
Religious heritage: for 81% of Europeans, the preservation of places of worship is key for the future of communities

According to a survey commissioned by the NGO “Future of Religious Heritage” (FRH), 81% of Europeans believe that the preservation of Europe’s historic places of worship is key for their community’s present and future. FRH, a network committed to safeguarding and promoting the cultural, historical and artistic value of religious sites, has today released data collected last October by interviewing 8,000 Europeans in eight European countries. For 77% of respondents, the over 500,000 churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious buildings as well as their art, crafts and ceremonies are “an integral part of their country’s cultural heritage”. Furthermore, 86% believe this heritage is a highly valued asset for their local community, because it is a key part of their local identity and an attractive element of their cultural landscape. Also, 79% of respondents welcome the possibility of “extending the use of religious buildings beyond their religious function”, by opening them to tourism or other cultural activities that are compatible with these sites. According to Pilar Bahamonde, President of FRH, it is “no surprise at all that European citizens support the cultural and identity value of religious heritage”, which is the fruit of the work of generations. Pilgrimage routes, she said, are “an invisible backbone” of the continent “nourishing the identity of Europe”.

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