NARRATE

Needs for Digital Recording and Documentation of Ecclesiastical Cultural Treasures in Monasteries and Temples

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The purpose of NARRATE project is to codify the actual recording and documentation needs for the ecclesiastical cultural treasures, through a systematic study of the users' needs.

Consortium partners

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- ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE (KMKD)
- COGNITIVE UX

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Abbreviations

Executive Summary

The EU Erasmus+ “NARRATE: Needs for Digital Recording and Documentation of Ecclesiastical Cultural Treasures in Monasteries and Temples” (2022-1-EL01-KA220-HED-000089867) aims at identifying and promoting the needs and priorities concerning ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage (CH) documentation.

This study seeks to organize and address the specific requirements for recording and documenting ecclesiastical cultural treasures by thoroughly analyzing user needs. NARRATE focuses on capturing ecclesiastical cultural heritage in a way that allows stakeholders to convey their interconnected histories, roles, and spiritual significance over time.

The current report, *R4.1a: Report of Pilot Study,* is part of Work Package WP4 Development of Educational Material and Training Webinars on the Documentation of Ecclesiastical Treasures. This report summarizes and provides an overview of the pilot study Agios Panteleimon Rum Orthodox Church, Kuzguncuk, Istanbul, Turkey.

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the documentation and digitization process conducted as part of the Narrate project at the Agios Panteleimon Rum Orthodox Church in Kuzguncuk, Istanbul, Turkey. The primary purpose of this digitization effort was to assess the capacity, efficiency and ease of use of the Narrate platform. By utilizing the Agios Panteleimon Rum Orthodox Church as a pilot site, the project aimed to test how effectively the platform could manage and digitize cultural and religious artifacts. The process was intended to measure not only the technical capabilities of the platform but also its accessibility and user-friendliness, ensuring it could operate smoothly in similar contexts by multiple users. Additionally, this study sought to demonstrate the platform's strength in processing high-resolution digital content, showcasing the project's aim and potential for cultural heritage preservation and documentation.

Furthermore, the project aimed to test the platform's ability to sort and organize all data, ensuring it could manage and carry all necessary information like restoration stages, dates and measurements. An essential aspect of the evaluation was to determine whether the platform could maintain specific standards and ensure consistency across various stages of digitization. This assessment was crucial in understanding the full range of capabilities of the Narrate platform, including its ability to handle the tasks and maintain a high level of performance.

Documentation Process:

The Narrate educational videos provide a valuable resource, allowing a broader range of individuals to participate in the digitization and documentation of church assets, regardless of their technical expertise. This pilot study was conducted by a team that included a photographer, yet challenges remained in achieving the best possible image results due to the physical limitations of the space and lighting conditions. The documentation process was carried out in nearly five separate sessions, each focusing on digitizing a specific area. However, some icons could not be photographed due to their location, particularly those positioned at high points or in narrow-angle areas, which posed technical challenges.

The assets comprised both portable and affixed icons, some of which were positioned at significant heights. Although a ladder was utilized, certain icons on the templon could not be adequately measured, presenting challenges in the documentation process. Additionally, capturing images of icons in the Ambon and other larger assets was

hindered by restricted shooting angles and inadequate lighting conditions. In some instances, insufficient lighting compromised the image quality, requiring multiple attempts to achieve satisfactory clarity. Due to limited shooting angles and poor lighting conditions, some photographs underwent color correction and digital enhancement. These adjustments were made to improve the visibility of the details of these ecclesiastical treasures while maintaining their original aesthetic qualities.

Despite these reservations, the documentation process still yielded valuable and usable results, reinforcing the platform's reception in capturing and archiving assets with varying levels of equipment and technical resources. All church objects were successfully documented and organized within the Narrate platform, fulfilling the project's objectives.

The e-book presents the church's sections in a structured order.

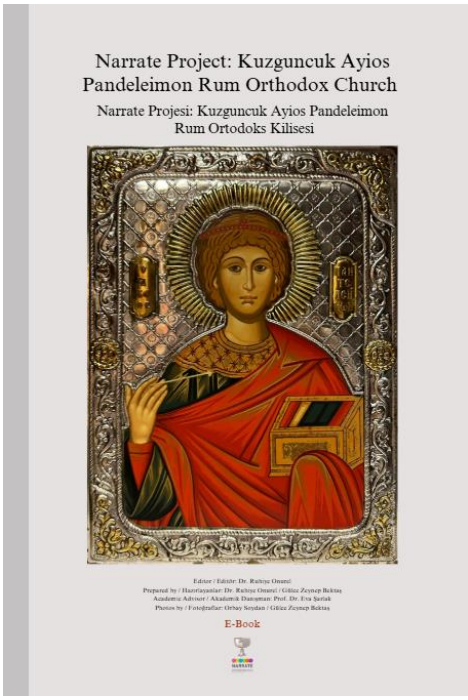

Figure 1 *The Cover Page of Agios Panteleimon Rum Orthodox Church E-book*

Figure 2 *A Page of Agios Panteleimon Rum Orthodox Church E-book*

Uploading Process for the Narrate Project Website

Upon completion of the digitization activities at Agios Panteleimon Church, the captured images were uploaded to the Narrate platform with specific user account. Several observations regarding the platform's functionality and user experience were made can be summarized as follows:

-Improved Interface Design: The newly implemented white-focused design significantly enhanced the visual appeal and navigability of the platform, contributing to a clearer and straight-forward user experience.

- Error Correction Features: The inclusion of delete and update functions facilitated efficient corrections of any upload inaccuracies, improving workflow.

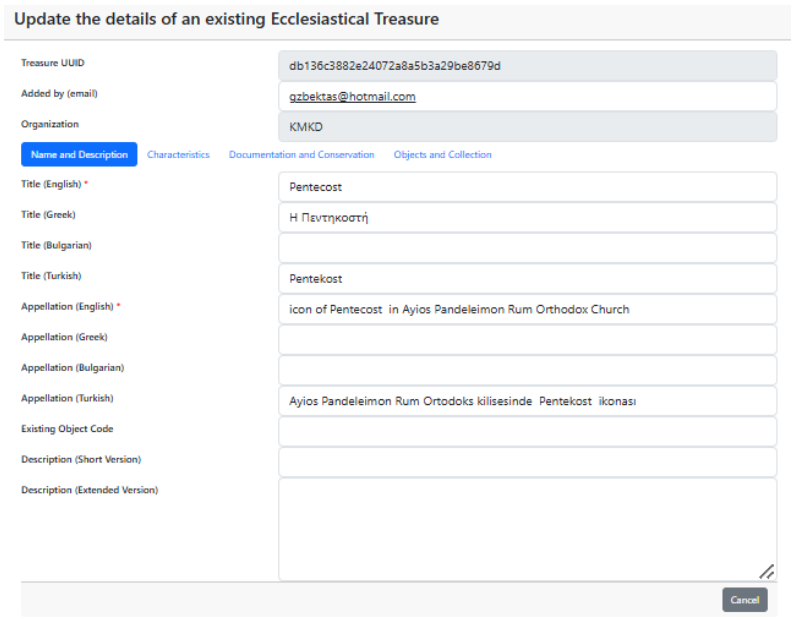

Figure 3 *Narrate Platform Editing Ecclesiastical Treasure*

-Support for High-Resolution Files: The platform's capability to accommodate high-resolution uploads ensured the preservation of fine details in the digitized icons.

Figure 4 *The Icon of Wedding at Cana which is uploaded to the Narrate Platform*

- Batch Upload Functionality: This feature speeds up the simultaneous upload of multiple files, enhancing operational efficiency.
- Category-Based Search Functionality: This feature enabled users to efficiently search and filter results by categorizing them, significantly improving the ability to locate specific items quickly and accurately.

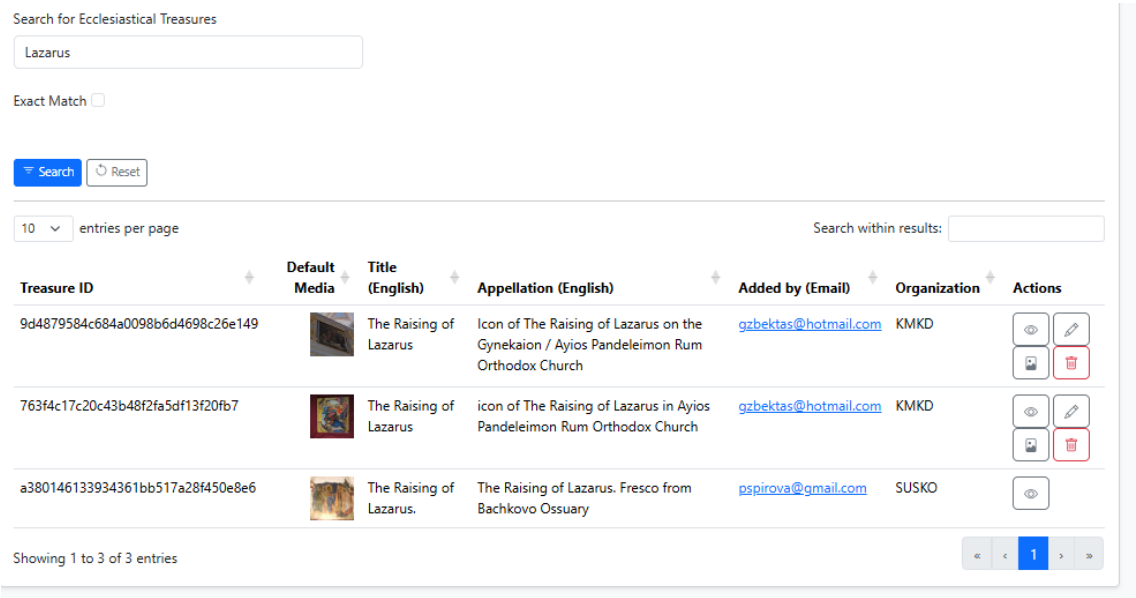

Figure 5 *Narrate Platform Search Function*

Limitation: Despite these improvements, the website's slow loading speed posed a notable constraint, impacting the overall efficiency of the upload process.

2. Conclusion

This pilot study demonstrates that the digitization and documentation process carried out at Agios Panteleimon Church can be applied to any church, regardless of size or complexity. The Narrate platform can handle this process with its high capacity and efficient performance. The system is self-taught, easy to learn, allowing users to quickly become familiar with the platform. Moreover, the platform supports various sorting functions, ensuring that all data and assets can be organized and managed effectively. This makes the Narrate platform a reliable tool for documenting and preserving cultural and religious artifacts in churches across diverse contexts.