DUTCH\)](#)!

Good luck!



Every cent counts

In anticipation of the figures for our annual financial report, we'd like to take the opportunity to mention a very special volunteer. For ten years, Hugo Lasat, CEO of Degroef-Petercam, has worked as a volunteer on our financial committee. He helps with advice on investments and other financial matters.



Hugo had always wanted to help Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. *"But I'm scared of needles, so I wasn't keen on giving blood,"* the financial expert says. *"In this way I can still make a useful and valuable contribution by offering my own expertise."*

Thanks very much for your efforts and years of commitment, Hugo!

P.S. You can read the 2018 financial report in anticipation of the 2019 one, [here \(DUTCH\)](#)!



Volunteers who listen

Our Social Intervention Service (SIS) may very well be the Red Cross' most hidden gem. The SIS counsellors are ready to listen and provide psychosocial assistance whenever major events occur.

They certainly did so in 2019: SIS were called upon 13 times to provide a Psychosocial Intervention Plan. This means that the teams were asked to prepare to help potential victims. They were also deployed 11 times for interventions with companies and organisations, and made 17 successful repatriations. In the case of a repatriation, the volunteers are requested by Foreign Affairs to help Belgians abroad who are unable to finance their own return journey. For example, they pick them up at the airport and take them to (emergency) accommodation.

Tangible impact

On 25 January 2019, there was a fire followed by an explosion at a timber processing plant in Anzegem. The SIS West-Flanders volunteers were alerted and monitored the situation together with the FOD Public Health psychosocial manager.

The casualties were taken to hospitals in Leuven and Ghent. The latter hospital accepted the offer of an SIS support team. Two volunteers from SIS East-Flanders headed for the scene as quickly as possible to provide psychosocial support to the families of the severely injured and the deceased.

These volunteers were later commended by the hospital and the policymakers involved, for the tangible impact their work had on the families. And that tangible effect is of course why we do it. We would like to express our support once more to the families and friends of those affected.



Lifesaving first aid training in Africa

In our partner countries in Africa (including Tanzania, South Africa, Rwanda, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe etc.) there is huge demand for first aid training. After all, first aid can save even more lives there: some communities are a long way from cities and therefore far from any hospitals. Furthermore, resources are limited for local Red Cross societies and organising first aid training is not always easy. We are happy to help!

Digitalisation

In Africa too, more and more people are glued to their smartphones. This is why we have developed something called 'blended learning training': you first learn the course theory from an app, with videos and quiz questions. Then there is one day of traditional group training focused on practising the procedures and techniques. The app was developed and tested in 2019 and we then trained 12 instructors in Rwanda and South Africa. There is now a pilot project to implement this First Aid Blended Learning (FABL) in company first aid in Rwanda. We hope this will soon enable us to train many more people with the same number of trainers. Watch this space!



First lifesaving ad break

January 2019 saw a first for Belgian Red Cross-Flanders and the VIER TV broadcaster: we broadcast the very first lifesaving advert! 😊

And this advert was scheduled during prime time too: during the ad break, viewers of Topdokters were treated to some handy first aid tips in a humorous fashion.

We developed a number of scenarios that demanded swift and decisive action, together with the cartoonist MATT. Stemming the blood from a wound, helping someone during an epileptic fit ... with a dash of humour and silly accents, we brought the importance of first aid to the attention of the Flemish public.

Take a look at adverts [on our Facebook page!](#)



Helping helps

In 2019, we decided to spread a pearl of wisdom that our volunteers have known all along: helping helps, in all directions. Because doing something good for someone else makes you feel better, too. That turns the cross into a circle - a magical moment that makes both the recipient of help and the helper feel good.

We've tried to capture this feeling in a number of short films. We want to persuade anyone who would like to help others to join us as a volunteer. Because without our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to do so much great work – both at home and abroad.





CEBaP: internationally established like the Red Cross

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders attaches a lot of importance to scientific research. This research ensures that we can help more efficiently and also take a longer-term view, so that public donations can be used as effectively as possible. This is why we carry out our own scientific research. An example: [CEBaP](#), our Centre for Evidence-Based Practice, is involved in a great many national and international partnerships. Quite a few of these were expanded during 2019.

National level

In Belgium, CEBaP is very closely involved in the activities of [Cochrane Belgium](#). In the world of Evidence-Based Medicine, the non-profit organisation [Cochrane](#) is considered the benchmark for creating and disseminating reliable health information in the form of systematic reviews. Cochrane Belgium provides training in the creation of systematic reviews and is supported by the government in doing so. Two of our CEBaP staff members are closely involved in this. Furthermore, we also play a part in developing guidelines for [primary care](#) and help develop the implementation and distribution of these guidelines through the national EBPracticeNet platform, which we are also part of. Close partnership with the [Health and Science](#) platform ensures the dissemination of our evidence-based first aid information in Belgium.

International level

At an international level, CEBaP is a member of the [ILCOR](#) First Aid Task Force. On behalf of ILCOR, we carry out various systematic reviews which are disseminated internationally. One example of this is the review on the use of sugar for [hypoglycaemia in diabetes patients](#). CEBaP is also involved in the development of guidelines for the European Resuscitation Council. CEBaP's first aid evidence summaries are also used by the IFRC Global First Aid Reference Centre in drawing up the five-yearly [International First Aid and Resuscitation Guidelines](#).

Together with the French Red Cross Research Foundation and various other Red Cross research and expertise centres, we have also worked towards increased and more thorough research within the IFRC, which has resulted in [an excellent vision text](#) concerning the drafting of the IFRC Strategy 2030. In the last year, CEBaP has been asked by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to develop two systematic reviews around drowning prevention. Our scientific work has obviously not gone unnoticed!

In 2019, our partnership with Cochrane was expanded further, as CEBaP established [Cochrane First Aid](#), a global platform working to provide scientific evidence within first aid and a focus on the layperson as an aid provider within Cochrane. Cochrane First Aid aims to bridge the gap between the major players in the field of first aid (such as IFRC and ILCOR) and evidence-based health information – of which Cochrane is the benchmark. Cochrane First Aid was launched in April 2019 and has the mission of establishing a global, independent network of people interested in developing, distributing and implementing high-quality research within first aid.

Advisory board of international experts 🧐

In order to put Belgian Red Cross-Flanders' research into a wider context and subject it to a critical perspective, a Scientific Advisory Board was set up a few years ago. This advisory board is chaired by Jimmy Volmink, Dean of the Medical School at Stellenbosch University, and comprises a number of experts from the academic and pharmaceutical sectors. Recent addition to the board Caroline Fiennes and her organisation [Giving Evidence](#) offer advice to donors on donating money, based on scientific research.

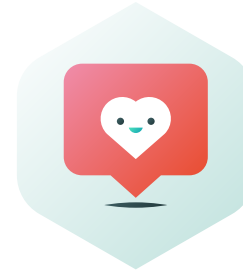


Prof. Zachée in Laos

Em. Prof. Pierre Zachée is a haematologist and the chairman of the Belgian Bone Marrow Register. Following his training at the Institute for Tropical Medicine, he is now a volunteer with Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

He uses his knowledge and expertise to support our International Cooperation service and GAP - the Global Advisory Panel on Corporate Governance and Risk Management of Blood Services in Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. That's a mouthful, but in a nutshell, GAP streamlines procedures and processes for national Red Cross societies that collect blood. This increases the efficiency and safety of the collection, administration and distribution of blood. In terms of structure, the GAP is part of the International Red Cross Federation.

Professor Zachée went to Laos, where 40% of the local blood stocks are used in the treatment of thalassaemia, and 20% is used in treating dengue. Would you like to find out why that is, and what the professor did there? [Read the interview here \(DUTCH\)](#)!



Totally social

In 2019, we reached everyone in Flanders on average 10 times over through our social media channels. Through our Facebook page, we reached 47,817,277 people in 2019. It was this unique unicorn that had the most views in the last year.



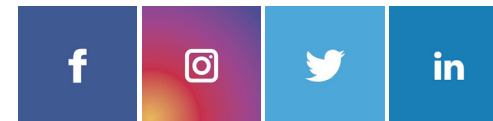
[A \(not so\) nice cat](#) beat that and achieved the highest engagement – meaning how many times people liked, shared or responded to the post.

We received the most likes and retweets on this callout, where none other than John Travolta stole the show.

[Our statement on the arson in the emergency shelter in Bilzen](#) also got a lot of support on Twitter. Did you know that we are on the top 30 #BEHealth 2019 Influencers Twitter list? We are joined there by the likes of Stop Darmkanker, FOD Volksgezondheid, UZ Leuven, Kom op tegen Kanker and the Artsenkrant.

We'd like to finish with the familiar words of Erik Van Looy: 't is gebeurd! Thanks to him, host of the Flemish TV show *De Slimste Mens Ter Wereld*, we reached the greatest number of people on Instagram.

Are you already following us on your favourite social network? 😊





13,340 helping volunteers!

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is the largest volunteer organisation in Belgium. Without our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to play such an important part in the many areas in which we are active. Social welfare, mobile blood collection, helping vulnerable young people, emergency aid... you name it! Young and old alike give their time for free. We had 13,340 volunteers this year. That's 300 more than last year!

Professionalism

Did you know that 1 in 5 volunteers are aged between 20 and 29? And 18% of our volunteers are between 60 and 70. The young pups can learn from the old dogs, and vice versa! 😊 Furthermore, most of our volunteers regularly undergo training so that they are always able to help in a professional way!

Are you also interested in giving your free time to help others? [Sign up here!](#)

On volunteer's day, 5 December 2019, we showed our love for our [volunteersv](#).



Children can save lives!

Dat we bij Rode Kruis-Vlaanderen wetenschappelijk onderbouwd aan de slag You already knew that we operate on a scientific basis at Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. The same goes for our international projects.

Our Centre for Evidence-Based Practice (CEBaP) has developed a new learning pathway for children and young people. After all, they are capable from an early age of gaining certain first aid skills. In line with the Flemish pathway that we have followed for a number of years, we have developed a learning pathway for African youths, together with African experts.

Where appropriate, the learning pathway focuses on the specific context in which they grow up. These pathways have grown into a youth manual. This contains youth material we have developed specifically to teach first aid in a fun way to 12 to 16-year-olds in schools and in Red Cross youth clubs. These educational materials are science-based like the rest of our African First Aid learning material and adapted to suit the African context, taking into account African customs and materials. So 13-year-olds can learn how to splint a leg following a snakebite, and 7-year-olds can learn to treat burns!

As soon as the learning pathway and the trainers' manual were ready, several of our Belgian Red Cross-Flanders volunteers coached the first 34 youth trainers. In this way our colleagues in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Lesotho can in future provide high-quality first aid training to young people. We have noticed that the young people in our partner countries are really keen to learn and highly motivated to use this first aid training to help their families and fellow villagers. And that helps the world become a little bit more self-reliant! 🙌



Long hot summer for Belgian Red Cross-Flanders

Although you might associate the summertime with chillaxing, that hasn't always been the case for the Red Cross volunteers. As is traditional, this summer was a busy period for our organisation. And that's just how we like it! 😊

In total, we stood at the ready at 1,500 preventive aid efforts between 1 July and 31 August this year. And in addition to major events like Graspop, Rock Werchter and Couleur Café, we also assisted the emergency services where necessary.

We received 24 calls between 1 July and 31 August, and actually took action eight times. And in various ways: in Flemish-Brabant we distributed water just before the start of Tomorrowland because of long queues due to a fatal accident on the A12. The Medical Intervention Plan was also activated in East-Flanders when numerous people became unwell on a train due to the heat. Our Rapid Intervention Team set up a Forward Medical Post at Ghent Sint-Pieters station and we kept six ambulances on standby.

Another event in which we are conspicuously involved is the Dodentocht. 2019 was an anniversary year with the walking event celebrating its 50th birthday. Over 300 Red Cross volunteers were ready to help the 13,000 walkers where required. In total, we recorded 2,500 incidences of care in the 11 aid posts along the route.

Finally, our volunteers were also in attendance at the festivals. At Extrema Outdoor, a three-day festival in Houthalen, they performed 412 treatments and we deployed 11 ambulances and the national command vehicle. In total, our volunteers spent 1,615 hours there. Our Logistical Unit placed an extra transmitter to strengthen radio coverage. This helped the various emergency services to communicate with each other.



Blood collected 128 times from workplaces!

This year we continued to collect blood from businesses. We took donations from people in the workplace 128 times. Convenient for employees and good for our blood stocks! Would you like to invite us to your workplace so that you and your co-workers can do a good deed? All the information you need can be found [here](#)!

Which of your tough co-workers is scared of needles? 😊



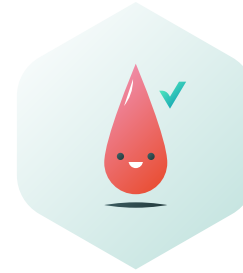


10,385 new plasma donors!

In 2019, 10,385 new plasma donors came to give their best in our donor centres. And that's good news – it's almost 2,000 more than last year!

Since 2017, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders has been tasked by the government to collect 5% more plasma each year than the year before. So we're always on the lookout for new donors! Would you like to join Team Plasma? [Check here](#) for locations near you! What's more, we've recently added two new donor centres!

You can only donate plasma in our permanent donor centres, as a special machine is needed to separate the plasma from the blood. In contrast to blood donation, you get your red blood cells back. Not sure what plasma is? Don't worry! We're happy to explain everything in this video.



397,576 successful donations

You are no doubt aware that Belgian Red Cross-Flanders collects blood, plasma and platelets. In 2019, our fantastic donors provided exactly 397,576 successful donations – that's roughly 16,000 more than in 2018!

This impressive number consists of ...

- 255,762 successful blood donations
- 126,806 successful plasma donations
- 15,008 successful platelet donations

Are you one of those donors who donated more than once? Thank you, you're a hero! 🙌

Have you not been yet? Let us persuade you to come along in 2020! For example, during one of our [#Donordates \(link in DUTCH\)?](#)



Almost 1 in 2 blood donors under 35!

Have you just turned 18, or does that seem like a faraway memory? We welcome blood donors of all ages. However, there is a good proportion of 'young blood': just over 40% of our donors are younger than 35! And of course there are plenty of students among them - for example, those who attend our Bloedserieus events.

Next is the 36-to-49 age group, which covers more than 26% of our total number of donors. Finally, roughly 1 in 10 donors are over 60! By the way, did you know that the maximum age for blood donation was abolished at the start of 2019? Now you can keep donating past 71, as long as you meet certain conditions.



670,557 safe blood products supplied

Last year we supplied 670,557 safe blood products to hospitals in Flanders and Brussels and to the plasma fractionation company CSL Behring, who use plasma to make lifesaving medicines. That's almost 30,000 more than last year!

We always guarantee maximum safety of our blood products. No matter how often you donate, we test the blood, plasma or platelet concentrate just as thoroughly every single time. Our [Central Laboratory](#) (CELA) tested all of the 397,576 donations for HIV, hepatitis B and C, syphilis and others.

Would you like to know more about the safety of our blood products? You can read more about it [here!](#)

Safety first! 😊





Playmobil volunteer breaks records!



Red Cross means stickers. For 59 years, our volunteers have sold stickers in busy areas and at crossings. Each sticker costs five euros, which goes to support your local Red Cross branch.

What happens to that money? It is used, for example, to buy materials to support the aid posts at local events. Such as the cyclocross in Zichen-Zussen-Bolder or a benefit festival for the local scouts: it helps provide the right support. But then there is also the assistance we provided following the attacks at Zaventem on 22 March 2016. We were only able to do this thanks to everyone who bought stickers in the past. In 2019, our volunteers sold 661,000 stickers – smashing the previous record of 650,000 stickers in 2017. Did we mention that our volunteers are the best? 😊

Will you buy a sticker this year? You will see us all over Flanders from 23 April! Get your five euros ready! 😊



Everyone deserves a holiday!

At Belgian Red Cross-Flanders we realise that it's not easy for everyone to go on holiday - although everyone needs one at times. This is why in 2019 we organised 20 Adapted Holidays for people with mental or physical disabilities and their carers. Senior citizens are also welcome on these holidays.

In order to allow these guests to enjoy a holiday with tailor-made care at [Zorghotel Domein Polderwind](#), we filled 393 volunteer placements. Thank you to all the volunteers who came at least once!

Holiday Camps and Adapted Holiday Camps

Our volunteers are also there for socially vulnerable children. We organised three Holiday Camps for 102 children between 6 and 14. In addition, 42 volunteers were present to help 46 children with physical and/or mental disabilities from socially vulnerable families. We provided a great holiday for them at the Adapted Holiday Camps.

Would you like to help others to enjoy a great week's holiday? You don't need any medical knowledge. We will provide a one-day care induction to get you ready.

[Sign up here \(Dutch\)](#)!



45,406 people took a first aid course!

In 2019, the importance of first aid was made clear on more than one occasion. When a bus driver resuscitated a man, for example. Or when our first aid app broke the 100,000 download barrier!

It makes sense: knowing first aid can make the difference between life and death. This is why the Red Cross has been providing first aid training for decades: you can take a basic course, train to become a Helper, or learn resuscitation and defibrillation using an AED device.

In 2019, 29,129 people took a first aid course in their free time, at their local branch for example. 16,277 others took the course together with co-workers, during a company first aid course. Finally, we also trained a lot of students in schools. So don't worry: the number of potential lifesavers grew considerably last year! 😊



671 volunteers building bridges

In 2019 we had the help of 671 Bridge volunteers. They assist socially vulnerable children with their schoolwork, among other things.

These might be children who have lost a parent or grandparent, or whose parents have recently divorced. They could be newcomers who speak a different language, or children of parents who don't speak great Dutch yet. For these kids, education can be an important step towards a better future. Our volunteers literally build a bridge between school and the home.



730 friendly volunteers for the library service!

Our library service for hospitals and care institutions helps people who stay in care, whether for a short period or a longer one. If the context of their care restricts them from visiting a regular library, volunteers drop by with books, CDs, DVDs and a smile to provide fun and company.

A book and a visit

Most importantly, the volunteers make time for a chat or to play a game with the patients or residents. We try to combat loneliness in this way. So far there are 446 lending points throughout Flanders, and to keep them all running we are lucky to be able to depend on 730 volunteers. What happens during one of these visits?



250 guardianship cases opened

Every year, children come to our country from countries including Afghanistan, Syria or Palestine without their parents or another adult relative. In 2019, our guardians looked after 250 of these unaccompanied minors.

These guardians are responsible for representing the interests of the minors and protecting them. Belgian Red Cross-Flanders employed eight guardians in 2019, each of whom took care of at least 25 unaccompanied minors.



830 extra emergency shelter places provided

On behalf of the government, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is responsible for a number of reception centres for people applying for international protection (formerly known as asylum seekers). Due to the continuing need for additional space, we were asked to set up emergency shelters on a number of additional sites.

To this end, an emergency reception centre was opened in Mechelen in early 2019. 230 residents currently occupy a wing of a former hospital. In the autumn, we opened a temporary reception centre for the second time since 2015 in Leopoldsburg, on the site of the former barracks at Kwartier Moorslede. We accommodate 500 people here.

Just before the end of the year we provided temporary accommodation for 100 people in a pop-up reception centre. They stayed at the Peace Village holiday resort in Mesen until the end of January 2020.

All of our reception centres are run according to the principles of bed, bath, bread and social assistance, with extra care for the most vulnerable.

2019 was also a year in which we were shocked by the arson at what was to be an emergency shelter in Bilzen. This was a painful reminder of the growing and increasingly grim protest against the accommodation of those seeking refuge. Because of this deplorable incident, the planned 140 placements could no longer be accommodated in 2019, despite the desperate need for them. Repair work is still being carried out in order to make the building operational as quickly as possible.



1,389 employees gave their best every day

It's obvious from the most cursory glance at this website that Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is active in all kinds of areas. From blood collection to international cooperation, from social welfare to disaster aid: we help to help in so many ways. This is why we rely so much on as many volunteers as possible, who are always ready to do their bit with enthusiasm and professionalism.

But in order to keep all this running even more smoothly and provide the necessary framework - in terms of logistics and content - we also depend on 1,389 members of staff. This includes accountants, psychologists, blood donation workers, quality controllers, clinical biologists, doctors, assistants in the reception centres and research scientists.

Could a career with Belgian Red Cross-Flanders be for you?

[Check our careers page!](#) We're always looking for talented and caring people!



Belgian Red Cross-Flanders and science ...

... you can't have one without the other! Did you know that all of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders's activities are scientifically supported? We carry out both primary research - that is, in the lab or in the field - and secondary research, using existing scientific literature.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders' primary scientific research consists of both [lab research](#) into blood platelets, for example, and field research into [water projects](#): which model of water pump is most suitable for the residents of Kasungu, a region of Malawi?

Our Centre for Evidence-Based Practice (CEBaP) performs secondary scientific research, in which it uses existing studies to formulate guidelines and optimise the aid we provide.

Together with the Blood Service, the boffins at Belgian Red Cross-Flanders published [36 scientific publications](#) in 2019. That's three times as many as last year - because our scientific element is gaining in importance. The themes of these publications vary greatly: from the scientific basis for the selection criteria for blood, plasma or blood platelet donors, to the development of first aid materials for African children, or insights into the supply of blood following attacks like the one in Zaventem.

You can see CEBaP's list of publications [here](#). Find out more about our research into blood products [here](#). Would you like to learn more about our evidence-based approach? Then watch the video below!



Restoring Family Links: 50 missing persons traced!

The former Tracing service has gone by the new name of Restoring Family Links since 2018. This name covers the remit of our activities better, because in addition to tracing missing relatives we also restore contact between family members and provide information on the Belgian procedure relating to family reunification for refugees and subsidiary protected persons.

In total, we traced 50 missing persons in 2019. These included people who had lost contact with their families in the chaos of natural disasters or conflicts. Our International Red Cross network enables us to search accurately at the location where contact was lost. We also opened 177 tracing cases and 217 family reunification cases.



Number of IHL training courses + 33rd conference

International humanitarian law (IHL) encompasses all the rules intended to limit the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. This law protects **the life, health and dignity** of persons who are not (or no longer) participants in an armed conflict. It also restricts or prohibits the use of certain weapons and methods in armed conflicts.

The Red Cross has a key role in the dissemination and development of the rules of international humanitarian law. In 2019, **733** persons were trained including 599 professionals (journalists, lawyers, military and humanitarian personnel) and 134 policy makers.

33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement took place between 9 and 12 December. This is a four-yearly conference that brings together all the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC, IFRC and 192 National Societies) with the General Assembly of the Geneva Convention.

At this year's conference, 187 of the 192 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies were in attendance. The 196 countries that ratified the 1949 Geneva Convention were also invited, and 168 of them came to Switzerland. Each of the national societies and states had a vote, with an equal influence on decision making.

A total of 8 resolutions were adopted this year:

1. Bringing IHL home: a plan to implement IHL better in each country
2. Greater attention for the mental and psychosocial needs of communities affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and other emergencies.
3. Time to act: working together to deal with pandemics and epidemics more effectively.
4. Restoring Family Links: with respect for the privacy of those seeking and those being sought - including with regard to personal data.
5. Women and leadership within the humanitarian actions of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
6. Act today, shape tomorrow.
7. Working towards a disaster policy that leaves no one behind.
8. Monitoring the agreed partnership between the Israeli humanitarian society Magen David Adom (also a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) and the Palestinian Red Crescent Movement. This partnership was set up in 2005 and the International Movement keeps its finger on the pulse to offer support where required.

Every national Red Cross society now has four years to implement all of these commitments, individually or in cooperation with other partners within the Red Cross Movement and the states. We'll keep you posted!



Active in 17 countries

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders was internationally active in 17 countries and on 4 continents in 2019: Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Central America. In total, our projects have, directly or indirectly, had a positive impact on the lives of an estimated 520,000 people.

What do we do?

- In Tanzania, for example, we guide first aid providers to give first aid training themselves. First aid knowledge is particularly important there, as in these parts of the world, the proximity of a hospital or even a doctor is not to be taken for granted as it is here.
- We also invest a great deal in disaster preparedness. Rather than offering help after a disaster, we always try to anticipate potential natural disasters. This may be in the form of cash preparedness, which means we ensure the local Red Cross can help as soon as a disaster occurs by distributing cash. Affected families can then decide what to spend it on, thereby increasing their self-reliance. It also helps to prevent the local economy collapsing. Another disaster preparedness programme is Early Warning – Early Action. This provides advance training to people in a region threatened by natural disaster, to ensure they are prepared to respond in the best way possible in time of crisis.
- In Southeast Asia and the Middle East, we provided assistance to people affected by emergency situations resulting from conflicts or natural disasters, by issuing basic necessities (i.e. food or hygiene kits), medical treatment or psychosocial assistance.