

PRESS RELEASE

The Wooden Church of Urși Village, Vâlcea County, (România) among winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2021

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The European Commission and Europa Nostra have just announced the **2021 winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards**, the EU prize for cultural heritage funded by the Creative Europe programme. This year, Europe's top honour in the heritage field goes to 24 exemplary achievements from 18 European countries (*for the full list see below*). Among this year's winners is **the Wooden Church of Urși Village, Vâlcea County, (România)**, laureate project in the Conservation category, designed and coordinated by the Pro Patrimonio Foundation.

The announcement of the Award winners 2021 has just been made at a live online event co-hosted by **Mariya Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, and **Hermann Parzinger**, Executive President of Europa Nostra.

Speaking at the online event, European Commissioner **Mariya Gabriel** said: *"The winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2021 are ambassadors of the beauty of heritage in Europe, whether it be traditions and know-how, breath-taking architecture or the way that heritage can unite communities and generations. I truly believe that the successful preservation of our tangible and intangible heritage depends on the commitment of the people behind it. With these awards, we therefore honour all those exceptional men and women, heritage professionals, architects, scientists and volunteers who bring our common heritage closer to our hearts. Their vision should be applauded."*

Europa Nostra's Executive President **Hermann Parzinger** stated: *"Each year, the winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards exemplify the incomparable creativity and commitment of those who work to protect, valorise and pass on Europe's precious inheritance to the next generation. This year's laureates powerfully demonstrate how heritage offers solutions and paths to recovery in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, as we take action for the climate, mobilise for sustainable urban and rural development and tackle the many threats to our core European values. We applaud their outstanding achievements: may they serve as inspiration and encouragement for future action for so many heritage professionals and enthusiasts across Europe and beyond."*

The Award winners were selected by independent [juries](#) composed of heritage experts from across Europe, upon evaluation of candidatures submitted by organisations and individuals from 30 European countries.

2021 Award Winners ¹

Category Conservation

[Gare Maritime, Brussels, BELGIUM](#)

[Fredensborg Palace Garden, DENMARK](#)

[Vardzia Rock-Cut Complex, GEORGIA](#)

[Haus Am Horn, Weimar, GERMANY](#)

[Plaka Bridge, Epirus, GREECE](#)

[18 Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin, IRELAND](#)

[Wooden Church of Urși Village, Vâlcea County, ROMANIA](#)

¹ The winners are listed alphabetically by country

[Besòs Water Tower, Barcelona, SPAIN](#)

[Mas de Burot, Els Ports Natural Park, SPAIN](#)

Category Research

[FIBRANET - FIBRes in ANcient European Textiles, DENMARK/GREECE](#)

[Control Shift - European Industrial Heritage Reuse in Review, GREECE/NETHERLANDS](#)

[ART-RISK - Artificial Intelligence Applied to Preventive Conservation, SPAIN](#)

Category Dedicated Service to Heritage by Organisations & Individuals

[Gjirokastra Foundation, ALBANIA](#)

[Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, CYPRUS](#)

[Rita Bargna, ITALY](#)

[GEFAC - Group of Ethnography and Folklore of the Academy of Coimbra, PORTUGAL](#)

Category Education, Training and Awareness-raising

[Following in the Steps of Bulgarian Folklore, BULGARIA](#)

[Heritage Hubs, FINLAND/ITALY/SERBIA/SPAIN](#)

[The Invention of a Guilty Party, Trento, ITALY](#)

[Holidays! In the East and West - The School Church, Groningen, THE NETHERLANDS](#)

[European Solidarity Centre - Permanent Exhibition, Gdańsk, POLAND](#)

[Morón Artisan Lime, Morón de la Frontera, SPAIN](#)

[Archaeology at Home, UNITED KINGDOM](#)

[Morus Londinium: London's Heritage through Trees, UNITED KINGDOM](#)

IMPORTANT: Heritage supporters and enthusiasts from across the world are now encouraged to discover the winners and [vote online](#) to decide who will win this year's **Public Choice Award**. The Public Choice Award winner will be announced during the European Heritage Awards Ceremony, which will take place in the autumn of this year. The **Grand Prix** laureates, each of whom will receive a monetary award of €10,000, will also be made public on this occasion.

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TO FIND OUT MORE

[Press release in various languages](#)

Despre fiecare câștigător:

[Information and jury's comments](#)

[Videos](#) (in high resolution)

[Photos & e-banners](#) (in high resolution)

[Creative Europe website](#)

[Commissioner Gabriel's website](#)

www.propatrimonio.org

[Photos Wooden Church of Ursi](#)

About the Wooden Church of Urși Village, Vâlcea County, ROMANIA

This wooden church, found in the cemetery of the small village of Urși, has been carefully restored with the close involvement of many partners including the local community. *“This is the outcome of an exemplary interdisciplinary conservation of a painted wooden church in a rural setting. Made from materials from its surrounding landscape, it is of outstanding value and beauty”*, the Jury said.

The main partners involved were the **Pro Patrimonio Foundation**, the **Art Conservation and Restoration Department of the National Arts University of Bucharest**, the **ASTRA Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization**, the **National Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering “IRASM”**, the **National Chamber of Romanian Architects**, **Asociația 37** and the owner of the church, the **Romanian Orthodox Church**.

The project would not have been possible without the voluntary work of Urși’s community, who provided food, accommodation, access to electricity, labour and transportation, as well as the in-kind work from national and international volunteers who helped with the conservation works. The funding for the project was provided by the **International Music and Art Foundation**, the **World Monuments Fund**, the **Headley Trust**, **Holcim Romania**, online crowdfunding and the **European Investment Bank Institute** along with several private donors.

The Wooden Church of Urși Village, dedicated to the Annunciation and the Archangel Michael, was built between 1757 and 1784. Though it survived a fire in 1838, after which it was repaired and decorated with frescoes in 1843, the church was later abandoned following the construction of a new church in the village. On its rediscovery in 2007, the church lay without a foundation and was at risk of collapse while its shingle roof was in urgent need of repair. The frescoes, painted in the Post-Byzantine tradition with Western influences and of remarkable artistic value, faced serious decay. In 2009, the church of Urși was included in the “60 Wooden Churches programme” in Romania by the Pro Patrimonio Foundation, and thus later nominated to the 7 Most Endangered programme 2014.

From 2009 to 2020, the restoration works took place each summer following months of fundraising efforts in the preceding year. The Jury found the restoration quality to be commendable: *“This is an example of vulnerable architecture and an endangered monument that has been restored fully in accordance with conservation principles, with the original elements closely examined and reintegrated wherever possible. Sustainability was also central to the project, with trees planted to provide materials for future restoration work”*.

The restoration site itself was an open one, functioning as an educational space to raise awareness about the value of the church, its wooden construction technique, the fresco technique and the content of the mural iconography, icons and iconostasis.

“The conservation of the Wooden Church of Urși took place in a remote area, with limited resources and with the close involvement of local society. Over the course of the project, many opportunities for the exchange of knowledge were created. The project also led to a deeper local understanding of the value of the heritage and a sense of stewardship among the local community. This is an exemplary approach to the conservation of vulnerable buildings such as this one”, the Jury stated

Background

European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards

The [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu) were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. This Awards programme has the support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. The Awards highlight and disseminate heritage excellence and best practices, encourage the cross-border exchange of knowledge and connect heritage stakeholders in wider networks. The Awards bring major benefits to the winners, such as greater (inter)national exposure, follow-on funding and increased visitor numbers. In addition, the Awards programme fosters a greater care for our shared heritage amongst Europe’s citizens. The Awards are therefore a key tool to promote the multiple values of cultural and natural heritage for Europe’s society, economy and environment. For additional facts and figures about the Awards, please visit www.europeanheritageawards.eu/facts-figures.

In 2021, two **ILUCIDARE Special Prizes** will also be awarded from among the submitted applications to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards. The shortlisted projects will be announced on 10 June and the winners will be unveiled in the autumn of this year. [ILUCIDARE](http://www.ilucidare.eu) project is funded by Horizon 2020 with the aim of establishing an international network promoting heritage as a resource for innovation and international relations.

Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. A pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, it covers more than 40 countries. Founded in 1963, it is today recognised as the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe. Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through the [7 Most Endangered](#) Programme. Europa Nostra actively contributes to the definition and implementation of European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a participatory dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the [European Heritage Alliance](#). Europa Nostra was the EU's key civil society partner during the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) in 2018. It also figures among the first official partners of the [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative recently launched by the European Commission.

Creative Europe

[Creative Europe](#) is the EU programme that supports the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to jobs and growth. With a budget of €2.4 billion for 2021-2027, it supports organisations in the fields of heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music, and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, cultural and audiovisual professionals.

Pro Patrimonio Foundation

[Pro Patrimonio Foundation](#) has been intervening for almost 20 years in almost all regions of Romania in order to revitalize and strengthen disadvantaged communities, far from the areas of progress. The aim is to re-establish identity ties with the community for a built heritage that is currently abandoned, has lost its role, and as much as possible, to reintroduce it into the economic and cultural circuit. The actions focus on practical education projects, oriented towards the rehabilitation and refunctionalization of the historical heritage, as well as on the involvement and awareness by the communities of their own identity. As a non-governmental non-profit organization with branches in Romania, Great Britain and France, the foundation carries out projects designed to save heritage, educate and raise awareness regarding the importance of cultural heritage.

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