

# Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year 2022



## Winner and finalists



Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union

## **Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year 2022**

### **Winner and finalists**

Photos:

Orgelkids

The Ambulance for Monuments

The School Church

Peregrino Lebaniego Digital 4.0

Jewish Virtual Tourism

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## THE FRH INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR 2022

The Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year is a competition launched by FRH in 2022 to recognise remarkable contributions to the preservation, understanding and promotion of Europe's places of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, chapels, pilgrim routes, etc.)

The theme chosen for the first edition was sustainability, one of the five pillars of the European Commission's Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage which also has together with inclusiveness, resilience, innovation and global partnerships.

Sustainability should not only be understood as the fight against climate change and the response to its challenges, but from a broader perspective, considering also economic and social factors.

The five projects presented in this brochure exemplify the different facets of sustainability and demonstrate that innovation does not have to be digital.

FRH hopes that these noteworthy examples will serve as an inspiration to the cultural sector and as evidence of the efforts heritage organisations are making to ensure a more sustainable future.

### For more information:

<https://www.frh-europe.org/religious-heritage-innovator-of-the-year/>





# MEMBERS OF THE JURY

## Peter Aiers



Peter Aiers is the 34th Master and Chief Executive of the Charterhouse. He was previously the Chief Executive of the Churches Conservation Trust, a national charity caring for historic church buildings across England and had worked here for 15 years.

Peter's background is in historic building conservation and has always had a particular interest in how historic buildings can best serve contemporary society. He has a track record of significant historic church building development projects and also invented Champing™.

Peter is a trustee of the Heritage Alliance, and Goodwill Solutions CIO and also a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.

## Florian Trott



Florian Trott studied culture and communication management in Potsdam and Berlin as well as Italian at the Università per stranieri di Perugia. He is working as the managing director and member of the board of directors of the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe since September 2020. He is also responsible for the museum's digital strategy. From 2017 he headed the Communications department at the Kunsthalle, and from 2008 to 2016 he worked as Head of Communications and Education at the Luther Memorials Foundation in Saxony-Anhalt.

## Justin Kroesen



Justin Kroesen is Professor of Cultural History at the University of Bergen specialising in the material culture of Christianity, and research curator of the Church Art Collection at its University Museum. His research focuses on church interiors and furnishings during the Middle Ages and in the era of the Reformations. His present project concerns the survival of medieval art in Lutheran churches in Germany. From 2004-2015, he was a lecturer on the art history of Christianity at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands). Beyond academia, Kroesen is a member of the council of Future for Religious Heritage in Brussels and collaborates with several museums and other heritage organizations in Norway, the Netherlands, and Spain.



Winner



Photo: Orgelkids

## ORGELKIDS

Kerkmuziek Network  
(Churchmusic Network)

Orgelkids is an educational project to introduce children to the church organ in a very appealing way: by building one themselves. The project started in 2009 in The Netherlands to ensure that organs and organ music can continue to be enjoyed in the future despite church closures and the declining number of organists. Today, over 20 countries have embraced its successful formula, spreading the motto "organise the future" in their schools.

### What makes this project innovative?

Together with an organ builder, Orgelkids has developed a unique teaching kit: an organ that children have to assemble themselves and which is capable of playing music once set up.

The so-called "Do-Organ" consists of 128 parts that allow children to build a working pipe organ in 45 minutes. The assembled organ pipe has two octaves and two registers and gets wind with manually operated bellows. It can be disassembled after the activity.

With this hands-on methodology, children can tell exactly how an organ works. This makes a visit to the large organ in the church an instructive follow-up excursion.

The Do-organ can be used in formal educational situations, such as (music) lessons or workshops in primary schools, but it is also extremely suitable for informal meetings and special moments such as open monument days, cultural markets, or a church or city organ jubilee.

To this day, 150 Do-organs can be found in more than 20 countries all over the world.



## How does it contribute to sustainability?

The project does not aim to turn the children into organists or cultural heritage professionals but to bring them in contact and become more knowledgeable of this important cultural asset and the intangible heritage linked to it.

Children will be responsible for conserving our cultural heritage as active members of society in the future, and they will do so on the basis of their experience with this heritage.

By passing on knowledge about organ pipes to the younger generation, Orgelkids is playing a key role in guaranteeing a future for the organ.

Orgelkids sums up this idea in a sentence: "What is accessible is then lovable. And love is needed to give the organ a vibrant future!"

*Organ pipes were super computers of the Middle Ages, the most advanced machines that existed in the 16th -17th. When a church closes not only the built heritage is lost but also the activities that happen in it. A project like Orgelkids represents the future of religious heritage, and shows that innovation doesn't have to be digital, it can be tangible.*

Justin Kroesen  
(Member of the Jury)



Founder of Orgel Kids, Lydia Vroegindewey, and Organ builder Wim Janssen, who designed the Do-Organ.

Source: Orgelkids.com



Composition contest with Do-organs in 2019



Children experimenting with the do organ in the classroom.

### More information



[www.orgelkids.nl](http://www.orgelkids.nl)



[/Orgelkids](https://www.facebook.com/Orgelkids)



[@orgelkids](https://twitter.com/orgelkids)



[@orgelkids](https://www.youtube.com/orgelkids)





Finalist



Photo: Asociatia Monumentum

# AMBULANCE FOR MONUMENTS

Asociatia Monumentum

The Ambulance for Monuments was launched in 2016 in Romania to save endangered historical monuments with the support of volunteers, heritage experts, local communities and administrations. The project is designed to work in the same way that an ambulance for humans: there is a fully equipped vehicle that comes on site, the experts assess the damage and stabilise the patient, and then a team works to return the patient to a healthy state.

## What makes this project innovative?

The Ambulance for Monuments has developed a unique model of intervention for historic monuments that allows complex evaluation and restoration work to be carried out in an efficient, multidisciplinary and financially sustainable manner.

Its modus-operandi consists of a series of well-defined steps. First, a lorry equipped with tools and materials arrives at the endangered monument. Next, trained experts

and craftsmen assesses the monument's condition and draws up and directs an intervention plan. A team of volunteers and locals can then carry out the necessary work to restore the ailing monument to a healthy state. The monument is finally added to a database of restored sites.

The Ambulance operates according to the medical principle "Primum non nocere" or "first, no harm": it always strives to keep its intervention to a minimum, using harmless materials compatible with the body of the building and making sure that the intervention is reversible.

## How does it contribute to sustainability?

Asociatia Monumentum has created a sustainable cooperation model in which each of the actors involved in the intervention has a specific function: the community offers housing and food, the owner/local administration supplies construction materials, the NGO provides the documentation, and the experts, volunteers and craftspeople coordinate the site work.

The initiative has a financial bottom-up approach being supported mostly from private funds (local and national businesses, donations of local community members, crowdfunding etc.) and from many different local and regional administrations which makes it cost-effective and extremely resistant against political changes.

Thank to this cooperation and financial formulas, the interventions of the ambulance engage a similar number of actors with far less financial resources as a complex conservation intervention would do.

The organisations involved in the project also keep sustainability in focus by following closely the social impact it has.



Volunteers participating in the restoration of a rooftop.



Orthodox church to be restored

In its six years of operation, “the ambulance” has saved 53 religious buildings of various denominations (Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Lutheranism, Judaism) in Romania. 50% of the buildings that were saved by the ambulance have benefited from further interventions by the owners/local communities. More than 20 % of the building have been adaptively transformed and reused after the interventions, for a few others there has been designed a complex restoration projects and almost for all of them maintenance has been carried out.

*I have never seen a project to save monuments on this scale before. I really like the idea of getting on a van and going to save heritage. It provides practical solutions while campaigning at the same time. It has certainly had an impact.*

Peter Aiers  
(Member of the Jury)

### More information



[ambulanta-pentru-monumente.ro](http://ambulanta-pentru-monumente.ro)



[@ambulantapentru-monumente](https://www.facebook.com/ambulantapentru-monumente)



[@ambulantapentru-monumente](https://www.instagram.com/ambulantapentru-monumente)





Finalist



Photo: Zwiift project

## PEREGRINO LEBANIEGO DIGITAL 4.0

**Zwit Project.**  
**Territorio Rural Inteligente**

Peregrino Lebaniego Digital 4.0 (Digital Lebaniego pilgrim 4.0) is a digital project born in 2015 to revitalise the rural areas crossed by the Lebaniego Way, in the north of Spain, through the creation of an interconnected network of local businesses, pilgrims and tourists.

### What makes this project innovative?

The Lebaniego Peregrino Digital 4.0 project, aims to unlock the tourism, economic and cultural potential of the pilgrimage route of Liébana transforming it into a tool to boost rural development and prevent depopulation.

The efforts of the project resulted in an app that connects visitors and local enterprises, making the first understand the value of the region's traditions and cultural assets and helping the latter to exploit their resources in the best possible way.

Along the 72km of the Lebaniego route, hikers can find 15 beacons powered by solar panels that allow them to have free WiFi connection through the app.

Once connected, users have access to information about the eleven villages of the route and their monuments, a map with a geolocation service to know where they are at any moment and what the different alternatives of the Lebaniego Way are, an agenda of activities and local events, notifications of incidents along the route (caused by climate conditions, road congestion, etc.) as well as direct connection with the 112 phone line to communicate any emergency.



This makes the Lebaniego Way the first interconnected pilgrimage route in the world, setting an example to other regions crossed by pilgrimage routes.

## How does it contribute to sustainability?

The project contributes not only to improve the tourist experience in the region but also to the sustainability of tourism and the rural environment.

The Lebaniego Way has a human capital, a business network and a very diverse cultural and natural heritage that can support the creation and consolidation of tourist products and services based on the improvement of the local entities' highly differentiated tourist experiences.

This diversity is the key to attracting new segments of national and international demand, diversifying supply, reducing the seasonality of destinations, balancing territorial tourism development and improving the profitability and sustainability of tourism companies.

Beyond its tourist utility, the communications infrastructure generated as part of the project can be used to offer other services to the citizens of the territory, such as video assistance to the elderly and dependents or data transmission from sensor networks for the efficient management of lighting networks, water, waste containers, etc.

*This project represents the future of religious heritage, it benefits the whole community while being very aware of the traditions. It's really professional and it opens the door to economic, environmental, and technical industry sustainability.*

**Florian Trott**  
(Member of the Jury)



Presentation of Peregrino Lebaniego Digital 4.0 to the regional government of Cantabria, Spain.







One of the 15 solar beacons along the pilgrimage route.



Solar beacon close to one of the many religious heritage sites of the Lebaniego Way.

### More information

-  [peregrinolebaniegodigital.com](http://peregrinolebaniegodigital.com)
-  [@peregrinolebaniegodigital](https://www.facebook.com/peregrinolebaniegodigital)
-  [@peregrinolebaniegodigital](https://www.instagram.com/peregrinolebaniegodigital)
-  [Peregrino Lebaniego Digital](https://www.youtube.com/PeregrinoLebaniegoDigital)



Finalist



Photo: Groninger Kerken

## THE SCHOOL CHURCH

Groningen Historic Churches  
Foundation (Groninger Kerken)

The School Church is an excellent example of heritage reuse that has provided the community of Garmerwolde, The Netherlands, with an educational space that connects children with cultural heritage. This new "classroom" in the church of Garmerwolde encourages discussion through an interactive exhibition and invites the pupils themselves to take the initiative on the topics they want to discuss.

### What makes this project innovative?

The heritage organisation Groninger Kerken, which manages more than 100 churches in the Netherlands, wanted to give the medieval church of Garmerwolde, one of the most beautiful late Romanesque churches in Stad in Ommeland, a new use for educational purposes while maintaining the former purposes of the church and its surroundings.

The School Church is now a multifunctional space that offers programmes for primary and secondary schools within a safe, positive and professional framework.

The main educational programme focuses on the *Feast! In West and East* exhibition that has been set up in the church tower. This exhibition takes children and adults through Christian and Islamic holiday celebrations with the aim of creating an understanding between people from various backgrounds, through the recognisable theme of holidays and feasts.

The school programme that accompanies this exhibition introduces students to traditions and celebrations around the world, inviting them to start a debate. The programme also includes a guide and audio tours, teaching material for the classroom and transport to the School Church.



## How does it contribute to sustainability?

The project's greatest achievement has been to guarantee a future for a unique medieval church, turning it into a pleasant space for the community where heritage can be understood and appreciated without losing any of the essence of the building.

This result would not have been possible without the collaboration of the interdisciplinary creative development team, which consisted of an architect, designers, building engineers, local volunteers and educators. By working in this team, many different approaches to the theme of "holidays from the East and the West" came together and resulted in surprising ideas and solutions.

In addition to the sustainable collaboration model for developing the project, the School Church demonstrates its commitment to ecological sustainability, using energy in a sustainable manner and carefully monitoring the effectiveness of the measures taken with an energy registration and smart monitoring system. This provides crucial knowledge about sustainability and climate action in the care and use of the monuments.

*The School Church is a very professional project, creative and contemporary in its presentation. It uses religious heritage for mutual understanding, which is a broader social objective than just making cultural heritage known. Another strong point is that it contributes to making heritage appealing to a young audience that can sometime be hard to attract.*

Justin Kroesen  
(Member of the Jury)



Activity outdoors as part of the educational programme of The School Church.






Children walking through the Feast! In West and East exhibition in the church tower.



Students participating in a debate in the churchyard.

### More information

-  [www.schoolkerk.nl](http://www.schoolkerk.nl)
-  [@schoolkerk](https://twitter.com/schoolkerk)
-  [@schoolkerk](https://www.facebook.com/schoolkerk)
-  [@schoolkerk](https://www.instagram.com/schoolkerk)





Finalist



Photo: Jewish Majorca

## JEWISH VIRTUAL TOURISM

### Jewish Majorca

Jewish Virtual Tourism is a project that was born in the wake of the pandemic as a response to the mobility limitations that made it impossible to enjoy cultural heritage sites in situ. Through tours offered via Zoom, Jewish Majorca bridges the distance barrier by taking visitors on a virtual tour of the island's Jewish heritage in real time.

### What makes this project innovative?

Jewish Virtual Tourism proposes a new way of tourism that allows access to Majorca's medieval Jewish quarters to thousands of people from around the globe who are unable to travel in person, leading them through an interactive learning experience that engages both visitors and residents alike.

The initiator of this initiative is Dani Rotstein, an American who landed in Majorca seven years ago and who has turned his passion for the island's Jewish heritage into his full-time job.

There are currently seven virtual routes available covering different periods of time and aspects of Majorca's Jewish history and monuments. The tours are offered in English, Spanish and Mallorquin (the language of the Balearic Islands).

Mr Rotstein refers to these tours not only as a tourist tour but as an opportunity of building bonds with the Jewish community: "By offering a walk and talk experience with members of the local active Jewish community today – visitors get to see the past, present, and hopefully the future from another point of view. We also create space for dialogue open to Jews and non-Jews alike to learn together about the richness and diversity of Jewish history and culture."

## How does it contribute to sustainability?

Jewish Virtual Tourism is a clear example of adaptation to the new situation after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

By using a simple and well-known digital tool such as Zoom, Mr Rotstein was able to respond quickly to the mobility constraints, continuing its activity as a professional tour guide in Majorca despite the lack of tourists on the island.

The project is also sustainable from a social perspective as it creates a bridge between participants and local people from Majorca who appear during the tour, giving them the opportunity to make questions and interact.



Participants following one of the tours through Zoom.




Dani Rotstein during one of the live tours in Majorca.


*I have never seen a company offering virtual live tours before. It is something that you can enjoy from the comfort of your home and the fact that it uses a well-known platform as Zoom makes it more likely for people to get involved and enjoy heritage tours that they might not otherwise be able to see from anywhere in the world.*

Peter Aiers  
(Member of the Jury)




### More information

 [www.jewishmajorca.com](http://www.jewishmajorca.com)

 [@jewishmajorca](https://www.facebook.com/jewishmajorca)

 [@jewishmajorca](https://www.instagram.com/jewishmajorca)

 [@jewishmajorca9527](https://www.youtube.com/jewishmajorca9527)

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