

A Decisive Sponsorship for the Preservation of French Jewish Heritage

Claire Bommelaer, June 25, 2025



The restoration project of the Metz Consistorial Synagogue is considered the most significant undertaking for Judaism in France. Jewish Consistory of Moselle

The Heritage Foundation is launching a dedicated funding program. Endowed with €5 million thanks to the Edmond J. Safra Foundation, it aims to highlight a largely unknown heritage.

The announcement came on Tuesday, during an event focused on religious heritage organized in Paris by the Heritage Foundation. The Metz Consistorial Synagogue, closed for two years due to renovations, will receive financial support of €150,000. “With a community of 1,500 people, it’s not easy to secure funding, even though the State and local authorities are supporting us,” said Alain Aisene, Vice President of the Jewish Consistory of Moselle. “After having to raise €2.3 million for the façade and the steps, this sponsorship marks a turning point for us.”

Built in 1848 and listed as a historic monument, the large synagogue is located right in the city center. It bears witness to the longstanding presence of Judaism in the Moselle region. The funding will go toward essential structural work, such as refurbishing the flooring and decorative elements, and creating two exhibition rooms within the synagogue on Jewish life.

Designed in collaboration with the Cour d'Or Museum in Metz – which includes galleries dedicated to the history of Judaism in Metz – the spaces will be open to visitors. “It’s not

common for a synagogue to open its doors to the public, especially due to security concerns. But we're taking advantage of the building's reopening in 2025 to become part of the city's tourist circuit and give new energy to our community," Alain Aisene added.



Benfeld Synagogue (Bas-Rhin) Heritage Foundation / MyPhotoAgency / Julian Perez

The Metz synagogue is just the first in a long list of Jewish sites that could experience a revival – provided they receive support. On Tuesday evening, the Heritage Foundation announced the launch of a new “Jewish Heritage Program,” aimed at funding restoration projects for significant Jewish sites and properties. The program is backed by the Edmond J. Safra Foundation, with a €5 million commitment. “Our mission is to preserve endangered heritage across all religions and throughout France. We’ve already taken action, with Stéphane Bern and through the heritage lottery, at several sites, and this program will allow us to expand our efforts for a legacy that remains too often overlooked,” explained Guillaume Poitrinal, president of the Heritage Foundation.

Honoring the Resilience of French Jewish Communities

While France has 42,000 churches, synagogues number only in the hundreds. Like many churches, they are sometimes abandoned in rural areas. Most have an associative status and cannot rely solely on their members to fund restorations.

Wishing both “to support the Jewish religion” in France and abroad, and to “honor the resilience of French Jewish communities,” the Edmond Safra Foundation – named after a Lebanese-born banker – has long played its part by financially supporting places of

worship, Hebrew schools, and Jewish heritage. Among other achievements, it has helped restore the Maison Sublime in Rouen (the oldest Jewish monument in France, dating to 1100), the house of Rabbi Rashi in Troyes (from the 12th century), and synagogues in Clermont-Ferrand and Lyon.



Thanks to the *Sésame Prize* from the Heritage Foundation, the Thann Synagogue (Haut-Rhin) will open a Yiddish library. Guillaume de Laubier

The Heritage Foundation will propose suitable sites for inclusion in the program, and the candidates must submit applications by September 2025. It has already committed to restoring the synagogues of Elbeuf (Seine-Maritime), Fossemaigne (Territoire de Belfort), and Benfeld (Bas-Rhin), contributing to the renewal of Jewish life and culture. On Tuesday, it also awarded a prize to the 19th-century synagogue in Thann (Haut-Rhin), in support of its Yiddish library project.

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