

# BESOCIAL

## Towards a sustainable social media archiving strategy for Belgium

### DURATION

15/12/2019 – 15/03/2022

### BUDGET

441.750 €

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Social media content constitutes an interesting source for multiple research fields. The data however is very ephemeral and is often not archived by universities or institutional stakeholders thereby creating serious challenges for (digital) scholars who want to use archived social media content as a data resource. Also, the absence of social media in national web archiving initiatives poses serious challenges for preserving our digital heritage to support the understanding of contemporary society and its future. A number of heritage institutions abroad have already set up programmes to archive social media but it is not without challenges. The sheer volume of social media content alone can be an impeding factor. Social Media Archiving (SMA) is still an emerging field for which the standards for capturing and archiving are yet to be consolidated.

The goal of the BESOCIAL project is to create a two-fold Belgian strategy to preserve and archive online social media content. On the one hand, the social media channels used by Belgian newspapers included in the current (paper) collection of KBR will be archived and analysed, focusing on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. On the other hand, social media content related to a number of events (that will be selected during the project) will also be collected.

The project team will undertake an extensive literature review with regards to SMA policies for selection, access and preservation, study related legal frameworks (both in Belgium and abroad), test existing tools and software and investigate user requirements and research use of social media archives. In-depth interviews with professionals active in SMA will be organised and a survey among (inter)national researchers will be created in order to collect data about the user requirements. Pilot projects will be organised to test collecting social media and providing access to these collections for research use, which will inform the procedures and strategy that will be developed for SMA in Belgium.

The BESOCIAL project will enrich scientific research and knowledge in the domain of heritage science, regarding different topics related to social media archiving: legal issues (privacy, image right, copyright, etc.), technical aspects (harvesting and preservation) and providing access to these specific born-digital collections. Moreover, by developing a strategy for social media archiving in Belgium, BESOCIAL will directly comply with KBR's action plan (2019-2021) and especially the objective to make as much information as possible accessible. BESOCIAL is a project that aims to guarantee access to information, one of the major challenges of our society.

During the first phase of the project a review of existing SMA projects will be done comprising selection and access policies, tools for SMA, foreign legal frameworks and preservation policies.

The second phase focuses on preparing a pilot for SMA including the development of a methodology for real-time archiving of social media, an analysis of user requirements, an analysis of existing legal frameworks in Belgium and the definition of technical and functional requirements based on the OAIS-model. A report will be drafted for each of these aspects.

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A pilot for SMA will take place during the third phase. Social media content will be harvested resulting in collections of archived social media content. Quality control will be done on these collections which will be documented in a report. A preservation plan for these collections will also be developed.

During the fourth phase of the project, access to the collections will be piloted. The legal considerations concerning access to collections of archived social media will be studied and analysed in a report including operational guidelines for KBR. Additionally, the access platform and search environment will be developed. Lastly, the pilot social media archive will be evaluated by means of interviews and observations during real-life trials. These findings will be documented in a report.

The fifth phase of the project consists of making recommendations for sustainable SMA in Belgium, including legal recommendations, technical and functional requirements for an operational SMA system, business model development, the definition of a Belgian strategy for SMA, institutional embedding of SMA at KBR and the definition of concrete procedures at KBR.

Furthermore, the research findings will provide the basis for a number of publications and presentations at conferences and workshops. A concluding colloquium will also be organised at the end of the project. During the entire project CRIDS will also provide a helpdesk for legal enquiries which will result in an FAQ.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## LINKS

<https://www.kbr.be/en/projects/besocial/>

[BESOCIAL - towards a sustainable social media archiving strategy for Belgium — Research group for Media, Innovation and Communication Technologies \(mict\) \(ugent.be\)](#)

<https://researchportal.unamur.be/en/projects/besocial-towards-a-sustainable-social-media-archiving-strategy-fo>