

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001401/24
to the Commission
Catherine Griset (PFE)
(23 July 2024)**

Subject: Funding insurance premiums for historic monuments

On 30 March, floods hit the commune of Saint-Savin in the Vienne department (86), damaging 11th and 12th century paintings in the crypts of the abbey of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, nicknamed the ‘Romanesque Sistine Chapel’. Painted 17 metres from the floor on walls and vaults, these exceptional frescoes are evidence of the development of the Romanesque and Benedictine abbeys.

The abbey has been listed as a historic monument and registered as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) World Heritage Site.

Although the French state is funding 80% of the restoration work, the fact remains that this municipality of fewer than 1 000 inhabitants has not been able to pay to insure the building for many years.

Many small towns are unable to pay the substantial insurance premiums demanded for such monuments.

1. Would the Commission be willing to encourage Member States to pay insurance premiums for historic monuments or to pool them with all local authorities (state + regions + departments + inter-municipalities and communes)?
2. Would the Commission be willing to contribute towards the funding of these premiums?

Submitted: 23.7.2024

**Answer given by Ms Ivanova on behalf of the European Commission
(22 October 2024)**

The Commission emphasises the importance of safeguarding all forms of cultural heritage, including religious heritage.

Under Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) ⁽¹⁾, the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is primarily a national responsibility. Member States have significant discretion in supporting cultural infrastructures under EU State aid rules.

Funding for the maintenance of non-commercial cultural sites is generally excluded from state aid rules, especially when it has a purely local impact and does not affect trade between Member States.

The Commission has also established rules allowing Member States to grant state aid for cultural infrastructure without prior notification or approval.

For instance, aid can be granted under Article 53 of the General Block Exemption Regulation ⁽²⁾ or the services of general economic interest *de minimis* Regulation ⁽³⁾, provided that the funding meets the relevant criteria.

Member States may also notify state aid measures for approval under Article 107(3)(d) of the TFEU ⁽⁴⁾, promoting culture and heritage conservation.

While EU funding mainly supports cross-border projects under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, the EU can encourage cooperation between Member States in cultural heritage conservation.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/>

⁽²⁾ Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014R0651>, as amended by Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/1315, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023R1315>

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2832/oj>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A12008E107>