

PRESS RELEASE FROM FUTURE FOR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

RELEASE DATE: 07/02/2023

The future and sustainability of European religious heritage - FRH Biennial Conference 2023 in Sweden, April 20 - 21

The FRH Conference will develop new ideas and policies for a sustainable future for Europe's historic buildings of worship including churches, synagogues and mosques.

Future for Religious Heritage, the leading European organisation for the safeguarding of historic places of worship, is pleased to announce its Biennial Conference 2023 "European Sustainable Religious Heritage".

The two-day high-level event will analyse the challenges facing religious heritage in Europe and will take place **in Lund, Sweden, on 20 & 21 April**. The Conference has been organised in partnership with the Diocese of Lund, Church of Sweden.

This year's theme is sustainability, one of the five pillars of the European Commission's Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage and one of the top priorities on the agendas of global organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS.

The conference has been structured around four sub-themes: **economic sustainability, ecological sustainability, social sustainability and cultural/Spiritual sustainability**.

The programme will address the challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainability, examples of good practices, and current debates in international, European, national and regional contexts.

Among the specific topics addressed will be the **dramatic loss of heritage buildings in Ukraine** one year after the start of the war. Dealing with the effects of climate change on religious heritage across the continent will also be a key topic.

Financial need

In recent months, FRH has gathered disturbing information on the condition of religious heritage: in the Netherlands 1 out of 8 parishes were in financial need in 2021 (Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency; many of the UK's 40,000 pipe organs in churches are at risk (Pipe Up for Pipe Organs), and in Ukraine, more than 270 historic religious buildings have been destroyed in 2022 as a consequence of the war (Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine).

Prominent European and national representatives, including **Catherine Magnant**, Head of Unit for Cultural Policy in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, will open the conference.

As part of the conference, **FRH will put forward a policy paper** with useful insights and recommendations for policymakers and the public to work towards a more sustainable future for Europe's historic places of worship.

Speakers

This conference will bring together academics, policymakers, heritage practitioners and other professionals to fuel a lively debate among the public on the most pressing issues facing historic sacred sites.

The four keynote speakers are: **Christer Gustafsson**, Professor in Conservation at Uppsala University (Sweden) who will address the sub-theme of economic sustainability; **Shaul Bassi**, Director of the MA in Environmental Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy) who will address the sub-theme of ecological sustainability; **Jakub Nowakowski**, Director of the Galicia Jewish Museum (Poland), who will address the sub-theme of cultural/spiritual sustainability; and **Tharik Hussain**, travel writer and journalist specialising in Muslim heritage (United Kingdom), who will address the sub-theme of social sustainability.

The programme also includes presentations by **Silvia Aulet**, Researcher in spiritual and religious tourism at the University of Girona (Spain); **Britta Roos**, Head of the cultural heritage department at the County Administrative Board of Skåne (Sweden); **Bogdan-Ilie Cocieru**, from the Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava (Romania); **Anne Grady**, Seconded National Expert on Cultural Heritage from the National Museum of Ireland to the CULT Committee of European Parliament (Ireland); Jennie Hawks, Founder of the Building Crafts and Conservation Foundation (United Kingdom); **Klas Grinell**, Director of the Center of European Research at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden); **Ruslan Khalikov**, Consultant at the Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Studies (Ukraine); **Olimpia Niglio**, Professor in Comparative History of Architecture and Architectural Restoration at the University of Pavia (Italy); **Thomas O'Dell**, Professor at the University of Lund (Sweden); **Heikki Ranta**, Heritage Officer at the Diocese of Lund (Sweden); **Peter Palgut**, member of the EHL site Gotická cesta Association (Slovakia); **Matthias Ripp**, Regional Coordinator of the Organisation of World Heritage Cities in Northwest-Europe and North America (Germany); **Claire Walker**, Chief Executive at National Churches Trust (United Kingdom).

Innovator of the Year

The Conference will include the Awards Ceremony of the Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year. This FRH initiative was launched in 2022 to recognise outstanding examples of innovation in religious heritage. The theme was sustainability, not only to be understood as the fight against climate change but from a broader perspective, considering also economic and social factors. The 2022 winner is Lydia Vroegindewij, founder of the educative project Orgelkids to bring the organ pipe culture into primary schools.

More info and competition booklet here: <https://www.frh-europe.org/religious-heritage-innovator-of-the-year/2022-winner-and-finalists/>

Photo Competition

The Awards Ceremony of the Photo Competition 2022 will take place at the Conference. This worldwide competition is launched annually by FRH to find inspiring pictures of religious heritage sites, artefacts, people and events. The 2022 competition received 260 photos from over 30 countries. The winner was André Boto, a Portuguese professional photographer with a picture of the sunset over Silves' historic centre in which we can see the Cathedral of Silves and part of Igreja da Misericórdia de Silves' church.

More info and competition booklet here: <https://www.frh-europe.org/frh-photo-and-video-competition/winner-and-finalists/>

Students will “Run for Heritage” in Lund before the Conference (19th April)

Prior to the Conference, the city of Lund will host a bike tour as part of the Run for Heritage campaign. Through this initiative, FRH invites young people to discover their local religious heritage sites while promoting healthy habits among the younger generation. The activity will be organised in collaboration with Föreningen Larm.

More info about the campaign and past activities here: <https://www.frh-europe.org/activities/ongoing-activities/run-for-heritage/>

More information can be found on the Conference website: <https://www.frh-europe.org/events/conferences/frh-conference-2023-european-sustainable-religious-heritage/>

Bookings can be made on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/frh-biennial-conference-2023-european-sustainable-religious-heritage-tickets-465073456227>

Note to editors:

About FRH

Future for Religious Heritage (FRH) is an independent, non-faith, non-profit European network founded in 2011 and based in Brussels. Its aim is to promote, encourage and support the safeguard, maintenance, conservation, restoration, accessibility and embellishment of historic places of worship. Our network represents more than 80 organisations and over 120 professionals from 36 countries, which includes NGOs, governmental organisations, religious and university departments, and individuals. We are one of the 36 European networks currently supported by the Creative Europe Networks programme.

More information can be found on our website: www.frh-europe.org

Photos for public use: [Flickr](#)

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