

FRH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

22-23 OCTOBER 2026
LEUVEN | BELGIUM



PROGRAMME

THE TIME IS NOW!

HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF RELIGIOUS HERITAGE TOGETHER

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

Agentschap
Onroerend
Erfgoed



Vlaanderen
is erfgoed

KU LEUVEN



KADOC

PARCUM

Photo by Winston Tjia on Unsplash - Leuven Town Hall



As part of our commitment to protecting the environment, the 2026 FRH Biennial Conference will be paperless. Prior to the conference, participants will receive a pdf programme via email, which will be also available on the website. During the conference, participants will be able to access the programme on their phones via QR codes placed at the venue.

Welcome to Leuven!

Future for Religious Heritage (FRH) is delighted to welcome you at the **FRH Biennial Conference 2026 “The time is now: How to future-proof religious heritage together”** in Leuven Belgium. During the conference new paths will be explored for the future of Europe’s religious heritage, focusing on how a holistic approach and policy frameworks can help ensure that religious heritage remains relevant, resilient, and accessible for generations to come.

Themes

From community-based to holistic

Different approaches to future-proofing religious heritage. Religious heritage sites are not merely architectural monuments; they are part of broader cultural, social, ecological and economic ecosystems. A holistic approach should address these interconnections and move beyond mere conservation towards an integrated, long-term strategy. This perspective is becoming increasingly essential as heritage professionals respond to the challenges of climate change, resource constraints and the need for multifunctional uses of historic spaces.

Policies and tools

The effective management, reuse and revitalisation of religious heritage depend on supportive policy frameworks and practical tools. At regional, national, and European levels, a wide range of instruments (legal, financial, and strategic) are being developed to address the challenges of conservation and adaptive reuse. However, gaps and inconsistencies remain. By examining existing policies, sharing best practices, and identifying opportunities for improvement, the conference aims to advance more coherent and impactful approaches to safeguarding and revalorising religious heritage.

Programme

This year’s programme combines two mornings of expert presentations with an afternoon of interactive study visits and an afternoon of participatory workshops, offering opportunities not only to learn from presentations about leading practices and policies across Europe, but also to engage in guided discussions with other participants. The evening program on Thursday also offers an excellent opportunity to participate pro-actively as you are invited 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. And learn how to genuinely involve the people who live, work and are actively engaged in and around such a place?

After the official closure of the conference at **Irish College**, we are very pleased to inform you that you have the opportunity to join in on two very interesting activities on Friday evening. Participants are offered free entrance to a special exhibition and reception organised by our member KADOC followed by a Silent Film accompanied by Organ Concert at **Sint-Jozef church in Leuven**. The latter is organised by our member Daniel Vanden Broecke of Het Orgel in Vlaanderen (The Organ in Flanders) with support of the Organ of Leuven.

Conference participants that stay Saturday in Leuven are warmly invited by PARCUM and KADOC to join the Open door day & presentation at PARCUM to celebrate the completion of the restoration of **Park Abbey**, one of Leuven’s most remarkable heritage sites and home to PARCUM. And/or pay a visit to KADOC, documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society as it is opening the doors of the **Chapel of Our Lady of Fever**, a former Franciscan monastery church, and learn more in depth about KADOC’s mission in the oldest university in Belgium.

We are delighted and proud that such a remarkable and extensive program has been put together in collaboration and with the support of the **Flanders Heritage Agency, KADOC** and **PARCUM**. We look forward to the rich discussions, insightful presentations, the site visits and collaborative spirit that has defined our network for over a decade.

Patty Wageman

President Future for Religious Heritage (FRH)

Photo by Irish College Leuven - Irish College Leuven



Venues

With its rich religious heritage and renowned academic tradition, Leuven provides an ideal setting for discussions on the future of Europe's places of worship. The city is actively exploring ways to preserve its churches, monasteries, chapels and collections while ensuring they remain relevant and accessible to contemporary society.

The venue

Our venue will be the **Irish College Leuven**, a historic institution founded in the seventeenth century that continues to serve as a vibrant centre for education, culture, and dialogue.

Nearby the Irish College Leuven is the **Great Beguinage**, a charming area with historic houses and cobblestone streets where women used to live in a community back in the 1500s. Today most of these buildings belong to the university, KU Leuven.

Study visits

The study visits will offer participants first-hand insight into the Flemish approach to religious heritage. These include the **Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee** - a repurposed site turned into a carbon-neutral multifunctional space - as well as two churches of the **municipality of Boutersem**, which is currently developing a strategic plan for the future of its parish churches. We will end our tour at the **Vlierbeek Abbey**, followed by our conference dinner.

Partnership

This conference is organised in partnership with the **Flanders Heritage Agency**, which protects immovable heritage, supports its conservation and carries out policy-oriented research in Flanders; **KADOC-KU Leuven**, an interfaculty centre for the documentation and research of religion, culture and society; and **PARCUM**, a Flemish Government recognised museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture.

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PARCUM

Photo by Irish College Leuven - Auditorium Irish College Leuven



Irish College Leuven

The Irish College Leuven was founded in the 17th century by Irish Franciscan brothers. At the beginning it offered refuge to Irish scholars fleeing religious persecution. Over the years it became an important intellectual hub for preserving Irish culture and manuscripts. Today it is an international centre for education, training and research in European and international affairs.

Situated in the vibrant heart of Academic Leuven the Irish College is a vibrant hub for learning and collaboration. It offers the ideal environment for professional seminars, conferences and networking in their state-of-the-art conference spaces.

The FRH conference takes place on the ground floor. Plenary sessions will be held in the Auditorium. Opposite of the Auditorium is the wardrobe. Lunch on the first day is in Conference Room 1 and the surrounding corridor. On Friday, lunch will be served in Dinning room 1 and 2. Friday afternoon workshops will take place in Conference Rooms 1 and 2, the Green Room and the Auditorium. Poster exhibition is to be visited in the hall around the courtyard.

Wi-Fi Network: Irish College Leuven

Password: irishcollege

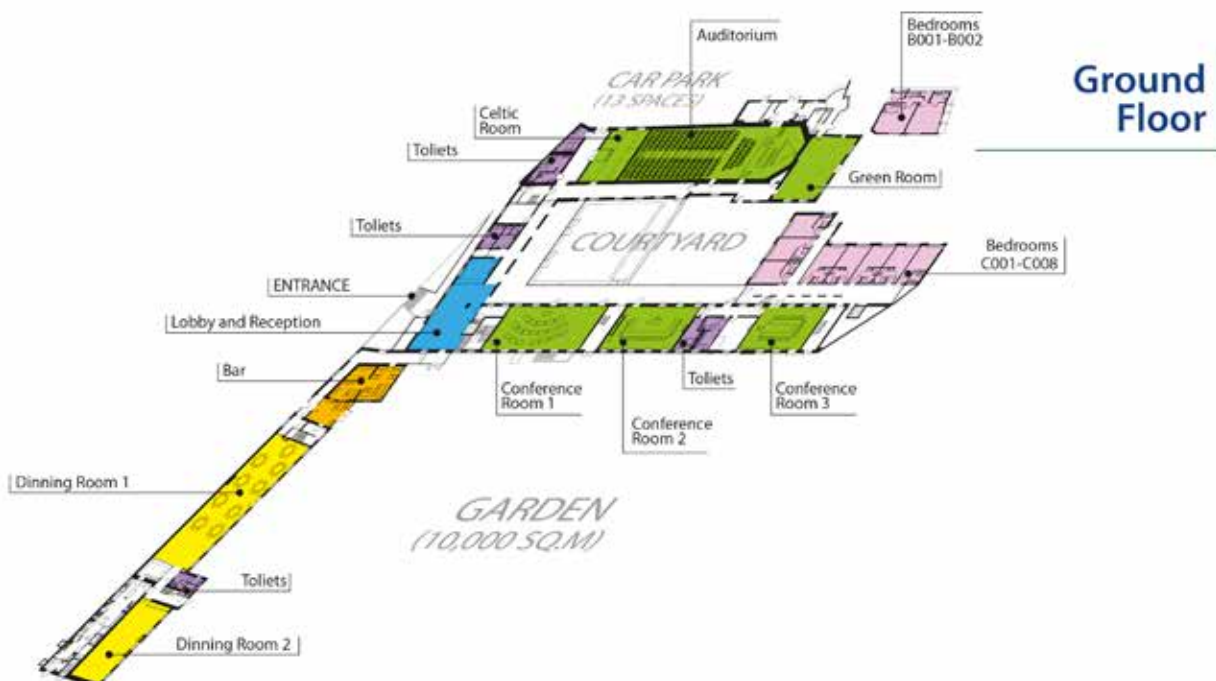


Photo by Kris van de Vorst made available by Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed (AOE) - Vlierbeek Abbey



Study visits

On Thursday the study visits will offer participants first-hand insight into the Flemish approach to religious heritage.

Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee

The Paul van Ostaijen site on Eerselvest in Leuven reopened its doors following an extensive renovation. The historic Victor Broos building—a monumental 1930s convent—was carefully restored while preserving its heritage value. Original Art Deco and modernist elements were integrated into the renewed complex. The iconic chapel hall, now transformed into a theater with tiered seating, serves as the site's showpiece. A key focus of the renovation was creating multifunctional spaces; rooms and studios were designed to accommodate a wide range of activities, a principle that also guided the renovation of the chapel hall. Sustainability was also a major priority. Today, the site is a vibrant hub where heritage, education, nature, and community life come together.

Two churches of the municipality of Boutersem

St. Michael's Church is the parish church of Butsel in Boutersem. It is located on Pastoriestraat and was originally a St. Martin's chapel. Around 1600, the chapel became a dependency of the Boutersem parish. After years of neglect, the small church collapsed in 1634. It was restored and, in 1861, expanded with an additional bay and a west tower. Since 1970, the church has been dedicated to St. Michael. The Romanesque eastern section, featuring a semicircular apse, dates from around 1100. The rest of the structure is Neoclassical and features round-arched windows. The church 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.

The **Church of Saint Anne** is located on Lubbeeksestraat in Roosbeek, a district of Boutersem. The church comprises a Gothic west tower, a nave, and a choir. The tower, built of calcareous sandstone, consists of four stages and features a slender needle spire, a stair turret, and a Neo-Gothic portal with quatrefoil motifs. Pointed-arch windows reinforce the Gothic character. The Neo-Gothic aisles are constructed of brick, while the choir and the northern sacristy are built of calcareous sandstone. The choir features Brabantine buttresses and a pointed barrel vault. A walled cemetery surrounds the church. The church 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.

Vlierbeek: Past & Present

Vlierbeek Abbey tells a story of spiritual strength, a sense of community, and a drive to build. In 1125, Duke Godfrey the Bearded donated an estate to the Benedictines of Affligem. What began as a modest priory grew into an independent abbey. For seven centuries, monks set the rhythm of life here, following the Rule of Saint Benedict: silence, prayer, study, and work. Within the walls, an autonomous world took shape, featuring a church, buildings arranged around a cloister, an orchard, a bakery, and a brewery. The abbot led, the prior kept watch, and daily meetings were held in the chapter house. Outside the abbey, Vlierbeek managed farms and parishes, and the abbot gained political influence in Brabant.

Wars brought setbacks—the abbey was even completely destroyed in the 16th century—yet the community recovered. The abbey experienced its most prosperous period in the second half of the 18th century, culminating in plans to construct an entirely new abbey complex. However, the French Revolution brought an abrupt end to monastic life. Yet Vlierbeek lived on—as a parish, a neighborhood, and a community—right up to the present day.

The abbey in the 21st century: the heart of a close-knit community. Far from falling silent after the departure of the last monks, Vlierbeek remains a hive of activity. Beneath the church tower, people meet, share stories, and dedicate themselves to one another and the neighborhood. Whether you live here or are just visiting, you sense it immediately: Vlierbeek is a special place. It is a place with a rich history, but above all, a vibrant community. Within these centuries-old walls, a warm home has been created for young and old alike. Together, all these associations make Vlierbeek a place where history and the future meet, and where a sense of connection remains the heart of the community.

(source: <https://www.abdijvanvlierbeek.be>)

Photo by THOC - KADOC



Evening programme

On Friday there will be a special evening programme offered by FRH member organisations

Exhibition and reception

God on the Street. How Religion Shapes Public Space

KU Leuven/KADOC invites you to a reception and a visit to this special exhibition. Discover how places of worship and faith communities help shape streets, squares, and neighborhoods. Through plans, photographs and films, you will journey from the mining towns of Limburg and the Jewish quarter of Antwerp to Molenbeek and the Beguinage in Bruges. A surprising look at the religious traces that color our everyday surroundings. "God on the Street" is a collaboration between KADOC and the Flanders Architecture Institute.

Silent film accompanied by organ concert

Experience Charlie Chaplin's masterpiece "The Kid" at St. Joseph's Church

Featuring live accompaniment by Paul De Maeyer on the historic Cavaillé-Coll organ. A unique fusion of film, emotion, and music, presented by Het Orgel van Vlaanderen and Leuven Orgelstad. Special thanks to FRH member Daniel Vanden Broecke, who initiated this special event, and to the board of St. Joseph's Church for making the venue available free of charge.

Tip: For those who want to enjoy a small bite in between the activities one can make a pitch stop at Frituur Movie - Burgemeestersstraat 42 (2 minutes walk around the corner of the St. Joseph's Church site).



Photo by THOC - Begijnhof Church Leuven



Programme

THURSDAY | 22 OCTOBER 2026

Venue: Irish College Leuven, Jansenusstraat 1, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

08.30	Registration
09.00	Official institutional welcome: • Patty Wageman President of FRH • Mr. Georg Haeusler European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture/Director Culture Creativity and Sport • Peter De Wilde CEO Flanders Heritage Agency • Wouter Jaspers Director PARCUM
	1st SUB-THEME: FROM COMMUNITY-BASED TO HOLISTIC DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO FUTURE-PROOFING RELIGIOUS HERITAGE Day chair: Adam Klups Care of Churches & Diocesan Advisory Committee Team Leader and Senior Church Buildings Officer at the Anglican Diocese of Gloucester, United Kingdom
09.30	Keynote presentation by Luigi Bartolomei Professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Bologna Title: The community as Origin, Inspiration and Horizon
10.00	Presentation by Manuela Klauser Member of the TRANSARA research group at the University of Bonn Title: Multiple Sacralities, Patterns and Paths of the transformation of sacred spaces
10.15	Audience Q&A
10.30	Coffee break Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.
11.00	Presentation by Dani Kranz Dani Kranz is director of the Tikvah Institute in Berlin Title: TBC
11.15	Presentation by Karim Ettourki and Hajar El Hadji Consultant of the KADOC Public Services and Sharing Expertise department; and Hajar El Hadji, policy officer at EMPACT Title: Miretage, pathways towards inclusive heritage
11.30	Abstract presentation by Anna Vilanova-Prat Tourism Officer at the Cathedral and the Archdiocese of Barcelona Title: TBC
11.37	Abstract presentation by Bert Ludwig Director of the European Heritage Volunteers Title: Safeguarding endangered Religious Heritage at the Great Prespa Lake

Photo by COM - Aerial view of Vlierbeek Abbey



Programme

THURSDAY | 22 OCTOBER 2026

Venue: Irish College Leuven, Janseniusstraat 1, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

11.44	Audience Q&A
11.55	Summary by the moderator of the day
12.00	Lunch Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.
13.15	Gathering for the bustrip From Irish College walk to the departure spot.
13.30	STUDY VISITS Bus departure to site visits. Participants will be divided into two groups. The first group will visit site 1 first and then head to site 2, and vice versa. Site 1 – Paul van Ostaijen Cultural Centre in Heverlee, Leuven Former monastery transformed into a carbon neutral multifunctional space and cultural hotspot. More information on page 9. Site 2 – Saint-Michael's and Saint Anna's churches in Boutersem Several churches of the municipality are currently exploring extended use possibilities as part of a municipal "church policy plan". We will visit two of them: • The Saint-Michael's Church 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. More information on page 9. • St Anne's Church 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. More information on page 9. After the site visits the busses will drop all participants at Vlierbeek Abbey to attend the conference dinner and evening program.
18.00 - 22.00	Conference dinner and evening programme Venue: Vlierbeek Abbey – Abdij Vlierbeek 14, Leuven 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 the dinner, we will enjoy exclusively local products, such as Vandeurzen Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine, Brut Kombucha, Vlierbeek bread, and Vlierbeek Grand Cru served by Het Kookpunt Cooking Studio. Afterwards 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.
22.30	End of the evening The busses will depart from Vlierbeek to Irish College.

Photo by stad Leuven, Jan Crab - Paul van Ostaijen Building



Programme

FRIDAY | 23 OCTOBER 2026

Venue: Irish College Leuven, Jansenusstraat 1, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

08:00	OPTIONAL – Mass at the St John the Baptist's Church Venue: Groot Begijnhof 2, Leuven Followed by a guided tour offered by the Bishops' Conference of Belgium
09.30	Coffee Venue: Irish College Leuven, Jansenusstraat 1, Leuven Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens
09.45	Welcome by the day chair
	2nd SUB-THEME: POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS GOOD PRACTICES ACROSS EUROPE Day chair: Mr. Rolando Volzone Architect and post-doc researcher at DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Portugal
10.00	Keynote presentation by Joanna de Haas van Dorsser Real Estate Director at the Diocese of Paris Title: Effective management of revitalisation of religious heritage. Examples of sustainable management and revalorisation in French context
10.30	Presentation by Sara Vermeulen Policy officer at the Flemish Heritage Agency Title: TBC
10.45	Audience Q&A
11.00	Coffee break Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens.
11.30	Presentation by Judith Toebast Programme manager of the Future of Religious Heritage Program at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands Title: Religious heritage in the Netherlands
11.45	Presentation by Dr Abdul-Azim Ahmed Deputy Director of the Islam-UK Centre at Cardiff University Title: Islam in Wales - Project, Policy, Potential
12.00	Abstract presentation by Henrik Lindblad Affiliated Researcher at Department of Art History, Uppsala University Title: TBC
12.07	Abstract presentation by Sophie Denoel Wallon Heritage Agency Title: TBC

Photo by THOC - St. Peter's Church Leuven



Programme

FRIDAY | 23 OCTOBER 2026

Venue: Irish College Leuven, Jansenijsstraat 1, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

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 Discover the inspiring story of Sint-Godelieve Abbey in Bruges on the screens
14.30 – 16.55	PARALLEL WORKSHOPS The afternoon is divided into 3 time slots of 40 minutes during which conference participants will be invited to participate in different workshops plus visit the poster exhibition. The first day of the conference at the registration/welcoming desk one can subscribe to different workshops. We aim at approximately 15 people per workshop. Each workshop consists of one or two short pitches to stir the 30-minute discussion within the group. More information on page 23. 1st slot: 14.30 - 15.10 2nd slot 15.20 - 16.00 3rd slot 16.10 - 16.50
16.55 - 17.10	Plenary feedback from the workshops By Professor Justin Kroesen (Approaches) and Sara Vermeulen (Policies and Instruments)
17.10 - 17.30	Summary and conclusions of the conference
17.30	Ending words FRH President Patty Wageman
17.45	End of conference programme at Irish College
	Special evening programme offered by FRH member organisations Exhibition, reception and silent film accompanied by an organ concert More information on page 11.
18.00	KADOC Welcome and introduction to the exhibition Venue: Vlamingenstraat 39, Leuven 10 minutes walk from Irish College to KADOC, guidance will be given. Exhibition "God on the Street. How Religion Shapes Public Space".
18.20	Reception offered by KADOC
20.00	Silent Film accompanied by Organ Concert at St. Joseph's Church Leuven Venue: Bogaardenstraat 72, Leuven, 10 minutes walk from KADOC exhibition Register to attend during first conference day at the registration desk.
	Tip: For those who want to enjoy a small bite in between the activities one can make a pitch stop at Frituur Movie - Burgemeestersstraat 42 (2 minutes walk around the corner of the St. Joseph's Church site).

Photo by THOC - Celestines Monastery, KU Leuven Library



Programme

SATURDAY | 24 OCTOBER 2026

Venue: PARCUM Abdij van Park 7, Leuven and KADOC Vlamingenstraat 39, Leuven

9.30 & 11.00

Festive events at PARCUM & KADOC

Conference participants staying till 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.

PARCUM | Open door day & presentation at PARCUM

First slot: 9.30 | Second slot: 11.00

Join this open door day to celebrate the completion of the restoration of Park Abbey, one of Leuven's most remarkable heritage sites and home to PARCUM, a museum and centre of expertise for religious heritage in Flanders. Discover the remarkable transformation of this historic site, gain exclusive insights into the restoration process, and explore how PARCUM helps safeguard and promote religious heritage throughout Flanders. Join us for this special celebration where centuries of history meet a vibrant future.

KADOC | 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 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.

It is possible to register for these tours at the registration desk in the main hall of Irish College on thursday morning 22nd of october.

Photo by THOC - St. James's Church Leuven



Parallel workshops

The first day of the conference at the registration/welcoming desk one can subscribe to different workshops. We aim at approximately 15 people per workshop. Each workshop consists of one or two short pitches to stir the 30-minute discussion within the group. Outcomes will be presented plenary at the end of the afternoon.

1st slot: 14.30 - 15.10 | 2nd slot 15.20 - 16.00 | 3rd slot 16.10 - 16.50

Workshop 1 | Approaches

Safeguarding multireligious heritage and archives

Moderator: Carine Dujardin (KADOC).

Pitch: Alexander Hilkins Minority heritage at Kadoc.

Pitch: Julie Aerts (PARCUM), Hemelsbreed, a heritage and research project on a rich and diverse heritage landscape in Flanders.

Creating new heritage communities for religious heritage

Moderator: Eline Doeselaere (FARO).

Pitch: Wim Jacobs (Sint-Amandus Church Council) The Church as Commons Lab; A Practice-based Experiment in Redefining Religious Heritage through Commoning.

Pitch: Inge Basteleur (Groninger Kerken), Take me to church, an experimental, youth-led approach to the reuse of religious heritage in the village of Holwierde (The Netherlands).

Heritage analysis as an instrument for a holistic approach to religious heritage

Moderator: Lotte Renard (PARCUM).

Pitch: Bert van der Veken (PARCUM) Tools for heritage analysis used by PARCUM.

Pitch: Kristien Suenens (KADOC), The case of the Bruges Beguinage, a pioneering project where history, living heritage, and community come together.

Workshop 2 | Policies and Instruments

Financial instruments to secure the future of religious sites

Moderator: Roel de Ridder (Platform Toekomst Parochiekerken).

Pitch: Bart Aerts (Leidsman), Financial Feasibility of Church Conversions.

Pitch: Harry Whitmore (Developments Trusts Association Scotland), Finding new futures for Scotland's former places of worship: community ownership as a response.

What's possible on this religious site? Instrument to guide decision making on new future

Moderator: Elisabeth Geukens (Flanders Heritage agency).

Pitch: Sven Sterken (KU Leuven), Repurposing profiles, guiding local authorities and church councils in shaping the future of their parish churches.

Pitch: Katrien Coenegrachts, Witteveen+Bos Belgium, Toolbox in ontwikkeling

Form and Function: how to incorporate possible future uses in religious policies

Moderator: Serge Defresne (Flanders Heritage agency).

Pitch: Charlotte Ardui CRIT Architects, Faith in the Periphery, Design research for the future of post-war churches as drivers for the sustainable development of suburban neighbourhoods in Flanders.

Workshop 3 | Poster exhibition

Thanks to an incredible response this year, we have an exciting lineup of abstracts! At the recommendation of our scientific committee, all attendees can visit the poster exhibition and connect personally with the participating presenters during the 3 time slots.

Photo by Stéphane de Rouville the overall winner of 2024 - Arco de Santa Catalina

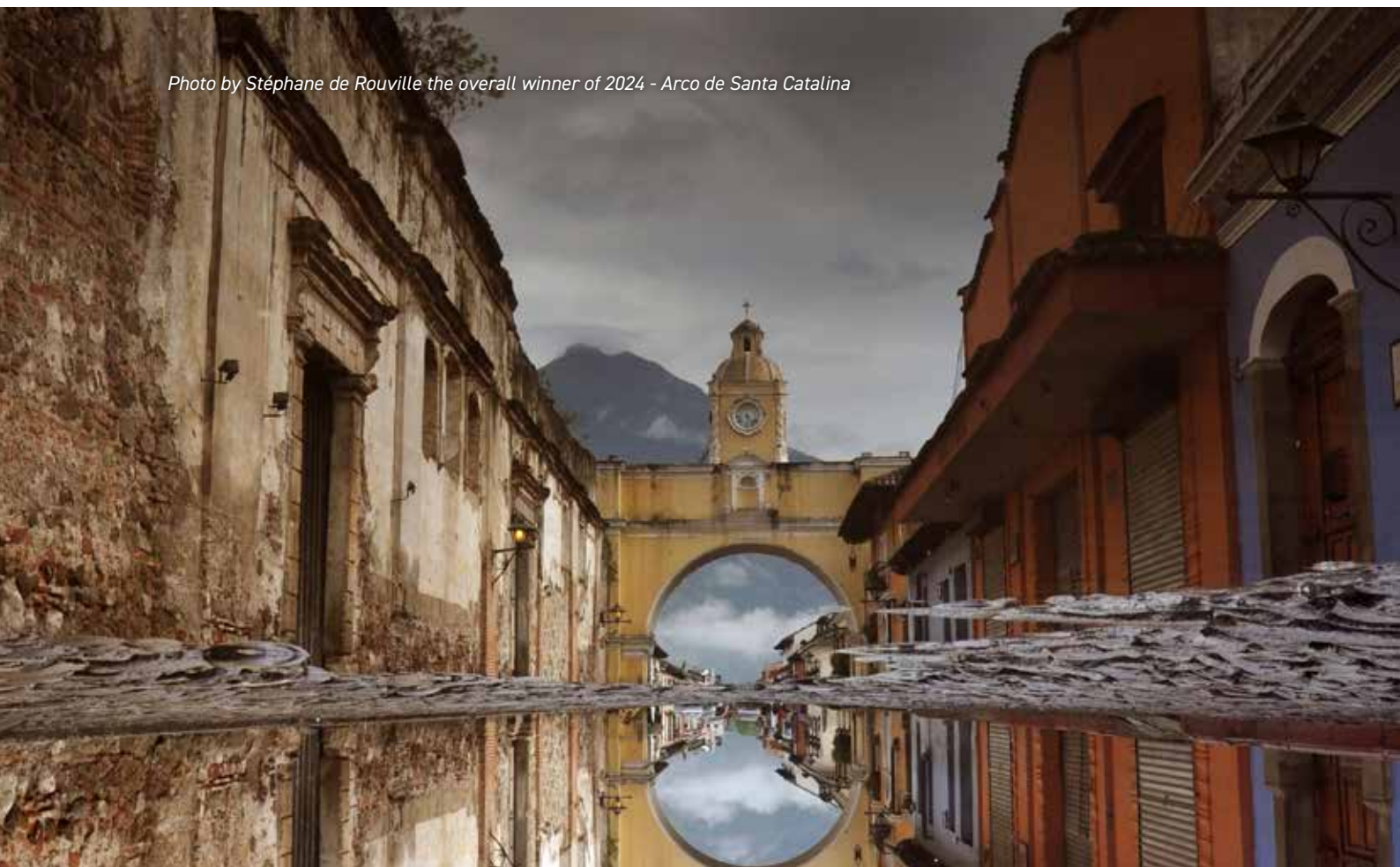


Photo by Alicia Cano the overall winner of 2025 - Smoke



FRH Photo competition

The FRH Photo Competition is an annual contest open to amateur and professional photographers to showcase the beauty of religious architecture, the unique celebrations that take place in every corner of the world and the special moments that make up part of our rich religious heritage. Over the years, every edition of the Photo Competition has witnessed the submission of photographs of exceptional quality, reflecting not only the mastery of the person behind the lens, but also the powerful messages that religious heritage can convey the viewer.

In 2024 and 2025, this competition demonstrated once again the great scope of this FRH activity with a record of 1068 photographs received from 100 countries from all corners of the world. A jury composed of José Cobo Calderón (Spain) Savina Lambert (France) and Snezana Negovanovic (Serbia) evaluated all entries and selected three finalists per category. After much deliberation, the jury selected for **2024 "Arco de Santa Catalina" a stunning photograph of Stéphane de Rouville (France) as the overall winner. And for 2025 the jury selected the picture "Smoke" from the photographer Alicia Cano (Spain) as the overall winner.**

During the awards ceremony of the Photo Competition, we will have the opportunity to see the best photographs of 2024 - 2025 and hear a message from a winner. We hope you enjoy this visual journey through religious heritage sites and traditions.

The overall winner of 2024

Stéphane de Rouville (France) for "Arco de Santa Catalina"

The overall winner of 2025

Alicia Cano (Spain) for "Smoke"

Finalists 2024

Religious buildings

- Hamidreza Hamzehpour (Iran) for "Saint Thaddeus Cathedral"
- Pyae Phyto Thet Paing (Myanmar) for "The Land of Ancient Pagodas"

Artefacts

- Yoe Yar (Myanmar) for "Faithful of Novice"
- Sirsendu Gayen (India) for "Buddha in a Banyan Tree"
- Stanislav Trofimov (Russian) for "Mast cap from the sunken steamship of the Valaam Monastery"

People and Events

- Stanislav Trofimov (Russian) for "Monk Avraam plays the flute"
- Dmitrii Kiselev (Russia) for "Prayer"
- Apratim Pal (India) for "Divine Splash"

You can find an overview of all the 2024 finalists and the selected images via this QR code.



Finalists 2025

Religious buildings

- Yevhen Samuchenko (Ukraine) for "On the wings of faith"
- Muzaffer Murat İlhan (Turkey) for "Istanbul"
- Mouneb Taim (Syria) for "Silent Minarets Amidst the Ruins"

Artefacts

- Muzaffer Murat İlhan (Turkey) for "Sarcophagus"
- Sirsendu Gayen (India) for "Main altar and paintings on the walls"

People and Events

- Moe Wai (Myanmar) for "Burmese Traditional Nat Pwe Horse Dance"
- Sirsendu Gayen (India) for "Lighting Candles"
- Alicia Cano (Spain) for "One came to life"

You can find an overview of all the 2025 finalists and the selected images via this QR code.



Winner of Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year 2024 - Scotland's Churches Trust

CHURCH RECORDERS' HANDBOOK

Created by Scotland's Churches Trust, as part of an Historic Environment Scotland supported pilot project, to assist future volunteers with recording the contents of Scotland's closing church buildings.



Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year

The Religious Heritage Innovator of the Year is an FRH award to showcase remarkable contributions to the preservation, understanding and promotion of Europe's places of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, chapels, pilgrim routes, etc.)

The competition launched for the first time in 2022 with the winner and finalists of that year exemplifying the different facets of sustainability and demonstrating that innovation does not have to be digital.

During the awards ceremony, we will have the opportunity to listen to winner of the **2024 Scotland's Churches Trust for their project "Recording Scotland's Closing Churches: A Race Against Time". And the winner of 2025 MUDD, Museo Diocesano Diffuso Di Napoli.**

Both editions were judged by Anne Grady (Head of Development with the National Museum of Ireland to the CULT Committee of the European Parliament), Gilles Guey (President of the Association of Directors of Culture of French Large Cities and Urban Areas), Justin Kroesen (Professor of Cultural History at the University of Bergen), Greg Pickup (Chief Executive of The Churches Conservation Trust).

Winner 2024

Recording Scotland's Closing Churches: A Race Against Time project developed by the Scotland's Churches Trust (United Kingdom).

Winner 2025

MUDD – Museo Diocesano Diffuso Di Napoli by the Fondazione Napoli C'entro – Arcidiocesi di Napoli (Italy).

Finalists 2024

- Buurtbakens Haarlem by the Municipality of Haarlem in cooperation with seven congregations (the Netherlands)
- Una catedral en el páramo: Villamorón - Burgos, España by the cultural association Amigos de Villamorón (Spain)
- 3D Sacral Art of Rivne region by Rivne Museum of Local Lore (Ukraine)
- Focus Craftership: Ora et Labora by PARCUM (Belgium)

Finalists 2025

- Remettre l'église au centre du village (Putting the Church Back at the Heart of the Village) by Paul LEVRAT, architecture student
- REBELAH (Religions, Beliefs, and Laicity in Cultural Heritage to Foster Social Inclusion in Adult Trainings) by Professor Todd Weir
- Saving Ukraine's Religious Heritage: Digitization and Preservation of Endangered Minority Archives by Tatiana Vagamenko
- Sacred Past Project: Promotion of the Religious Heritage in the Carpathian Basin by Symmetry Foundation (Hungary)



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

Photo by THOC - Ter Bank Chapel Leuven



Official Institutional welcome

Patty Wageman

President of FRH

Dutch. Council member since 2023, and President since 2025. Patty Wageman is the director of the Groningen Historic Churches Foundation (Stichting Oude Groninger Kerken). Before that, she had been director of Museum De Buitenplaats Eelde. She has a lot of administrative experience, including as chair of the Arts Advisory Committee, Arts Council Groningen for the 2017-2020 subsidy round, and as a member of the Work Advisory Council of the Frank Mohr Institute, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen.



Mr. Georg Haeusler

Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport in the European Commission (DG EAC)

Prior to that, he was Director in another Commission department for seven years. He joined the Commission in 1999 and has had several senior posts including as Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Dacian Cioloș, from 2009 to 2014. Before he began his Commission career, he was Secretary General of an EU-wide NGO.



Peter De Wilde

CEO of the Flanders Heritage Agency and president of Davidsfonds

Before he became CEO of Flanders Heritage Agency, Peter was professor of French language and medieval literature at the University of Antwerp and Dunkerque, was head of the department of culture of the province of Antwerp, Chief of the Cabinet for Culture & Tourism in Antwerp and CEO of Visit Flanders, the tourism agency of the Flemish government. In that capacity, he was also president of the European Travel Commission and president of NECSTouR and the Network of European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism.



Wouter Jaspers

Director of PARCUM

Wouter Jaspers graduated in 2013 with a teaching qualification in mathematics and arts education from GROEP T – Leuven Education College. After gaining several years of experience in education and the public sector, he moved into the cultural sector in 2018. Driven by a strong interest in art, heritage and public engagement, he joined KUNST Leuven, where he contributed to the Arenberg Festival. In 2019, Wouter Jaspers joined PARCUM, the museum and centre of expertise for religious art and culture recognised by the Flemish Government. He played a key role in the museum's further development and expansion, initially as Head of Communications and Public Engagement and later as Museum Coordinator. Since September 2025, he has served as Director of PARCUM.

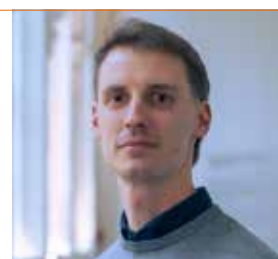


Photo by THOC - Saint Anthony's Church Leuven



Speakers and moderators

1st SUB-THEME: FROM COMMUNITY-BASED TO HOLISTIC DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO FUTURE-PROOFING RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Adam Klups - Day chair

Care of Churches & Diocesan Advisory Committee Team Leader and Senior Church Buildings Officer at the Anglican Diocese of Gloucester, United Kingdom

Adam Klups is Care of Churches & Diocesan Advisory Committee Team Leader and Senior Church Buildings Officer at the Anglican Diocese of Gloucester, United Kingdom. He is passionate about sustainable conservation management, community-led conservation, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. He holds a BA in History of Art with Material Studies, and an MA in Principles of Conservation, both from University College London. Following the vote of the General Synod in February 2020 for the whole of the Church of England to achieve net zero carbon by 2030, he has been involved in coordinating the diocesan response, professional advice, and resources, to support decarbonisation of almost 400 churches in the Diocese.



Luigi Bartolomei - Keynote speaker

Researcher at the University of Bologna and director of the Cherubino Ghirardacci Centre for Studies

Luigi Bartolomei, PhD in Architectural Composition (2008), is a researcher focused on the management and adaptive reuse of ecclesiastical heritage. Since 2016, he has coordinated conferences and training programs on the future of redundant religious assets, including the first Italian summer school dedicated to the reuse of buildings owned by communities of consecrated life. His studies have been presented at international venues such as the Liturgical Conference in Bose and "A Living Presence" in Washington DC. He is a consultant for the National Office for Cultural Heritage of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) and served on the promoting committee for the Holy See's 2022 conference "Charism and Creativity." He currently teaches "Religious Cultural Heritage" and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Scopus-indexed journal IN_BO. Since 2013, he has been a member of the editorial board of Il Giornale dell'Architettura.



Manuela Klauser

Research associate of the TRANSARA project at the University of Bonn

Dr. Manuela Klauser is art historian with a doctorate and experienced in freelance project work. Since 2022, she has been a research associate in the DFG research unit FOR 2733 "Transformation of Sacred Space: Function and Use of Religious Places in Germany", project 1: Exemplary case studies on the transformation of sacred spaces in the Aachen area. Her research areas include architectural history of modern church buildings and their close connection to liturgical history as well as their link to architectural theory and architectural sociology.



Dani Kranz

Coordinator of research at the Tikvah Institut in Berlin

Dani Kranz is the coordinator of research of Tikvah Institut, Berlin, director of Two Foxes Consulting, Germany and Israel. She is a consultant to the high commissioner of the German government for Jewish life and in the fight against antisemitism, as well as to a range of other foundations, museums, and NGOs. She is the president of Präsenzen – Netzwerk jüdische Gegenwartsforschung e. V. (Presences – Network for the Research on Contemporary Jewry); a board member of the Association for the Social Scientific Jewry (ASSJ) as well as a founding member of the Network of Jewish University Teachers (Netzwerk jüdischer Hochschullehrender, NJH). Her expertise covers migration, integration, ethnicity, law, state/stateliness, political life, organisations, memory cultures and politics as well as cultural heritage and antisemitism in the shape of antisemitism and philosemitism.



Karim Ettourki

Consultant of the KADOC Public Services and Sharing Expertise department

Karim Ettourki holds an MA in Oriental Languages and Cultures from Ghent University. Between 2008 and 2013, he was affiliated with the research department of KADOC, the Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society at KU Leuven. From 2013 to 2023, he served as a part-time consultant for the heritage of cultural minorities at KADOC-KU Leuven. Concurrently, he held a part-time position at Archiefpunt, a network organisation representing predominantly private archival institutions in Flanders. Since 2023, he has been a full-time consultant within the KADOC Public Services and Sharing Expertise department. In this capacity, he contributes to the development and support of projects aimed at safeguarding, documenting, and valorising cultural heritage, with particular attention to community engagement and inclusive heritage practices.



Hajar El Hadji

Policy Officer at EMPACT

Hajar El Hadji has a Bachelor in Family Science from the University of Brussels. Currently, she is active at Empact as a policy officer and at 'Nuff Said as a community builder. Her work focuses on super-diversity, racism and discrimination, intersectionality, and the empowerment of migrantised communities. Previously, she worked at GATAM and the Red Cross Flanders, where she gained experience in international cooperation, community development, migration, and social inequality.



2nd SUB-THEME: POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS

GOOD PRACTICES ACROSS EUROPE

Mr. Rolando Volzone - Day chair

Architect and post-doc researcher at DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Portugal

Council Member since 2025. He is an architect and integrated researcher at DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. His research focuses on religious heritage in Southern Europe, adopting an interdisciplinary approach that combines history, architecture, landscape, digital tools, and public policies. Since 2022, he has taught in master's and PhD programs in Portugal and Italy, and he coordinates the international conference Architectures of the Soul. He has taken part in several national and European projects and currently coordinates transHERITAGE as well as the Religious Heritage Observatory, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in cultural heritage studies.



Joanna de Haas van Dorsser - Keynote speaker

Head of Real Estate for the Diocese of Paris

Joanna de Haas van Dorsser is a senior executive specialised in corporate real estate, development and international expansion, combining legal and financial expertise. She is also a mediator, specialised in deal mediation. Joanna holds two Master's degrees from Paris II Assas (international law and real estate law), and holds a degree in Mediation from the Catholic Institute of Paris (ICP / IFOMENE).



Sara Vermeulen

Policy Officer at the Flanders Heritage Agency

Sara Vermeulen studied architecture and art history at KU Leuven and La Sorbonne in Paris. Since 2013, she has been part of the policy team of the Flanders Heritage Agency. In this capacity, she was a member of the steering committee of the Project Bureau for the Repurposing of Churches (2016-2021) and currently sits on the steering committee of the 'Platform Toekomst Parochiekerken' (Future of Parish Churches Platform) (2023-2027).



Judith Toebast

Programme manager of the Future of Religious Heritage Program at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands

Since 2022, Judith Toebast has been program manager of the Future of Religious Heritage Program at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The program is a collaborative program involving various government bodies, owners of places of worship, and representatives of heritage and civil society organisations. After studying Architecture, specialising in repurposing and renovation, at Eindhoven University of Technology, she immersed herself in rural architecture – historic farmhouses. From 2007 to 2022, she worked as a specialist in rural architecture at the same organisation until she made the switch to religious heritage.



Abdul-Azim Ahmed

Deputy Director of the Islam-UK Centre at Cardiff University

Dr Abdul-Azim Ahmed is a sociologist and lecturer in British Muslim studies. He is the Deputy Director of the Islam-UK Centre at Cardiff University, where he is part of an interdisciplinary team researching contemporary Islam. He is also Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Wales, working with Muslim collectives and charities in Wales in pursuit of the common good. His first work, The Contemporary British Mosque, explored the growth and significance of Muslim religious institutions. In 2026, he published Muslim Wales – A History in 9 Places that documented the story of Muslims in Wales.



Photo by THOC - Almshouse Chapel Leuven



Council members and Conference Committee members

FRH Council members

Patty Wageman (President)
Stefan Beier (Secretary)
Peter Aiers (Treasurer)
Lacramioara Beilic
Chiara Curti
Ildefonso de la Campa
Anna Dulcka
Justin Kroesen
Michael Mail
Andrea Longhi
Rolando Volzone

FRH Conference Committee members

This years conference committee was extended with:
Sara Vermeulen as representative of Erfgoed Vlaanderen
Sylvia Aulet
Lilian Grootswagers
Jennie Hawks
Thorsten Kruse
Susan Urban
Daniel Vanden Broecke,
Marcus Vermeulen

Advisory Board

Lilian Grootswagers-Theuns – Advisory Board President
Thomas Coomans de Brachène
Pilar Bahamonde
Sarah De Lencquesaing
Graham Bell

Photo by stad Leuven, Jan Crab - COM zalen Paul van Ostaïjen Building



Benefits of becoming a member

Not yet a member? Discover the benefits!



EVENTS

Participate in face-to-face meetings throughout Europe and member-exclusive webinars and get a special discount to attend our conferences.



PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Connect with an international network of experts and stakeholders in religious heritage, where you can share information, and good practices or even find partners to start building a new project.



VISIBILITY

Whether you are an organisation or an individual, we will help you promote your work across Europe through our monthly newsletter and social media channels.



UPDATES FROM THE HEART OF EUROPE

Our Brussels-based secretariat will update you on EU policies on a regular basis.



LATEST NEWS ON RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Stay up to date with the latest news on religious heritage. Our monthly Newsletter, social media channels and website will keep you informed.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Each year we publish our annual report, which gives you an overview of all the activities that have been carried out throughout the year. We also publish outputs from our projects, such as FRH Inform, a collection of data on the state of religious heritage in Europe.

Join a network of over 200 members across 43 countries!



More information: www.frh-europe.org/get-involved/join-us/

Future for Religious Heritage

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