

Conference programme

Thursday, 22 October 2026

Venue: Irish College Leuven, Jansenijsstraat 1, 3000 Leuven, Belgium ([View on Google Maps](#))

8.30	Registrations
9.00	Official institutional welcome:
	- Patty Wageman, President of FRH - Mr. Georg Haeusler, Director Culture Creativity and Sport, EU Commission - Peter De Wilde, CEO Flemish Heritage Agency - Wouter Jaspers, Director PARCUM
1st SUB-THEME From community-based to holistic: Different approaches to future-proofing religious heritage <i>Moderator: Adam Klups Diocese of Gloucester, United Kingdom</i>	
09.30	Keynote presentation by Luigi Bartolomei, Department of Architecture at the University of Bologna
10.00	Presentation by Manuela Klauser, TRANSARA research group at the University of Bonn
10.15	Audience Q&A
10.30 Coffee break <i>Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.</i>	
11.00	Presentation by Dani Kranz, Tikvah Institute in Berlin; and Sarah Ross, director of the European Center for Jewish Music at Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media
11.15	Presentation by Karim Ettourki, Services and Expertise Sharing KADOC - KU Leuven
11.30	Abstract presentation. “The implementation of digital tools in the interpretation of heritage from a cultural and pastoral perspective” by Anna Vilanova-Prat, Tourism Officer at the Cathedral and the Archdiocese of Barcelona
11.37	Abstract presentation. “Safeguarding Endangered Religious Heritage at the Great

	Prespa Lake” by Bert Ludwig, European Heritage Volunteers.
11.44	Audience Q&A
11.55	Summary by the moderator of the day
12.00 Lunch at the Irish College Leuven <i>Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.</i>	
STUDY VISITS	
13.30 - 17:30	Bus departure from Irish College Leuven at 13.30. Participants will be divided into two groups. The first group will visit Site 1 first and then head to site 2, and vice versa. Both groups will meet for the conference dinner and evening programme at Vlierbeek Abbey.
Site 1	Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee, Leuven. Former monastery transformed into a carbon neutral cultural hotspot. Discover how the former monastery is being revitalised as a cultural site. The complex, dating from 1937, was designed by the modernist architect Victor Broos. LAVA Architecten led the renovation work for four years, from 2022 to 2025. Art Deco elements and modernist details have been incorporated into the revised architecture. Today, the Paul van Ostaijen Site is a vibrant hub for art, education and social interaction.
Site 2	Saint-Michael's and Saint Anna's Churches in Boutersem As part of a municipal "kerkenbeleidsplan" (church policy plan) in Boutersem, several churches of the municipality are exploring extended use possibilities. We will visit two of them: -St Anne's Church in Roosbeek has been converted into a community center and museum dedicated to local religious heritage. A place for cultural events, exhibitions, and social gatherings managed by the non-profit organisation Hannah Acteum. -The Saint-Michael's Church, which is home to the community project 'Come and see'. Rooted in the Christian tradition, this project creates a place to pause, reflect, connect, and explore spirituality.
See Groups Schedule in the Annex below	
17.30 - 22.00 Conference dinner and evening programme at Vlierbeek Abbey <i>Venue: Abdij van Vlierbeek - Abdij Vlierbeek 14, 3010 Leuven (View on Google Maps)</i>	
We invite you to experience Vlierbeek Abbey not simply as a historic site, but as a living place, shaped and cared for by the people who are part of it today.	

Over dinner in the cloister, we will explore what a creative process for imagining the future of a religious heritage site can look like. How can we genuinely involve the people who live, work and are actively engaged in and around such a place?

During dessert, you will meet residents, volunteers and local organizations closely connected to Vlierbeek Abbey.

We will then move together to the abbey church for a special evening of stories, music and reflection. We will explore what gives a place its soul and look ahead together to what its future might become.

An evening to meet, listen, experience and imagine the future together, in one of Leuven's most remarkable religious heritage sites.

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8.00	OPTIONAL: Mass at the St John the Baptist's Church, followed by a guided tour offered by the Bishops' Conference of Belgium.
9.30 Coffee at Irish College Leuven <i>Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.</i>	
2^o SUB-THEME Policies and Instruments: Good Practices Across Europe <i>Moderator: Rolando Volzone, DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Portugal</i>	
9.45	Welcome by the moderator of the day
10.00	Keynote presentation by Joanna Dorsser, Real Estate Director at the Diocese of Paris
10.30	Presentation by Sara Vermeulen, Flemish Heritage Agency
10.45	Audience Q&A
11.00 Coffee Break <i>Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.</i>	
11.30	Presentation by Judith Toebast, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands

11.45	Presentation by Dr Abdul-Azim Ahmed, Islam-UK Centre at Cardiff University
12.00	Abstract presentation “Romanesque churches in Skåne - medieval, contemporary and future resources” by Henrik Lindblad, Affiliated Researcher at Department of Art History, Uppsala University
12.07	Abstract presentation. “Between Charter and Site: Navigating the Gap Between Normative Frameworks and Field Realities in Walloon Religious Heritage Management”, by Sophie Denoel, Wallon Heritage Agency
12.14	Audience Q&A
12.25	Summary by the Moderator of the Day
12.30	Photo Competition Award Ceremony (2024-2025)
12.45	Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year (2024-2025)
13.00 Lunch at the Irish College Leuven <i>Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.</i>	
14.00 - 16.15 PARALLEL WORKSHOPS The afternoon programme is divided into 3 time slots of 40 minutes during which conference participants, divided in groups, will rotate to participate in two workshops and see the poster exhibition. 1st slot: 14:00-14.45 2nd slot: 14.50-15:35 3rd slot: 15.40-16.25	
Workshop 1	Different approaches to futureproof religious heritage Moderator: Justin Kroesen, University of Bergen (Norway) <i>Rooms: Auditorium (Tables 1 & 2) Hall (Table 3)</i>
Workshop 2	Policies and Instruments to future proof religious heritage Moderator: Sara Vermeulen <i>Rooms: Hall 1 (Table 4), Hall 2 (Tables 5 & 6)</i>
Workshop 3	Poster exhibition Participants will be given time to view the posters displayed at the hall of the Irish College Leuven.
See Groups schedule and Workshops programme in the Annex	
16.30	Plenary presentation of the workshops outcomes by Professor Justin Kroesen (Approaches to futureproof religious heritage) and Sara Vermeulen (Policies and Instruments).

17.00 Closing of the conference	
17.00	Summary and conclusions of the conference
17.30	Closing words
17.45	End of the conference
18.00 Reception and exhibition visit at KADOC <i>Venue: KADOC - Vlamingenstraat 39, 3000 Leuven (View on Google Maps)</i>	
18.00	Welcome and introduction to the exhibition "God on the Street. How Religion Shapes Public Space" by KADOC Streets, squares and neighbourhoods possess a distinct character that has been shaped by the interplay of numerous actors. Alongside architects, the authorities and local residents, churches, mosque councils and religious communities have also left their mark on the environment. The exhibition explores the impact of religion and religious actors on public space through case studies in Flanders and Brussels. This evening, the curators will take you on a unique journey of discovery through this under-explored aspect of public space. <i>Exhibition organised by KADOC in collaboration with the Flemish Architecture Institute.</i>
18.20	Reception offered by KADOC
20.00 Silent film and organ concert Participants interested in attending must buy a ticket during the conference	
20.00	Welcome
20.15	Brief introduction to organ music
20.30	Silent film with live organ accompaniment by Paul De Maeyer
21.00	End of the concert

Saturday, 24 October 2026

Conference participants that stay Saturday in Leuven are warmly invited to join the following events happening in town. Both activities can be combined. Please note that these activities are

not guided by FRH, although our team will provide guidance on how to get to the venues and what to expect from each event.

Visit & presentation at PARCUM (First slot: 9.30 | Second slot: 11:00)

PARCUM is celebrating the completion of the restoration works on Park Abbey, which houses the organisation’s museum and centre of expertise on religious heritage. To mark the occasion, a festive open day will invite the public to discover the details of the restoration and learn more about the role PARCUM plays in supporting Flanders’ religious heritage.

Visit & presentation at KADOC (First slot: 9.30 | Second slot: 11:00)

KADOC (Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society) is opening the doors of the its Chapel of Our Lady of Fever, a former Franciscan monastery church, sold in 1987 to the University of Leuven and since 1994 serving as venue for presentations and a meeting place for art and heritage. Apart from the visit, participants will learn more in depth about KADOC’s mission in the oldest university in Belgium.

STUDY VISITS

Thursday, 22 October 2026

GROUP 1

Programme

14.00-15.00 | Visit to St Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee

Discover how the former monastery is being revitalised as a cultural site.

15.30 | St Annakerk in Roosbeek (Boutersem)

General introduction by Chris Vervliet (Alderman of finance, church factories, heritage and patrimony, science policy, culture, strategic traffic projects) of the municipality of Boutersem.

Formation and operation of HannaH Acteum by Daniel Vandenhoeck (chairman of the church team of Roosbeek)

16.15-16.30 | St. Michielkerk in Butsel (Boutersem)

Explanation of the Project 'Come and See' by Bettie Geelen (Secretary of the Church Council Boutersem)

17.00 | Bus departure to Vlierbeek Abbey

GROUP 2

Programme

14.00 | St. Annakerk in Roosbeek

General introduction by Chris Vervliet (Alderman of finance, church factories, heritage and patrimony, science policy, culture, strategic traffic projects) of the municipality of Boutersem.

Formation and operation of HannaH Acteum by Daniel Vandenhoeck (chairman of the church team of Roosbeek)

14.45 | St. Michael's Church in Butsel

Explanation of the Project 'Come and See' by Bettie Geelen (Secretary of the Church Council Boutersem)

15.45 | Bus departs to St Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee

16.15 | St Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee

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17.00 | Bus departs to St Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee

WORKSHOPS

Friday, 23 October 2026

WORKSHOP 1 | Different approaches to futureproof religious heritage

Moderator: Justin Kroesen, University of Bergen (Norway)

Participants will be divided into smaller groups and will rotate between three round-table sessions, each of which will explore a different approach to ensuring the long-term preservation of religious heritage, based on two specific case studies.

The table below shows the location, topic and coordinators for each round-table session:

	Table 1 (Auditorium)	Table 2 (Auditorium)	Table 3 (Room 1)
Focus:	Safeguarding multireligious heritage and archives	Creating new heritage communities for religious heritage	Heritage analysis as an instrument for a holistic approach to religious heritage
Moderator:	Carine Dujardin (KADOC)	Elien Doesselaere (FARO)	Lotte Renard (PARCUM)
Notulist:	Freya De Cauwer (PARCUM)	TBC	Judith Delbaere (PARCUM)
Case 1:	Moskee erfgoed, by Karim Ettourki (KADOC)	Wim Jacobs (Commons lab)	Tools for heritage analysis used by PARCUM door Bert Van der Veken (PARCUM)
Case 2:	Hemelsbreed , by Julie Aerts (PARCUM)	Inge Basteleur (Groninger Kerken)	Brugse Begijnhofcase, by Kristien Suenens (KADOC)

WORKSHOP 2 | Policies and Instruments to future proof religious heritage

Moderator: Sara Vermeulen, Flanders Heritage Agency

Room: Room 1 (Table 4), Room 2 (Tables 5 & 6)

Participants will be divided into smaller groups and will rotate between three round-table sessions, each of which will explore instruments and frameworks to future-proof religious heritage, based on two specific case studies. The table below shows the location, topic and coordinators for each round-table session.

	Table 4 Room 1	Table 5 Room 2	Table 6 Room 2
Focus:	Financial instruments to secure the future of religious sites	What’s possible on this religious site? Instruments to guide decision-making on new future.	Form and function: how to incorporate possible future uses in religious heritage policies
Moderator:	Roel De Ridder (Platform Toekomst Parochiekerken)	Elisabeth Geukens (Flanders Heritage Agency)	Serge Defresne (Flanders Heritage Agency)
Notulist:	Nomi Deschuytteneer Platform Toekomst Parochiekerken	Ben Boone (Flanders Heritage Agency)	Vera Ameels (Flanders Heritage Agency)
Case 1:	Research project Leidsman by Platform Toekomst Parochiekerken - TBC	Purposing profiles by Sven Sterken	Faith in the periphery research, Charlotte Ardui - TBC
Case 2:	Scottish case by Harry Whitmore	Tool Witteveen en Bos - TBC	Research project on heritage values, Stijn Cools - TBC