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PRESS RELEASE

30 May 2024

European Heritage Award/ Europa Nostra Award 2024 for the National Trust of Georgia

In 2021-2023, the National Trust of Georgia set up a collaborative European project to restore a medieval tower in danger of collapse, in Khevsureti, a remote high-mountain region of Georgia. The complex project was successfully implemented thanks to the high commitment and excellent collaboration of British, French, Polish and Georgian partners, an experienced team of professionals, and the tireless effort of 46 young Georgian and European citizens working on a volunteering basis. The project has brought much-needed national and international attention to this remote mountain community of Georgia and enhanced its potential for future sustainable development.

[The National Trust of Georgia](#), with The [International National Trusts Organisation \(INTO, UK\)](#), the lead partner, [REMPART](#) (France) and Association '[Ducal Tower in Siedlecin](#)' (Poland), is proud to announce that this project, titled '*Citizens' Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower, Akhieli, Georgia*' was selected for Europe's most prestigious award for heritage, the *European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award*, co-funded by the [Creative Europe](#) programme of the European Union. The project was commended by the [European Commission](#) and [Europa Nostra](#) on 30 May as one of **26 outstanding winners from 18 countries**.

The project was supported by a grant from **ALIPH - the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas**. Georgia benefitted with an amount of US\$ 157,290, of which about US\$ 34,000 went directly to the local community, actively involved in the project activities.

The 19-metre medieval watchtower is set in one of the nation's remotest regions – cut off by a 2,900 metre pass, eight months of the year. The tower, severely damaged by a Russian missile in 2001 during the Second Chechen war, had been in danger of collapse. 46 Georgian, French, Polish and British citizens worked alongside technical experts, local villagers, and traditional craftspeople to restore the tower, which is now a model for rehabilitation of Georgian defensive architecture.

Alongside the tower's stabilisation, a large focus of this project was knowledge sharing and capacity building. As well as learning new skills in stonemasonry and trail building, participants experienced one another's intangible heritage, thus showing the peacebuilding capacity of collective restoration. The

project has raised the profile of volunteering in Georgia and provided sought-after opportunities for young citizens to engage with their heritage, fostering local pride and identity.

The project faced many challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a major landslide. Against all odds, the Tsiskarauli Tower carries a new, positive layer of history, marked by European collaboration. [This short film](#) (5 minutes) shows the project coming to fruition.

Marine Mizandari, Co-chair, National Trust for Georgia, said:

'The commitment of British, French, Polish and Georgian professionals and young volunteers and their determination to rescue the medieval tower in danger of collapse in Georgia, were instrumental to overcome all challenges and to successfully fulfill this worthy mission.

This was a collaborative European project in the field of safeguarding Georgian cultural heritage on a scale I have never seen before. Multiple benefits and impacts of this joint initiative are already tangible: through this project, we have strengthened the local community, have increased the potential of eco-tourism in this remote region, and have put a solid international network of young volunteers in place. Through the extensive media coverage, we have raised awareness of the uniqueness of Georgia's cultural heritage and importance of its protection, both within the country and internationally. I am convinced that the fully rehabilitated tower will continue to be a focal point around which new initiatives can flourish'.

Today the tower, with its internal museum, stands open to the public – inviting a new population of tourists up to this remote and beautiful valley. The visitors can read about the tower's history on interpretation panels, see the remains of the Russian missile, learn of its restoration, and explore the surrounding villages.

"The Citizens' Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower embodies excellence in heritage conservation through a holistic approach, integrating the restoration of built heritage, community engagement, international collaboration, and capacity-building, following the severe damage to the monument caused by a Russian missile fired during the Second Chechen war. Engaging in a broader network and consortium, the project provided a platform for the exchange of knowledge and culture", the Awards' [Jury](#) commented.

"The use of traditional materials and techniques has enhanced the authenticity of the work, while community engagement, involving locals, international volunteers, and the diaspora has created a sense of stewardship. The project has served as a catalyst for international cultural relations, peace, and trust building, demonstrating the power of heritage-led collaboration in overcoming conflict and rehabilitating local communities", the Jury concluded.

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These are the winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2024 in five categories¹:

Conservation & Adaptive Reuse

[Royale Belge Building, Brussels, BELGIUM](#)

[Schulenburg Mansion, Gera, GERMANY](#)

[Ignacy Historic Mine, Rybnik, POLAND](#)

[Saxon Church in Alma Vii, ROMANIA](#)

[St. Michael's Church, Cluj-Napoca, ROMANIA](#)

[Snow Wells, Sierra Espuña, SPAIN](#)

Research

[NewsEye: A Digital Investigator for Historical Newspapers, AUSTRIA/FINLAND/FRANCE/GERMANY](#)

Education, Training & Skills

[Teryan Cultural Center - Empowering Armenian Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, Yerevan, ARMENIA](#)

[Boulouki - Travelling Workshop on Traditional Building, GREECE](#)

[Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, IRELAND](#)

[Serfenta Crafts Revitalisation Model, Cieszyn, POLAND](#)

[White Carpentry School, Narros del Castillo, SPAIN](#)

Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising

[The Square Kilometre, Ghent, BELGIUM](#)

[The Silence that Tore Down the Monument, Kamenska, CROATIA](#)

[Preserving the Community Halls for Local Civil Society Activities, FINLAND](#)

[Fortified Castles of Alsace Association, FRANCE](#)

[Citizens' Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower, Akheli, GEORGIA](#)

[International Festival of Classical Theatre for Youth, Syracuse, ITALY](#)

[Foundation for the Conservation of the Historical Estate Ockenburgh, The Hague, THE NETHERLANDS](#)

Heritage Champions

[Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities, CROATIA](#)

[Else "Sprossa" Rønnevig, Lillesand, NORWAY](#)

[Professor Piotr Gerber, Wrocław, POLAND](#)

Europa Nostra Awards 2024 for outstanding projects from the UK

This year, Europa Nostra Awards go to four remarkable heritage projects from a European country not taking part in the EU Creative Europe programme.

[Gideon Tapestries, Hardwick Hall](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse category)

[Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, Shrewsbury](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse category)

[Westminster Hall, London](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse category)

[Marcus Binney CBE, OBE Hon FRIBA FSA](#) (Heritage Champions category)

The winners will be celebrated at the **European Heritage Awards Ceremony 2024** on **7 October** at the Romanian Athenaeum, the most prestigious concert hall in Bucharest, Romania, which recently received a [European Heritage Label](#) in recognition of its European significance. This high-profile event will be co-hosted by the European Commissioner **Iliana Ivanova** and Europa Nostra's Executive President **Hermann Parzinger**. During the ceremony, the Grand Prix laureates and the Public Choice Award winner, chosen from among this year's winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards and entitled to receive €10,000 each, will be announced.

The ceremony will be a highlight of the [European Cultural Heritage Summit 2024](#) which will take place on 6-8 October in Bucharest under the high patronage of the President of Romania, **H.E. Klaus Iohannis**. The Summit, co-funded by the European Union, is organised by Europa Nostra in close cooperation with heritage organisations and partners, both public and private, in Romania.

¹ The winners are listed alphabetically by country

Heritage supporters and enthusiasts are now encouraged to discover the winners and [vote online to decide who will win the Public Choice Award 2024](#), entitled to receive a monetary award of €10,000. You can cast your vote until 22 September.

Background

European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards

The [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#) were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. For 22 years, the Awards have been a key tool to recognise and promote the multiple values of heritage for Europe's society, economy and environment.

The Awards have highlighted and disseminated heritage excellence and best practices in Europe, encouraged the cross-border exchange of knowledge and connected heritage stakeholders in wider networks. The Awards have brought major benefits to the winners, such as greater (inter)national exposure, additional funding and increased visitor numbers

Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. It is a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, covering over 40 countries. It is the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe, maintaining close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies. Founded in 1963, Europa Nostra celebrated its 60th anniversary last year.

Creative Europe

[Creative Europe](#) is the EU programme that supports the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to Europe's society, economy and living environment. 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.

National Trust of Georgia

National Trust of Georgia champions the protection and preservation of the country's rich cultural heritage. The trust provides practical support for the preservation of buildings and land, as well as encouraging heritage awareness within Georgia.

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INTO: <https://www.into.org>

INTO brings the global National Trust family together to share knowledge and tools for the protection of cultural and natural heritage. With 100 members worldwide, we are a global movement of people who care about nature and culture and are inspired to celebrate and protect it. Our programmes and projects facilitate collaboration in the international heritage sector.

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TO FIND OUT MORE

[Press release in various languages](#)

About each Award winner:

[Information and Jury's comments](#)

[Videos](#) (in high resolution)

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

[Creative Europe website](#)