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**PRESS RELEASE**

**European Commission and Europa Nostra announce**

**Europe’s top heritage award winners 2020**

Brussels / The Hague, 10 November 2020 - The [winners](https://www.europanostra.org/europes-top-heritage-awards-honour-21-exemplary-achievements-from-15-countries/) of the **2020 European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards**, Europe’s top honour in the field, were celebrated this afternoon with a virtual gathering that connected heritage lovers, professionals, volunteers and supporters from across Europe and beyond. Due to the safety precautions against COVID-19, the European Heritage Awards Ceremony was held entirely online for the very first time, with the virtual participation of **Mariya Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, and **Hermann Parzinger**, Executive President of Europa Nostra. During the online ceremony, representatives from the European Commission and Europa Nostra proudly announced **the three Grand Prix laureates and the Public Choice Award winner**,which were selected from among this year’s 21 winning achievements from 15 European countries.

The **2020 Grand Prix laureates** are:

1. the exemplary restoration of the **Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, L’Aquila (Italy)**, heavily damaged by the devastating earthquake of 2009;
2. the outstanding project **Tramontana Network III** **(France, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain)**, dedicated to the research of the tangible and intangible heritage of Europe’s mountainous regions; and
3. the major exhibition **Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away (Poland/Spain)**, marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the largest Nazi concentration camp.

The Grand Prix laureates, chosen by an independent [jury of experts](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/jury/) and the [Board of Europa Nostra](https://www.europanostra.org/about-us/governance/board/), will receive €10,000 each. *(Read below to learn more about these outstanding European heritage projects and the reasons why they received a Grand Prix).*

The **Public Choice Award** went to the education, training and awareness-raising project **The Ambulance for Monuments** **(Romania)**, which has rescued hundreds of heritage-listed buildings in the country through a large network of active heritage organisations. This project received the largest number of votes, cast via an online poll with the participation of over **12,000 citizens** from all over Europe.

“*The 2020 winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards represent what Europe stands for: creativity, resilience, innovation, solidarity, talent and dedication. This makes me proud – as European Commissioner and as a European citizen. I sincerely thank each one of them for demonstrating yet again that Europe’s shared cultural heritage is not only part of our past, but a valuable asset for tackling our present day challenges and for ensuring a better future for all. With their work, they illustrate the great potential of cultural heritage for Europe’s socioeconomic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic*,” said **Mariya Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth.

“*Honouring this year’s laureates of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards with a fully digital ceremony has been an exceptional and enriching experience. It has proved that excellence, commitment and perseverance in our heritage world know no limits. This is precisely what the 21 awarded achievements embody: these are stories of exceptional skills and teamwork, tireless dedication and bold action. On behalf of Europa Nostra, I wish to warmly welcome all of them to our ever-growing pan-European network of Heritage Excellence, which brings together the most captivating and outstanding heritage initiatives from across the continent. In the trying times we live in, might these heritage heroes inspire many others, in Europe and beyond, through the compelling power of their positive example,*” stated **Hermann Parzinger**, Executive President of Europa Nostra.

The European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra - The European Voice of Civil Society Committed to Cultural Heritage - ever since. The Awards have the support of the **Creative Europe** programme of the European Union.

During the online ceremony, representatives from the European Commission and the ILUCIDARE Consortium, including Europa Nostra, were delighted to unveil **the two** **winners of the very first edition of the ILUCIDARE Special Prizes: Archaeology for a young future (Italy/Syria)**, for excellence in heritage-led international relations; and **TYPA - Estonian Print and Paper Museum, Tartu (Estonia)**, for excellence in heritage-led innovation ([*read related separate press release*](https://ilucidare.eu/news/ilucidare-special-prizes-2020-archaeology-young-future-italysyria-and-estonian-print-and-paper)).

The winners of the **ILUCIDARE Special Prizes** were selected by the ILUCIDARE partners from among the submitted applications to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2020. ILUCIDARE is a project funded by Horizon 2020 with the aim of establishing an international network promoting heritage as a resource for innovation and international relations.

The online European Heritage Awards Ceremony was enhanced by exceptional musical performances prepared by our invaluable partners, the European Union Youth Orchestra, Le Dimore Del Quartetto (Italy), an Award winner from last year, and the European Music Centre in Bougival (France).

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**Grand Prix Winners**

**Category Conservation**

**[Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, L’Aquila, ITALY](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/basilica-santa-maria-di-collemaggio/)**

The Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio was heavily damaged by a tragic earthquake that hit the region on 6 April 2009. The restoration of the Basilica required not only an advanced conservation, but also respect for its special place in the life of the community. In December 2017, the long process of recovery was completed, allowing the community to again gather and celebrate at the Basilica.

When choosing the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio to receive this year’s Grand Prix in the category Conservation, the **Board of Europa Nostra** noted: “*This intervention, while conducted according to the highest technical and scientific standards is also innovative, truly exemplary and all the more important for its great symbolic value. Following the tragic earthquake that affected L’Aquila, the recovery of the building represents the rebirth of the entire city and is an opportunity for the community to heal the wounds caused by the earthquake. This project is an exemplary testimony of the importance of restoring heritage at risk*”.

**Alessandra Vittorini**, former Superintendent for Archaeological, Artistic and Architectural Heritage and Landscape for L’Aquila and its Seismic Crater, stated: “*This Award celebrates the commitment and passionate work of the members of staff of our Soprintendenza and the other offices working for the reconstruction of L’Aquila's cultural heritage. We are very proud that the restoration of the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio is recognised as a European example of good practice. We hope that Collemaggio will continue to stand as a positive case study for those who work for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage, and a symbol of hope in the face of adversity for the people who experience it*.”

**The Superintendency for Archaeological, Artistic and Architectural Heritage and Landscape for L’Aquila and its Seismic Crater** carried out the project with a team from three Italian universities (**“Sapienza” University of Rome**, **Politecnico of Milan**, and **University of L'Aquila**). The restoration work was the result of a successful collaboration between the **Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MiBACT)**, the **Diocese of L’Aquila** and the **Municipality of L’Aquila** with the energy company **ENI S.p.a.** acting as sponsor.

**Category Research**

[**Tramontana Network III, FRANCE/ITALY/POLAND/PORTUGAL/SPAIN**](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/tramontana-network-iii-france-italy-poland-portugal-spain/)

Tramontana Network III is a celebration of the mountain heritage of Europe, an intangible heritage that is common across Europe in its richness of diversity. This comprehensive study sought to safeguard, collect and promote this heritage through its documentation and broad dissemination through interactive online portals, workshops, and events and publications.

When selecting the Tramontana Network III to receive this year’s Grand Prix in the category Research, the **Board of Europa Nostra** emphasised: “*Rural mountainous communities throughout Europe have an extremely rich and diverse cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. The transborder and cooperative nature of the Tramontana Network III project is a strong example of the importance of research as a driver in equipping these communities with the necessary tools to preserve and celebrate their heritage.*”

The 8 project partners from 5 countries - namely **Binaural Nodar**, **Audiolab**, **Akademia Profil**, **Bambun**, **Eth Ostau Comengés**, **LEM-Italia**, **Nosauts de Bigòrra** and **Numériculture Gascogne** - each created a project involving every other partner, to encourage international cooperation and cultural exchange.

**Luís Costa**, Coordinator at Binaural Nodar, affirmed: *“The Award has helped us realise that small-scale grassroots organisations devoted to rural cultural heritage and working collaboratively on a European scale can produce relevant, diverse and high impact results. The Award is also an homage to European rural communities and their memories, showing that European countries still have a deep material and symbolic connection with their rural territories. Finally, the Award gives visibility to the importance of digital archiving as a tool to enhance a sense of deep knowledge about the social fabric of Europe*.”

**Category Education, Training and Awareness-Raising**

[**Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away, POLAND/SPAIN**](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/auschwitz-not-long-ago-not-far-away/)

The exhibition *Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.* provides those who cannot visit the Auschwitz Memorial with insight into the site’s story and the fate of its prisoners. Thanks to this exhibition, it is expected that more than 7 million visitors will learn about the complicated history of the largest German Nazi concentration camp – Auschwitz-Birkenau – as well as how and why the Holocaust happened. The exhibition first took place in Madrid and is currently in New York. It will continue its tour to a number of other cities around the world with the content adapted to include stories related to each locality.

When choosing *Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.* to receive this year’s Grand Prix in the category Education, Training and Awareness-Raising, the **Board of Europa Nostra** noted: “*Europe is facing an alarming and unacceptable rise in nationalism, xenophobia, antisemitism, racism and hate speech. Exhibitions such as* Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away. – *based on rigorous research and European collaboration* – *are important in that they raise awareness and make the lessons from our shared past more tangible, offering factual and clear evidence of what can happen when various forms of extremism are tolerated*”.

The exhibition is the result of the collaboration of two European entities, **Musealia** from Spain and the **Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum** in Poland. It has been supported and provided with artefacts by more than 20 museums and institutions.

“*Above all, the Award comes as an important tribute to all the victims, and a powerful reminder of how the story of Auschwitz is part of our shared cultural heritage. Hundreds of thousands have visited the exhibition, many of which are young students. It is very encouraging that so many people, in different continents, are willing to face such a deeply problematic part of our history. It speaks about the responsibility many individuals share not only to remember the past, but also to critically analyse our present*,” stated **Luís Ferreiro**, Director, Musealia / Auschwitz Exhibition.

**Public Choice Award Winner**

**Category Education, Training and Awareness-Raising**

[**The Ambulance for Monuments, ROMANIA**](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/the-ambulance-for-monuments/)

The Ambulance for Monuments project has rescued hundreds of heritage-listed buildings in Romania through a large network of active heritage organisations. These emergency interventions are carried out by experts, students and trained craftsmen on a voluntary basis with local communities and authorities. At the heart of the project in each region is an intervention kit and a lorry equipped with tools, construction equipment and materials.

**H.E. Klaus Werner Iohannis**, President of Romania, in a special message read during the European Heritage Awards Ceremony, warmly congratulated the team that initiated this project: “*Due to their vision, through the involvement of young people, of the specialists, authorities and sponsors, many monuments at risk have been saved during the five years since The Ambulance exists, thus testing the viability of a model of social cohesion emerging from cultural values and local identity*.”

The Ambulance for Monuments project won the Public Choice Award 2020. It received the largest number of votes, cast via an online poll with the participation of over 12,000 citizens from all over Europe.

The President of Romania saluted the public that ranked The Ambulance for Monuments first in their choices. “*I believe that many European citizens appreciated the Romanian project as a concrete expression of solidarity and an example for the appropriate use of the civic energies developed by culture and cultural heritage*”, affirmed H.E. Klaus Werner Iohannis (read full message in [English](https://www.europanostra.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20201110_Message-KWI_President-of-Romania_EN.pdf) and [Romanian](https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/mesaje)).

The conservation work is carried out by **Asociația Monumentum** (the owner and developer of the project), **Asociația pentru Patrimoniu Activ-PACT**, and **Asociația Vernacular and** **Asociația Arhaic**. The network is still growing, with a further four organisations joining this year: **Asociația Actum**; **Asociația Inima Olteniei**; **Asociația Atelierul de Patrimoniu**; and **Asociația Rost**. The projecthas enjoyed the support of **His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales** and **The Anglo-Romanian Trust for Traditional Architecture**.

“*The community involvement in heritage preservation, hands-on training of young specialists and focus on sustainability are essential features for the success of our approach to safeguarding heritage. The Award greatly contributes to spreading the word about our mission and strengthens our thoughts to extend the project in other European countries which face a similar abandonment of monuments*”, emphasised **Eugen and Veronica Vaida**, Architects of Asociația Monumentum.

**Background**

**European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards: some facts, figures and benefits**

The [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/) were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run in partnership with Europa Nostra ever since. The Awards are supported by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

The Awards celebrate and promote the highest standards in heritage interventions, research, and education, training and awareness-raising, as well the longstanding dedication of professionals and volunteers. The achievements recognised throughout the lifespan of the Awards scheme are a testament to the dynamic and vibrant heritage of Europe and of the dedication with which it is celebrated and cared for across the continent.

In **18 years**, organisations and individuals in **39 countries** have submitted **3,150 applications** to the Awards. Independent expert juries, with the help of expert assessors, have selected **533 award-winning projects** from **34 countries**. A total of **126 Grand Prix** of €10,000 have been presented to outstanding heritage initiatives, selected from among the award-winning projects.

The **winners** of the Awards have reported a multitude of short and long-term **benefits**, such as increased **networking and professional opportunities** across Europe; **increased footfall** to the heritage sites that they manage; and **follow-on projects, further funding** and **other development opportunities**. The Awards are recognised as **Europe's most prestigious honour in the heritage field.** As a result, the Awards bring local, national and European visibility and recognition to the winners. And not just to the award-winning projects themselves but also to their countries and local communities!

The Awards provide a wide-ranging portfolio of high-quality examples which help to illustrate best practices and promote the exchange of ideas and approaches. The Awards scheme constitutes a **rich database of best practices in heritage**, which are geographically and thematically diverse. This database is also widely used for research purposes.

Best practice heritage projects which operate at local/national level and have a high social value are key to building a narrative on how cultural heritage contributes to Europe’s most pressing challenges. **The awarded projects feed into wider policy debates**, including in terms of support for campaigning for heritage protection, and supporting education and training in the cultural heritage sector. Many of them are made possible thanks to EU funding, which is also interesting in policy terms.

**Europa Nostra**

[Europa Nostra](https://www.europanostra.org/) 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](http://7mostendangered.eu/). It celebrates excellence through the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards. 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 3.3](http://europeanheritagealliance.eu/).

**Creative Europe**

[Creative Europe](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm) 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 €1.46 billion for 2014-2020 and €1.64 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.