



CANTABRIA

REGION

581,078



Challenge

Cantabria is a small rural Spanish region with widely dispersed municipalities. It suffers from dramatic depopulation, with many inhabitants at risk of exclusion because of the digital divide or geographic isolation. This results in a loss of services, economic activity and investments.

Although the region boasts a wide variety of cultural assets and traditions, these trends accelerate the deterioration and abandonment of cultural heritage, which adds to the lack of, and limited access to, artistic and cultural activities.

Solution

Located in a thousand-year-old church, the Liébana Centre of Studies is a public-private initiative offering cultural, artistic and educational activities to over 6,000 inhabitants at risk of exclusion.

Founded by the Regional Government of Cantabria, this inclusive multi-functional space hosts a rich calendar of initiatives which are codesigned and organised with the local regional stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, schools, SMEs, local brotherhoods and religious entities).



Domus Dei to Domus Populi



1000-year-old church is new centre for cultural life



Participatory Governance



Adaptive Reuse

How ?

1

Research and stakeholder engagement

To tackle the initial reluctance of the local stakeholders, a participatory mapping exercise identifies local cultural assets. Experts catalogue them and co-design the pilgrimage route 'Camino Lebaniego' (a subsidiary of the Camino de Santiago, UNESCO World Heritage), positioning it in national and international pilgrimage networks.

2

Infrastructure

Acquisition, protection and restoration of a deconsecrated religious building and transformation into a multi-functional space for cultural, artistic, and educational activities, tailored to the needs of target audiences (elderly, special needs, etc.).

3

Business development

Develop business models for local SMEs linked to the Camino Lebaniego, to revitalise the economic and social activity in the area. The centre incubates cultural enterprises, providing SMEs with a space to interact with cultural actors.

4

Tourism and marketing

An innovative marketing strategy attracts specific clients, such as tourists. The centre provides information to and monitors over 50,000 pilgrims and tourists per year. The internationalisation of the centre has been enabled by participation in EU initiatives and networks.

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Budget/Financing

Restoration costs: €2,000,000

Museum transformation works: €300,000

Average annual budget: €300,000

- Average annual staff cost €175,000
- Exhibitions and cultural activities €110,000
- The rest: building maintenance



Management

A quadruple helix model was used:

- The Regional Government of Cantabria created the centre, which is managed today by the SRECD (Sociedad Regional Cultura y Deporte), a public company governed by public law of the Regional Ministry of Universities, Equality, Culture and Sports. This allows greater flexibility when developing and funding initiatives.
- A full team of eight within the SRECD work closely with the regional ecosystem (public and private actors) to codesign, implement, and monitor the centre's annual work plan.
- This participatory process ensures a constant dialogue with the town councils located in the territory of Liébana, local and regional development associations, cultural associations, educational centres, and civil society associations.



Link

Website: <https://centros.culturadecantabria.com/t/he-centro-de-estudios-lebaniegos/>



Transferability

- Study the needs of the territory to build a strategy. Cities/regions need to identify their strengths and unique aspects.
- Culture and cultural heritage extend to areas such as education, private sector, social, etc. Through culture projects, other sectors can express themselves and develop. This requires inclusive projects with all possible local/regional actors.
- Projects should be living and flexible. Evaluation strategies must allow rapid action, correction, and improved performance. Governance models must be inclusive and flexible, in constant dialogue with the environment.



Impact

- Improved local awareness of the value of the regional religious heritage.
- Renewed public availability of a religious heritage asset, with positive social impacts for the inhabitants.
- Increase of, and improved access to, artistic, cultural and educational activities – some of which were especially designed for an ageing population.
- Strengthened civil engagement in strategic public planning, and improved collaborative culture amongst regional stakeholders.
- Consolidation of a regional ecosystem around religious heritage, with increased business opportunities, renewed economic dynamism, and tangible spill-over effects in the tourism and agriculture sectors.



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