

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001662/24
to the Commission
Catherine Griset (PFE)
(9 September 2024)**

Subject: The need to make sure religious buildings are safe

France's religious heritage watchdog (OPR) has reported that church fires have become increasingly common over the last few years. In the last six months there have been 13 fires in churches in France; there were 27 in 2023.

The OPR points out that most of the fires have been accidental, very often occurring during renovation work.

Whether accidental or the result of arson, these fires and the damage they cause are on the increase for a number of reasons:

- the fact that creaky wiring and old electrical appliances are in use makes renovation work riskier;
- there is a shortage of CCTV systems and equipment for intruder-detection, fire detection and, where applicable, fire extinction.

Investment in electrical systems and surveillance equipment is therefore required in order to cut the number of fires and help firefighters intervene more quickly.

Small municipalities, however, may well find it difficult to afford the equipment concerned, and they are not getting enough support from the government.

1. What steps would the Commission envisage to improve funding for the renovation of the electrics in religious buildings and the installation of surveillance equipment?
2. With particular reference to the ERDF and other EU funds, is it easy for small municipalities to access such funding? Could the bureaucracy involved in accessing it be reduced?

Submitted: 9.9.2024

**Answer given by Ms Ferreira on behalf of the European Commission
(12 November 2024)**

The European Commission is deeply committed to safeguarding and enhancing cultural heritage in all its forms. It therefore takes note of the suggestion to fund electrical systems and surveillance equipment at cultural heritage sites in the Member States.

The Commission would emphasise that the preservation, conservation and promotion of cultural heritage is primarily a Member State responsibility.

However, Creative Europe, which is Europe's flagship programme to support the cultural and creative sectors, including religious heritage, co-funds initiatives and projects of European interest or importance aimed at the preservation, promotion and stewardship of built cultural heritage sites. Municipalities of any size are able to access this funding.

In relation to the European Regional Development Fund and other cohesion funds, the use of appropriations is governed by the Partnership Agreement between France and the Commission and the details are set out in regional programmes.

The national or regional managing authorities select projects for funding and are also responsible for applying the many simplifications introduced by the regulations governing the funds as well as for supporting project owners.

The aim is to open up access to funding in compliance with the programme conditions which are uniformly applied to all eligible beneficiaries.
