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PEER LEARNING VISIT REPORT  
AND ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

# THE VALORISATION OF RELIGIOUS AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Cantabria,  
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*“No money in the world will be able to fight against depopulation if there is no feeling of belonging. Locals need to be protagonists of change: nothing hurts local identities and belonging more than a paternalistic approach to rural areas.”*

***Segundo Caso, Mayor of Peñarrubia***

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural, dispersed and less accessible communities are often not the focus of cultural heritage (CH) protection and valorisation policies. With often a decreasing population and reduced services, these areas are confronted with specific challenges linked to urbanisation trends, older demography and agricultural decline.

In this context, underlining the opportunities of heritage protection, reuse and valorisation in rural communities is an important statement. The peer learning visit to Cantabria was a unique opportunity to address the challenge of managing cultural heritage (notably religious heritage) and natural heritage in one of the most beautiful mountainous regions of Europe with a view to keep a vibrant social and economic life.

Cantabria is an autonomous region of Spain. The population (around 550,000 inhabitants – 1% of Spain's total population) is heavily concentrated along the coastal areas north of Spain. One half of Cantabria's land lies above 600 meters high. Its capital, Santander, holds a third of the total population. The rural population like in the Liébana region that hosted the visit tends to be widely scattered, living sometimes in isolated hamlets.

The peer learning visit was the opportunity to understand how authorities in the Liébana valley have taken up the challenges leaning on the local cultural heritage assets: mainly religious and environmental resources.



The following themes were considered during the two days mission:

### **Management of heritage sites, entrepreneurship and job creation:**

1. The Centro de Estudios Lebaniégos (CEL) set up by the Cantabria region plays a crucial role in promoting local heritage resources and in developing the narrative on the role of natural and religious heritage in economic development. Thanks to the dynamism, enthusiasm and drive of the head of the Centro, Pilar Bahamonde, strong relationships have been established with local entrepreneurs. The Centro is clearly acting as an essential linking-pin with the public authorities notably policy makers (mayors) to promote the value of heritage. This is a strong element of a good practice (institution with sufficient credibility and statutes well driven/managed by the right personality). CEL has been keen to show the economic potential of religious and natural heritage during the visit with introduction to the main players in the field.
2. Cultural heritage professionals should think beyond the project that they are managing but consider the wider economic implication of heritage resources. It is important to properly manage these resources in coordination with public authorities and consider the numerous options to raise funding to the benefit of the site as well as the community. In this respect Intellectual property is a means to protect cultural heritage but also to trade usage of such property rights. It is worthwhile to investigate the value of IP in the local context and develop an appropriate strategy (for instance through inspiration from other main religious sites such as St James de Compostela).
3. The cultural agenda should highlight the responsibility of entrepreneurs in promoting authenticity, local gastronomy and processes so that they are included as heritage stakeholders and contribute to the safeguarding of heritage. Institutions such as CEL are important to coordinate this planning and help policy makers devise the strategy. It is important to solicit the sense of pride of the community including the business community to generate awareness on the potential of CH. Business skills should integrate the importance of heritage in business management.

### **Community management and engagement:**

1. Communities play a central and often catalyst role in cultural heritage promotion and conservation, both tangible and intangible. In the context of Cantabria, CEL represents a place for local community to gather as it is now used as a multi-functional space hosting a rich calendar of initiatives which are codesigned and organised with the local regional stakeholders.
2. When dealing with community engagement and management, common challenges can be identified all over Europe, from remote and rural contexts to over-exploited areas. Most of these challenges arise from the fact that culture is not valued as a beneficial factor, nor perceived as a priority, in the daily life and social well-being of citizens, which are facing several socio-economic problems. Finding a constructive role for culture in society and defining this catalyst role through bottom-up activities, is crucial to ensure long-term engagement of communities in heritage preservation and management.
3. Adaptive re-use of heritage buildings should be more focused on creating public spaces for community use and activities, involving people in the decision-making process from the start and fostering a sense of ownership, though stemming from public authorities' initiatives especially for requalification of abandoned buildings and the use of EU funding.

### **Education, digitalisation, technology:**

1. Education should be understood as part of the key actions needed to ensure the sustainability of cultural heritage; heritage education has moved from being aimed at heritage professionals to reach out to local authorities and communities to empower them to manage their cultural heritage. The Centro de Estudios Lebaniégos has managed to establish itself as a place that offers artistic, cultural and educational activities, and recognises education as a key to sustainability for both local communities and cultural heritage. Understanding education as a way to strengthen the local community's skills and capacities aimed at managing cultural heritage, CEL offers educational activities and training courses that contribute to rural development and social cohesion.

2. Technology and digitalisation are important for the research, protection, restoration, conservation, safeguarding, promotion and dissemination of tangible and intangible assets. According to that, and the digital divide that exists in the Cantabria Region, the Centro de Estudios Liébaniégos offers access to technology, encompassing research and valuation processes, dissemination and communication of cultural and natural heritage.
3. The Centro de Estudios Lebaniégos has managed to understand how to benefit both the community and its heritage through new technologies. On the one hand, it offers training courses to different groups of the population to reduce the digital divide in rural areas, while strengthening local capacities. On the other hand, through new technologies, social networks, digital channels and platforms, CEL carries out communication and dissemination strategies.
4. Although technology and social networks are increasingly being used to reach new audiences such as children, young people and adults, the elderly are being excluded from the enjoyment of their cultural heritage as some of them are not familiar with this technology. The challenge here is to avoid widening the gap between the elderly and heritage, rather to design technologies that bring them closer together.
5. In an increasingly globalised and virtual world, where using virtual platforms and social networks is becoming common scenarios for training, education and dissemination, they are attracting more and more new users. CEL is aware that digitalisation is a core aspect in contributing to rural area connection, collaborating in exchanges between people, the develop of economic activities based on cultural legacy, such as tourism, handicrafts, traditional food, etc., while also in creating new jobs and connections in dispersed towns in mountain areas.

### **Stakeholder networks, ecosystems and funding:**

1. It is important to engage a diversity of stakeholders in heritage preservation, reuse and valorisation. While public administrations are often the most important drivers of heritage preservation and reuse, their work can be amplified by knowledge institutions, NGOs, local communities and businesses.
2. Mapping local stakeholders, cultural actors and heritage assets can be an important tool to have a better overview of the heritage and tourism potentials of an area. Such overview can facilitate cooperation between different local actors, as well as sharing and pooling resources among them, helping individual entities remain well-equipped in rural areas characterised by scarce resources.
3. Specialised knowledge institutions like CEL can act as a catalyst of cooperation in a region. Situated in the in-between space between public administrations, NGOs, private companies and research centres, such institutions can provide a relatively neutral space for encounters and exchange.
4. Local networks are crucial in building a common narrative of a region: an identity that is shared by a diversity of local actors can be an important asset for an area's sense of belonging as well as economic development.

This report offers an in-depth exploration of these themes, the challenges and good practices encountered in the Cantabria region, as well as input from other initiatives across Europe.



## CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE HOST REGION

Cantabria is an autonomous region of Spain. The population (around 550 000 inhabitants – 1% of Spain total population) is heavily concentrated along the coastal areas north of Spain. One half of Cantabria's land lies above 600 m high. Its capital, Santander, holds a third of the total population. The rural population like in the Liébana region that hosted the visit tends to be widely scattered, sometimes living in isolated hamlets.

In the past decades, Liébana has been actively working on creating a more coherent regional economy and brand, building on the area's religious and natural heritage, the good reputation of its regional products (with three appellations of origin) and the growth potential of its agri-food sector.

Therefore, the Liébana valley's stakeholders defined as their objective to consolidate and modernise the economic sectors of the region, to promote the creation and growth of knowledge- and local resource-based companies, and to increase the quality of the touristic offer. This process has been led by the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos, a knowledge institution, funded by the Region, whose missions are as follows:

### **Strategy, vision, main policies linked to culture and cultural heritage**

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).

### **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.

### **Building on cultural heritage**

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.).



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### **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.

### **Branding the territory**

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.

# 1. Analysis of a selection of local initiatives



# CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS LEBANIEGOS

The Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos (CEL) was set up in 2007 by the Cantabria region as a public-private initiative. With a yearly budget of around €200,000. CEL works closely with the municipalities, schools, civil society, businesses of the area, taking up a role of mediation between local stakeholders. In the past decade and a half, CEL has been working on valorising local heritage, disseminating knowledge about Liébana, improving tourism services and establishing a coherent narrative about the valley. CEL is also engaged in developing skills in the local population, especially concerning digitalisation and the knowledge economy.

The initiators of CEL play a crucial role in the institution's success. Pilar Gómez Bahamonde, the director of CEL and president of the European Association of Religious Heritage, acts as a mediator between key stakeholders of religious heritage locally and internationally. Her management and leadership skills, combined with a transversal approach to heritage are key in helping a knowledge institution acknowledge and connect local actors and resources in a dispersed rural area like Liébana.

## Results / impacts

- 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.



## Lessons learnt & key success factors

- A participatory process and governance ensure a constant dialogue with the town councils, local and regional development associations, cultural associations, educational centres, and civil society associations
- 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.





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## FUTURE FOR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE (FRH)

Future for Religious Heritage (FRH), the European network of historic places of worship, is a non-fait organisation dedicated to safeguarding Europe's diverse and unique religious heritage. FRH works to ensure the promotion and sustainability of Europe's religious heritage by bringing together, organisation, stakeholders, universities, authorities, communities and heritage professionals, working to protect religious heritage across Europe.

FRH was founded in 2011, consists of over 70 organisations, 180 professionals coming from 35 countries, understanding Europe as a rich and deeply rooted religious, its unique buildings, tranquil spaces and exquisite artefacts, that includes rich cultural traditions, masterpieces of art, craftsmanship, music, furniture, etc. Religious heritage is an invaluable resource that FRH wants all generations to enjoy and is aware that in an era of globalisation, religious cultural heritage helps to remember European cultural diversity and its understanding develops mutual respect and helps to dialogue among different cultures.

The organisation sees that the future of religious heritage presents challenges and opportunities. Knowledge transfer and innovation are key and needed to hand over this legacy. FRH's ambition is to maintain and strengthen a network of European organisations for ongoing intercultural exchanges regarding the protection and safeguarding of religious heritage.

With a wide range of heritage management experience, the organisation has projects such as skills development for the valorisation of European religious heritage, creative reuse of historic buildings, educational processes to transmit traditional knowledge, the Europe-tour project in order to connect rural areas in Europe with the aim to enhance local cultural tourism. In addition, FRH develops strategies to bring the youth closer to cultural heritage and to stimulate entrepreneurship based on European religious heritage.

## Results / impacts

Since its creation in 2011, FRH has experience in the formulation and implementation of several projects which can be concluded as results and impacts:

- A creative, innovative and inclusive management of religious cultural heritage.
- A social network that includes authorities, professionals, NGOs, rural and urban areas, public and private entities, children, young people, adults and the elderly.
- One positive impact to highlight is the recognition of the diversity of faiths and beliefs in Europe, and the message of respect for religious differences.
- The meaning of networking, to share experience and join efforts.
- The transformation, reuse and re-signification of spaces intended for worship.

## Lessons learnt & key success factors

- Protecting and disseminating European heritage, stimulating various sectors of society, understanding religious heritage as part of European identity can be considered a good practice in an increasingly virtual and globalised environment.
- Another lesson learnt is how the FRH association has contributed to and stimulated socio-economic development, through the creation of enterprises based on religious heritage.
- As expressed by Lilian Grootswagers-Theuns, the meaning of working together “the more we are together, the stronger we are”.
- Also a key success factor is the way in which FRH manages to demonstrate the social role of European religious heritage, reflected in respect of faith diversity, community engagement, and the sustainable economic development through job opportunities based on cultural and natural resources.
- Another lesson learnt is the adaptation and reinterpretation of a religious heritage to a use that responds to the needs and requirements of the territory and its communities, as in the case of “Domus Dei to Domus Populi”.

## Feedback from hosts and participants, including on the transferability of practices presented by the hosts in other local contexts

- The importance of involving children and young people in the response to enjoyment of religious heritage was highlighted, generation and identifying new and creative ways of appropriation, guaranteeing heritage sustainability.
- Another interesting aspect highlighted by the participants was the way in which religious legacy can be enjoyed and appreciated by the younger generation, through sports and leisure activities. (e.g. [FRH Run for Heritage 2022](#), [Run for Heritage 2021](#), etc.)
- Participants also recognised how heritage can be adapted in order to respond to current dynamics of society, territory and the environment, without compromising the cultural heritage integrity and its values.





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## TERRITORIAL BRAND OF LIÉBANA

The brand “Liébana, conecta sensaciones” and “Liébana, Picos de Europa” was established in 2019. It aims to promote and transmit to the public those qualities and singularities that are traditionally perceived as a sign of identity of Liébana: the agri-food products, its gastronomy, the natural surroundings, its tourist offer, etc., thus creating a sustainable tourism destination brand.

This action of promotion and reinforcement of the Liébana brand is developed by the Local Action Group, in collaboration with the Mancomunidad de Liébana y Peñarubia.

The Tourism Sustainability Plan of the Region of Liébana is funded by the Secretary of State for Tourism of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism of the Movement of Spain; the Regional Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Innovation, Transport and Commerce of the Government of Cantabria and the Mancomunidad de Liébana y Peñarubia (formed by its eight towns councils )

The Liébana territorial brand seeks to improve the local economic and business conditions, by attracting new customers and markets, and it is aware that traditional knowledge, natural heritage and religious cultural heritage are important for local development. Within the traditional trades, their practitioners and bearers the brand has identified key actors who are included and benefited from the brand, among them : cheese dairies, distilleries, meat products, wine, bakeries, marmalades, fodder productions, beekeepers, vinegars, etc.

## Results / impacts

In terms of cultural heritage and branding, as a result the cultural heritage has been recognised by locals as part of the cultural identity as well as a source of community development. An inventory of traditional practices, who are the bearers and practitioners, and production chains are identified by the local Action Group of Liébana, considering these actions as safeguarding measures. Another point in favour is the fact of thinking as a territory, and the management that has been done to integrate other sectors and institutions to promote cultural business based on intangible cultural heritage.

## Lessons learnt & key success factors

As results and lessons learned, it is concluded: the meaning of working as a region and recognizing the cultural heritage and management skills of each municipality or village, joining efforts and capacities. Safeguarding cultural heritage, using it as a source of sustainable development, improving living conditions and livelihoods, and finally the importance of supporting cultural heritage entrepreneurship by identifying risks and protection measures.

## Feedback from hosts and participants, including on the transferability of practices presented by the hosts in other local contexts

During the presentation there was a question regarding the marketing of intangible heritage, considering it a possible threat that could endanger traditional practices.

In this regard, and in order to ensure the sustainability and safeguarding of these practices that are being merchandised, the following aspects should be considered :

- The production capacity of the artisans and entrepreneurs (Supply-demand);
- Raising - awareness on use responsible of materials and ingredients that come from natural resources (Environmentally friendly measures ).
- In economic terms, guarantee that artisans and entrepreneurs are direct beneficiaries and not intermediaries.
- Stimulate young people's participation in order to transmit them the knowledge and keep the traditions alive.

Another recommendation, to see how traditional craftsmen can produce religious objects to be marketed in places such as Santo Toribio de Liébana, whereas most of the products sold there come from another region and are produced industrially.



# LA HERMIDA BALNEARIO

La Hermida Balneario is a spa and hotel complex that opened in 2006 in the Peñarrubia municipality of Liébana. The complex builds on the local tradition since the 16th century when monks began to use the natural hot springs for bathing. Physically, it is the extension of a pre-existing architectural structure that was abandoned in 1936, during the civil war.

The renovation project took place with administrative support by the local municipality. In the renovation between 2001 and 2006, many original architectural elements were preserved and integrated in the new buildings.

As a private company, its main objective is economic, but it also contributes to the valorisation of an important natural heritage asset. The private use of a common natural resource was not without any conflict. When the leadership of the spa complex tried to control the use of the hot springs outside the complex, this effort understandably met significant resistance from the side of locals and tourists alike. A more enlightened policy followed: La Hermida gave up on monopolising bathing in the area and opened some of its services to locals for free or at discounted price. An open doors policy at Christmas was also launched to provide a space for all residents to celebrate in community.

## Results / impacts

Besides the health services provided for the local community, La Hermida's impact also includes the employment of 40 families from the region as well as the purchase of various services from local providers. Being one of the most important spas in Spain, La Hermida is also an integral part of the Liébana valley's touristic offer, attracting a great number of people into the area and therefore contributing to the valley's economic dynamism.

Another important impact is the creation of accessible healthcare facilities and services as well as a social venue for the local population.



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## Lessons learnt & key success factors

La Hermida Balneario is a perfect example of conflict between natural commons and a natural resource-based tourism facility. An initial conflict characterised by an attempt by the spa to claim an exclusive use of the hot springs that attracted criticism. This conflict was followed by a softened approach by the hotel and spa complex that, while creating an economic benefit out of the use of the common natural resource, also allows locals and tourists to use the natural site without adhering to the spa. The spa also strengthened its local position by regularly opening its facilities to inhabitants of the valley. This more collaborative approach exemplifies that it is possible to create a feasible business plan while respecting the public use of common resources.

## Feedback from hosts and participants, including on the transferability of practices presented by the hosts in other local contexts

It is Important to balance between economic sustainability and the commons-like use of natural resources.

## 2. Main findings and recommendations

# MANAGEMENT OF HERITAGE SITES, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND JOB CREATION IN LIÉBANA

Cantabria is an autonomous region of Spain. The population (around 550 000 inhabitants – 1% of Spain total population) is heavily concentrated along the coastal areas north of Spain. One half of Cantabria's land lies above 600 m high. Its capital, Santander, holds a third of the total population. The rural population like in the Liébana region that hosted the visit tends to be widely scattered, living sometimes in isolated hamlets.

The peer learning visit was the unique opportunity to address the challenge of managing cultural heritage (notably religious heritage) and natural heritage in a mountainous region of Europe.

The economy of the valley of Liébana is essentially driven by rural tourism thanks to its natural heritage (landscapes and way of living, agricultural tradition and fier events) including the Picos de Europa National Park. The valley has a total population of 6,000 inhabitants including seven municipalities. The capital is Potes (1,500 inhabitants).

The host of the peer learning visit Centro de Estudios de Liébano (CEL) presented the diverse economic activities in a rural context based on the exploitation of the natural and religious heritage of the place.

In this instance, this mountainous region can exploit products of farmers (ham, honey and cheese for instance (Quesucos de Liébana – or the Picon Bejes-Tresviso that enjoy a protected denomination), the exploitation of cork oaks as well as wine (including distillation (Orujo de Liébana) or craft beers.

Touristic activities also enabled development of local businesses and distribution of agri-food based on new demand (artisanal ice cream companies such as Antiuxixona). Restaurants and hotels are sometimes keen to present the local products thus providing useful distribution outlets for artisans and craftsmen.

The region is also benefiting from hot springs. This is partially exploited with a hotel (La Hermida) that developed spa activities with an increasingly international reputation. The establishment located in La Hermida attracts people looking for health treatment. It provides 40 jobs and facilities are accessible at a reduced price to benefit the local community. The facility respects the local environment notably the Gorge in which it is situated.

Another element of attractivity is the religious heritage, notably with the Monastery Santo Toribio de Liebana founded prior to the 6th Century) or the museum dedicated to the work of the Monk Beatus of Liebana (8t C). The Monastery is one of the major centres of Christianity, hosting a piece of the left arm of the Holy Cross discovered in Jerusalem (Lignum Crucis). The site is managed by 4 Franciscans' friars. The monastery together with the public authorities; including CEL are considering ways to develop economic resources to help the small friar's community which is dependent on shrinking donations and a small shop. However, the head of the community is reluctant to engage in commercial and money-spinning activities that would benefit the Valley in terms of economic activities and additional financial resources. A first step to protect the heritage assets of the Monastery was to register the holy cross's design and visuals through trademark protection in 2000 (national registration yet to be extended as the protection expires after 20 years).

This was the opportunity to address the potential role of intellectual property in protecting cultural heritage assets as well as to enable their exploitation through the trading of rights and licensing. The Monastery so far used its trademark to prevent usage of the visual. It has however not developed a strategy to trade its intellectual property rights to generate revenues for itself but also for businesses that could benefit from the international importance of the Monastery. It remains that the Monastery could be instrumental in generating more economic activities and employment to the region without affecting its destination – to remain a place of worship and pilgrimage.





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The region is also characterised by the following:

- The Liebana Valley is disconnected and not easy to reach (only by car/bus through the Hermida Gorges when coming from the coast/airport of Santander). However, this remoteness also contributes to its attractiveness. Santander, the economic centre is 100 km away accessible by public transportation in 2 hours.
- The Valley benefits from the National Parc “Picos de Europa” which attracts nature lovers notably hikers. It has a good hotel infrastructure and service industry devoted to rural tourism.
- Villages even in remote places remain active. The Valley can retain its population which is however getting older.

The main economic challenges addressed during the visit:

- Production of local milk is insufficient to supply the three local cheese makers (2000 L/Week).
- The cost of adapting to local production processes according to EU regulatory standards (health and safety) with the risk of endangering local processes.
- The best way to develop a sustainable strategy for the Monastery Santo Toribio de Liebana. Whilst respectful of its mission this religious heritage could support the development of the region and become a central point to promote the local heritage whilst contributing to generating resources (that could serve for instance the protection of endangered sites elsewhere in the region or in promoting local productions and crafts thus supporting the branding of the region and local entrepreneurship/craftsmanship).

#### Main takeaways related to economic development:

- The Centro de Estudios Lebaniégos (CEL) set up by the Cantabria region plays a crucial role in promoting local heritage resources and in developing the narrative on the role of natural and religious heritage in economic development. Thanks to the dynamism, enthusiasm and drive of the head of the Centro, Pilar Bahamonde, strong relationships have been established with local entrepreneurs. The Centro is clearly acting as an essential linking-pin with the public authorities notably policy makers (Mayors) to promote the value of heritage. This is a strong element of a good practice (institution with sufficient credibility and statutes well driven/managed by the right personality). CEL has been keen to show the economic potential of religious and natural heritage during the visit with introduction to the main players in the field.
- The Centro is well connected at European level. Its director is President of the European Association for Religious Heritage (Future for Religious Heritage – FRH-europe.org) gathering close to 200 associations in 36 countries. This networking is helping to share economic experiences.
- The work of CEL shows the importance to valorise the agri-food heritage, help maintain traditions in distillery, cheese and wine making as this is an element of territorial attractiveness and originality. Local producers must feel that their activities are a crucial part of the territory’s cultural heritage and its attractiveness.
- Maintenance of an agri-food activity is essential to maintain the landscape – landscape heritage.
- The development of tourism services helps the distribution of local productions/crafts/know-how and thus help retain local economic activities in a region with a dispersed habitat whose villages’ survival depends on agricultural activities.



# Recommendations

1. Developing the right structure / institution whose mission is to valorise cultural heritage (useful experience was given from Sibenik and Limerick in this respect with local authorities taking the steps to manage entities entrusted with the task to valorise and monetize cultural heritage according to public policy objectives.
2. The importance of networking and sharing of experience as problems/ challenges across the EU look very similar.
3. Cultural heritage professionals should think beyond the project that they are managing but consider the wider economic implication of heritage resources. It is important to properly manage these resources in coordination with public authorities and consider the numerous options to raise funding to the benefit of the CH site as well as the community.
4. Intellectual property is a means to protect CH but also to trade usage of such property rights. It is worthwhile to investigate the value of IP in the local context and develop an appropriate strategy (for instance St Jacques de Compostelle).
5. EU Funds devoted to heritage are more and more important. A proper holistic strategy (associating CH preservation and economic development) is key to access significant funding. Cantabria will use 1.2 million of the Recovery Fund to protect CH; The Sibenik fortress (Croatia) has benefited from 12 million Euros. As a result, it is important to develop a local cultural agenda which includes a strategy to mobilise EU funds through various programmes (Horizon, Recovery Fund, Creative Europe, Green Deal, New Bauhaus, Structural funds etc).
6. The cultural agenda should highlight the responsibility of entrepreneurs in promoting authenticity, local gastronomy and processes so that they are included as CH stakeholders and contribute to the safeguarding of heritage. Institutions such as CEL are important to coordinate this planning and help policy makers devise the strategy.
7. It is important to solicit the sense of pride of the community including the business community to generate awareness on the potential of cultural heritage.
8. Business skills should integrate the importance of heritage in business management.
9. Local banks/financial institutions should be mobilised and educated on the business and economic value of cultural heritage. They are a useful resource of funding in particular banks working closely with the public sector. The EU Guarantee Facility for the Cultural and Creative Sector managed by the European Investment Fund can be mobilised to incentivize financial institutions.
10. Heritage professionals should work more closely with national and local institutions promoting the cultural and creative sectors as well as with local development agencies.
11. Legal and economic mechanisms for distributed profits: in many regions, revenues from tourism disproportionately benefit certain actors that make use of other actors. For instance, Cantabria's Santo Toribio de Liébana Monastery suffers from its lack of mechanisms to generate revenues while being one of the most visited historical monuments of the region. Legal tools such as intellectual property rights or economic distribution mechanisms such as the daily visitor cards in Venice can assure that a tourist destination takes its share from the spending of the region's visitors.



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# COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Another of the key topics identified during the activities and discussions of the peer-learning visit was community engagement and management, including cross-cutting thematic such as awareness raising, youth and skills development. Local communities play a central and often catalyst role in cultural heritage promotion and conservation, both tangible and intangible. In the context of Cantabria, The Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos represents a place for local community to gather as it is now used as a multi-functional space hosting 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), engaging all levels of society and valorising different type of cultural heritage as well as traditions in distillery, cheese and wine making.

The Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos is a symbol of community identity itself, being a thousand-year-old church, San Vicente Martir of Potes, located in two of the four mediaeval places of jubilee in the whole Christianity, listed by UNESCO as World Heritage and connected to the pilgrimage route 'Camino Lebaniego'.

However, the Centro has been experiencing difficulties in stimulating the interest of all levels of society into its activities and histories, especially when connected to religious roots. Youth is the most difficult audience to engage in religious cultural heritage, though the one that one day will be responsible for transmitting the knowledge and traditions of the place.

## Key challenges

Participants of the three working sessions started their reflections from analysing the several questions at stake and challenges faced when trying to engage citizens and local communities into cultural planning and heritage promotion. The key challenges that emerged from the conversation were the following:

- Cultural heritage is often taken for granted by local actors and citizens, therefore it is not perceived as a priority;
- Local communities find it hard to recognize the role and importance of cultural heritage as it often does not have a direct social/economic impact in their life. This becomes harder in remote or rural areas;
- Lack of interest in cultural heritage, cultural policies, activities and events, as culture is often missing a constructive role in society and policies;

- Connecting social issues and cultural solutions is both a key aspect and a challenge in order to involve communities;
- Top-down approaches and policies (EU - National – Regional level) are not the most effective tool to address communities' cultural challenges and do not often consider the real needs of communities.
- Brain-drain constitutes a key challenge for rural and remote communities and could be addressed through cultural actions.

## Main takeaways and practices

Along the roundtable discussion, participants provided several examples of how they addressed the above-mentioned challenges through actions and policies adapted to their local contexts, which stimulated exchanges and enhanced the replicability of some of the best practices:

- [Budapest100 community festival](#), an annual two-day festival organised by KEK with the support and participation of residents of the city and volunteers to reveal and celebrate the city's built heritage. The project uses tangible and intangible heritage associated with the city's built environment to fight social isolation and strengthen local communities. The festival started in 2011 to celebrate houses turning 100-years old. Residents develop a programme with the support of volunteers and the festival organisers. Through installations and stories told by residents and volunteers (passionate urbanists, architects, and researchers) visitors learn about the history of the place and what makes it remarkable.
- [Public Institution Fortress of Culture Šibenik](#) and the connecting cinemas in rural areas project: the EU-funded project includes 4 cinemas, 3 cultural centres, 3 universities and 3 festivals to connect audiences from different European regions by developing quality programmes and organising cultural events and simultaneous cinema screenings. The programme addresses burning issues such as climate change, social inclusion and migration from different perspectives, strengthens awareness of the diversity of European cultures, shares knowledge about digital technologies and builds new audiences. An old cinema in Šibenik was restored and transformed into a house of culture for the use of the community, fostering local engagement,



(c) Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos

sense of ownership and exchange. Moreover, the revenues from the cultural events organised in the fortress are reinvested in the refurbishment and requalification of other areas of the town and the community is directly involved in the requalification through the possibility of voting for the areas to be requalified.

- **Faro municipality Cultural Strategy**, the municipality of Faro designed a new cultural strategy directly engaging the local community in the process by deconstructing the way in which community's needs are identified. Young people and volunteers were involved, gathering citizens' opinions and feedback on their social well-being through informal activities held in public spaces (stalls in the public market and streets). More than 180 ideas were collected and from these inputs the City Cultural Strategy was developed.
- **Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Slovenia**, Regional Unit Celje – The institute contributed to the restoration of an old church in a very small town by raising awareness and mobilising the entire local community. Thanks to this community engagement, citizens invested, through direct donations, in the refurbishment of the church as they felt it as part of their cultural heritage.
- [Limerick City Council Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund](#), Addressing both brain-drain and abandonment of old historic buildings issues, the Limerick City Council set up two schemes focusing primarily on the conservation and enhancement of historic structures and buildings for the benefit of communities and the public. The schemes offer grants to assist owners and occupiers of recognised heritage buildings and structures undertake appropriate conservation works to their properties, supporting the investment of private capital in labour-intensive projects to conserve historic structures in public and private ownership for community use. Some of these buildings have been reconverted into public spaces such as a boxing club and men's sheds for crofting, contributing to the feeling of community ownership of cultural heritage and raising awareness of adaptive re-use of heritage buildings for people's engagement.

## Recommendations

From the discussions and practices shared, some main guidelines/ recommendations could be drawn for better community engagement initiatives and management processes:

1. Awareness raising and sense of ownership of cultural heritage is a key element to be included in policies and initiatives to engage and foster the interest society (at all levels) in the promotion and protection of tangible and intangible heritage;
2. The value and potential of cultural heritage need to be mainstreamed in the policies and programmes addressing societal challenges and economic needs, supporting the identification and recognizing of a constructive role for culture in societies, as in the case of Faro Municipality cultural strategy;
3. Public authorities should involve different local stakeholders in the planning and design of initiatives and programmes promoting and protecting cultural heritage, ensure community representations in the process and activities, as demonstrated by the case of the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos ;
4. Brain-drain and youth involvement has been addressed as a key challenge from both the host and the participants, despite the engagement of young people is already considered essential for preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Informal education activities are the best tool to promote the participation of young people in cultural heritage protection and should be implemented at local and international level, as in the case of FRH Run for Heritage;
5. New narratives and branding of cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) should be designed at the local level, coming from the identity of communities and people experiencing that heritage in the first place, to ensure a sense of ownership and inclusion.

# EDUCATION, DIGITALISATION, TECHNOLOGY



(c) Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos

Other key issues were identified during the visits and discussions among the speakers, the hosts and participants such as: education, technology and digitalisation, managing cultural and natural heritage properties and elements.

In a rural context with widely dispersed municipalities the Centro de Estudios Liebaniégos has managed to establish itself as a place that offers artistic, cultural and educational activities, encompassing research processes and valuation of natural and cultural heritage in the territory. The Centro has achieved participatory processes to ensure a constant communication and dialogue among town councils, local and regional development associations, cultural organisations, educational centres and civil society.

Experience in participatory processes generated by Centro de Estudios Liebaniégos includes a number of good practices such as: a participatory mapping to identify local cultural assets, positioning them in national and international pilgrim networks; acquisition of a religious building transformed into a multifunctional space. Strategies aimed at developing business models to revitalise the economic and social activity in the area; The Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos incubates cultural enterprises, providing them a space to interact with cultural actors; and additionally a series of innovative marketing strategies which attract specific clients, such as tourists.

The Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos is located in the old church of Sain Vicente Mártir, a building declared as an Asset of Cultural Interest in 2000. The 646 square metres building acts as an information office for pilgrims and tourists in Potes. In addition, it provides a space, the Neri Room of New Technologies, for training courses targeting different population groups, with the aim of reducing the digital divide in rural areas. Besides, the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos is also used for cultural events, conferences, workshops, meetings, concerts, etc.

## Key challenges

During the three sessions with participants, some reflections and challenges were shared and identified around education, technology and digitalisation in managing cultural heritage assets and manifestations. The key challenges emerged from participants' discussions were the following:

### Education:

- Education is a necessary action for heritage sustainability over time, formal and non-formal educational processes must be designed and implemented.
- Heritage education contributes to raise awareness in communities about the importance of maintaining cultural legacy. A key challenge is to start including the teaching of cultural heritage in the classrooms, thus children and young people can get to know and value their heritage from an early age.
- On the other hand, the educational process should be aimed at building and strengthening capacities, among communities, stakeholders, public authorities and heritage professionals. Local and regional authorities play an important role in protecting assets and manifestations, but often they are not aware of the policies, conventions and international tools or simply they do not know their heritage. A challenge would be for these authorities to be trained in cultural heritage management.

### Technology and digitalisation:

- Technology facilitates cultural heritage safeguarding and preservation. While the meaning of preserving cultural heritage is obvious, people are currently facing difficulties in preservation processes, such as natural disasters or human-made damages. However, technology still represents a high cost, the challenge would be to stimulate the creation of research centres and technological entrepreneurship and thus expand their production.
- Although technology and social networks are increasingly being used to reach new audiences such as children, young people and adults, the elderly are being excluded from the enjoyment of their cultural heritage as some of them are not familiar with this technology. The challenge here is to



avoid widening the gap between the elderly and heritage, rather to design technologies that bring them closer together.

### Main takeaways and practices

Throughout the roundtable discussion participants shared experiences and good practices on the field of education, technology and digitalisation, which have contributed to the sustainability of heritage sites and manifestation in their territories:

- [Yeats Thoor Ballylee Society, Ireland](#). Thoor Ballylee serves as an interpretative centre, as well as a cultural venue for literature, theatre, art and music. Some of the challenges they have faced for the sustainability of the site have been Covid pandemic. During lockdown QR codes were used when the attraction was closed, using English and other languages. They created hotspots with music, poetry etc, showing the story of the site.
- **Brixen, University of Bozen, Italy**. The university of Brixen aims at developing digital infrastructures and applying technology for children and young people. Through technology the University facilitates interventions on cultural heritage, increasing accessibility to remote heritage sites. However, its major change is fund-raising and how to connect the elderly with cultural heritage.
- [ADRAL - Alentejo Regional Development Agency, Portugal](#). Alentejo is the biggest region in Portugal. There is a traditional singing inscribed on the representative list of intangible cultural heritage of Humanity, UNESCO. Through educational processes and strategies this element is safeguarded, transferring it from generation to generation. Social media is recognised as a measure to record and disseminate the values of this cultural practice.
- [Public Cultural Institution Fortress of Culture Šibenik, Croatia](#). Focussing on sustainable management and preservation of cultural heritage, they understood the power of Instagram influencers and paid for it, in order to raise awareness and promote the heritage site. The influencer created stories with a local cat who became the star of the social media and of the fortress.
- **Cultural Department of Faro, Portugal**. They created a Minecraft game in order to digitally replicate 500 modern buildings in Faro, as a way of involving 720 students to value regional architecture. The main challenge was convincing the teachers.
- **Government of Cantabria, European Projects Office**. It is recommended to have immersive experiences in museums, in order to attract new audiences. Education through technology and digitalisation in creating storytelling to share traditions such as myths and legends.

## Recommendations

1. Cultural heritage education processes from an early age. Education programmes in the classroom could give children and young people a chance to voice their concerns and to become involved in safeguarding and protecting their cultural heritage. It helps to encourage and enable tomorrow's decision-makers to participate in heritage sustainability, responding to the continuous changes and threats facing the cultural heritage.
2. To stimulate the transmission of traditional knowledge through formal and non-formal education programmes. Create programmes in which the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation is allowed in order to guarantee the sustainability of traditional practices, involving new generations and re-creating the cultural properties and manifestations.
3. Create education and communication strategies for responsible tourism in heritage contexts. Given that tourism is present in heritage contexts, and that in some cases it is considered a risk, strategies should be implemented to promote responsible heritage tourism, raising awareness on the friendly use of the environment, cultural and social resources.
4. Capacity-building processes aimed at improving local skills. Partnerships should be established between cultural, education and public entities to implement training programmes aimed at strengthening management capacities of local authorities, stakeholders, communities, craftsmen, merchants, NGOs, etc. In this way, the local community is prepared to face the challenges of caring for its cultural heritage.
5. To support research and entrepreneurship in digital technologies. Given that one of the limitations in the use of new technologies in heritage management is the high cost it represents, it is recommended that the private and public sector support the creation of start-ups and new technology ventures focused on creating tools for heritage management.
6. Friendly digital tools for the elderly. Most digital tools and platforms aim to bring children, young people and adults closer to their cultural heritage, but these tools should be more inclusive and allow the elderly to participate and enjoy their cultural heritage. Therefore, it is recommended to create technologies that are easily accessible to the elderly.
7. Continuous development of educational processes through virtual platforms. Knowing the territorial experience in Cantabria on participatory heritage management, technology has been a fundamental scenario for teamwork and social cohesion; it is recommended to continue developing educational activities, such as training through virtual platforms.

# STAKEHOLDERS NETWORKS, ECOSYSTEMS AND FUNDING

One of the key topics explored during the site visit is the role of different stakeholders in the heritage regeneration and valorisation process. While public administrations are often the most important drivers of heritage preservation and reuse, their efforts are usually accompanied by knowledge institutions, NGOs, local communities and businesses. In some cases, public institutions are created to connect all these stakeholders in a network of collaboration.

In the case of Cantabria, the CEL – Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos (see local initiative 1) is such an institution. As a Study Centre, CEL is an institution that plays a catalyst role in the Liébana valley. The key to its success is that it connects a variety of actors and activities that are vital for the valley's life.

The Centro is the living example of the successful renovation and adaptive reuse of religious heritage (see the section “Management of heritage sites, entrepreneurship and job creation”), a great resource for (and sometimes a burden on) the villages of the valley. With a successful fundraising, renovation and programming process, the renovation of the San Vicente Mártir Church into a multi-functional space is a blueprint for other religious heritage buildings in the area.

CEL is one of the primary venues of culture in the valley, offering a broad range of cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, conferences, literary and performing arts events) to the valley's six thousand inhabitants (see the section “Community management and engagement”). As one of the biggest buildings in the valley, it also demonstrates the possibilities of such spaces: during the pandemic, it hosted students at an appropriate distance from each other, allowing them to leave their home isolation while respecting the regulations.

Most importantly CEL acts as a catalyst of cooperation. Being an institution with public funding but with a more dynamic organisational structure, the



(c) Levente Polyak

Centro is the perfect space to become a node in the valley's network of stakeholders and help different actors meet and cooperate. In order to build an ecosystem around the Liébana valley, CEL conducted a participatory mapping exercise to identify local cultural assets. The mapping process and the mutual acquaintance of cultural actors and heritage assets in the valley led to better cooperation among them. For example, sharing resources has become a common way for Liébana organisations to support each other. Pooling resources such as spaces, equipment or expertise has made individual organisations more efficient and more cooperative in their daily operations in a region where resource scarcity poses significant problems.

The map of cultural assets led to the creation of a catalogue of local heritage. This catalogue became the basis of the pilgrimage route ‘Camino Lebaniego’ (a subsidiary of the Camino de Santiago, UNESCO World Heritage) that positioned Liébana in the national and international pilgrimage networks.

Becoming part of a pilgrimage route also helps marketing the valley. CEL has actively contributed to the design of a new brand for the area, based on the valley's most important natural, cultural and religious assets. The Centro's capacities in shaping a new narrative for Liébana are amplified by the combined role it plays in the local tourism ecosystem. CEL operates both as a Pilgrimage Assistance Office and a Tourism Information Office, providing information to and monitoring over 50,000 pilgrims and tourists per year.



With first-hand data about tourists' needs and movements and connection with the key public and economic stakeholders of Liébana, CEL supports businesses across the valley. This support consists of promoting enterprises and services to tourists by including them in a curated local tourism offer as well as developing business models for local SMEs linked to the Camino Lebaniego. CEL also incubates cultural enterprises, providing SMEs with a space to interact with cultural actors.

The work of the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos is coordinated with a variety of local and regional actors following a quadruple helix model that allows greater flexibility when developing and funding initiatives. Created by the Regional Government of Cantabria, CEL is now managed by SRECD, a public company governed by the Cantabrian Ministry of Universities, Equality, Culture and Sports. The annual programme of CEL is co-designed, implemented and monitored by SRECD, together with other public and private actors across the region. These actors include the town councils located in the territory of Liébana, local and regional development associations, cultural associations, educational centres, and civil society associations.

Besides benefiting from public funding for the renovation and management of the San Vicente Mártir Church, the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos has also been involved in attracting national and EU funds to the region. CEL cooperates with a variety of public actors to ensure the efficiency and impact of funding programmes.

Among these, the Liébana Local Action Group, an association operating as the valley's development agency, has been managing the local Leader-Cantabria programmes. These programmes, developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Ministry of Rural Development, Livestock, Fisheries, Food and Environment of Cantabria, as well as City Councils of the Liébana region, have been helping local entrepreneurs start or modernise their businesses. The Local Action Group joined CEL's efforts in building a new narrative of the region, effectively creating, promoting and spreading the brands "Liébana, Picos de Europa" and "Liébana, Conecta Sensaciones," as well as developing a new Tourism Sustainability Plan for the area.

Another key public actor in the local ecosystem around the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos is OPE Cantabria, the region's EU office. OPE Cantabria contributes to the ecosystem by supporting a broad range of local actors in accessing EU funds. This support is key to develop partnerships with competent partners that CEL can rely on when developing its regional cooperation programmes.

## Recommendations

1. Neutral spaces for encounters: local heritage ecosystems need "neutral spaces" where different sectors and public, private, civic and knowledge actors can meet and develop fruitful collaborations. While CEL functions as such a "matchmaking" space, membership organisations like Future for Religious Heritage illustrate the advantages of such platforms.
2. Organisations for territorial cohesion: many rural and urban areas suffer from fragmentation of administrative competences. To overcome such fragmentation, it is necessary to create umbrella organisations that connect actors across a territory. While in Cantabria this connecting role is played by CEL, in other European regions metropolitan authorities (Iasi) or extended municipalities (Limerick) can improve territorial cohesion.
3. Knowledge institutions to provide data for territorial development: public authorities often lack the research facilities or capacities that could enable them to make informed decisions. Knowledge institutions that have accumulated knowledge about a territory can be useful partners in supporting data-driven decision-making. With its connection to tourists and entrepreneurs alike, CEL can rely on data that is essential for the valley's tourism and economic development. Similarly, the Alentejo region in Portugal relies much on knowledge provided by the University of Evora, to develop its programmes.
4. Local networks for sharing resources: in areas with limited economic and materials resources, cooperation between stakeholders can present a series of benefits. For instance, CEL and other institutions in Potes mutually help each other by sharing their technical equipment, furniture and tools, when needed. Similarly, a common approach to natural resources also enables different users to benefit from hot springs, for example, without an exclusive, monopolistic claim of the resources.
5. Support organisations for mosaic funding: an extended ecosystem needs to have access to a variety of funding sources. Cooperation with local and regional agencies such as the Liébana Local Action Group or OPE Cantabria enables CEL and its partners to access different kinds of funding programmes. Well informed partners that can mobilise start-up grants, cultural endowments, knowledge exchange support or renovation funds, just to mention a few different-scale funding types, can contribute to heritage regeneration and management from ideation and community engagement, through participatory process and co-design to renovation, management and programming. Such a mosaic of funding sources also allows local consortia to build long-term visions where these different funding sources complement each other as different elements of an integrated, long-term trajectory.

# 3. Conclusions



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## CONCLUSIONS

Participatory cultural heritage management has a positive impact on supporting the development of the Liebana valley with due respect to its authenticity and values. Public authorities in Potes and in the region recognise that cultural heritage is essential to the future of the place. Cultural heritage contributes to a sustainable development that takes into account local specificities, values, traditions and practices. Through a strong partnership between government, associations, communities, stakeholders, businesses, schools and NGOs, the local structure of the Centro de Estudios Lebaniégos has contributed to make the most of local capacities and cultural resources (notably religious and natural heritage).

The public structure CEL and its management have been excellent in promoting cultural heritage and in enabling a wide community participation. CEL provides a space of participation and creation, developing and testing approaches that demonstrate the relevance of heritage for local development. Its participatory process of governance ensures a constant dialogue, understanding local needs and recognising skills and opportunities to build a strong future. The benefits from CEL use enhance the feeling of a place and belonging, mutual respect

for others, and a sense of purpose and ability to maintain a common good, which contributes to the rural development and territorial cohesion, through the development of cultural heritage initiatives and projects.

As seen and discussed during the peer-learning visit in Cantabria, involving local communities and other stakeholders in decision-making process is key to ensuring result benefits both cultural heritage and local population. The main goal of sustainable cultural heritage is to ensure good conservation, adequate safeguarding measures along with wide community engagement.

Likewise, the design and implementation of adaptive re-use and re-creation represents challenges at multiple levels: from local needs to policy and decision makers to be addressed in policymaking; understanding local dynamics, finding a perfect balance between tradition and innovation. The visit shows that similar challenges for heritage sustainability are faced in other countries. The peer learning was the opportunity to share experiences, to enable networking with a view to encourage transnational collaboration and support cultural diversity in European cities and regions.

## 4. Annexes

# FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

18 PARTICIPANTS FROM 13 CITIES AND REGIONS TOOK PART IN THE VISIT TO CANTABRIA.

City/Region	Main learning points	Future use of ideas and knowledge gained
Salerno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The transversality and the sharing of a common interest between various cultures allows to escape from sectorization and to build new bridges and new opportunities</li><li>• The enhancement of the cultural identity of an area can be a source of tourism attraction and private investments</li><li>• Importance of protecting religious cultural heritage.</li></ul>	
Salerno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learned that for the success of a good European project, the transversality and the sharing of common interests and objectives between various cultures allows to escape from the sectoralization, to build new bridges and opportunities.</li><li>• The enhancement of cultural identity (even for small rural centers) can be a source of attraction for tourists and private investment</li><li>• Importance of protecting religious cultural heritage.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a more open environment within the group already working for finding funds and new projects.</li></ul>
Yeats Thoor Ballylee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I learned the extent to which support is available, and discovered new programmes I was not previously aware of</li><li>• The value of networking and sharing of goals and projects.</li><li>• I learned the importance of connecting various projects within a region to better serve the whole.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to communicate with delegates, to track progress, and apply methods and supports available.</li></ul>
Yeats Thoor Ballylee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is power in numbers and in networking</li><li>• The discussions around tangible and intangible heritage were very informative and insightful.</li><li>• struck by the problem facing the monks at the monastery, and how they do not benefit monetarily very much by the large volume of visitors.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It would be useful to perhaps think of a festival that we could run as one – thereby creating more attention from visitors and unification in the way we approach our future sustainability.</li><li>• A change in management is going to be required.</li><li>• I will look at developing the QR code installation and adding more languages and maybe an incentive to get more people to download the app.</li></ul>
Brixen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to make local communities participate to the cultural heritage valorization process,</li><li>• How to use IPR for cultural heritage.</li><li>• how to involve elder and younger people for the fruition of religious cultural heritage.</li></ul>	



City/Region	Main learning points	Future use of ideas and knowledge gained
Celje	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Think Europe” is the best advice from one of the mentors. The projects that we are working on, should be considered as part of European heritage and that is why we can also get fundraising from European Union projects.</li> <li>• It is necessary to have public engagement when owners of monument are deciding about new ways of re-use. The inhabitants know what kind of content they need in their environment.</li> <li>• Different stakeholders from EU have very similar problems regarding protection of cultural heritage. We all have many empty buildings, which costs a lot of money to renovate, and we also have problems with appropriate content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I learned about new options for fundraising for monument renovation projects in EU. I’m going to deep dive into options, that can be used for rehabilitation of Jelšingrad mansion.</li> </ul>
Limerick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of face-to-face meetings with peers to develop meaningful professional network that understand, collaborate and share the same challenges and passion regarding European Culture and Heritage</li> <li>• The success of a cohesive approach involving passionate community members and teams, the integration of state and community bodies, local trades and artisans for urban, rural and tourism related projects.</li> <li>• European cooperation, linking towns and countries with pedestrian links religious links, Atlantic links. We as Europeans encounter similar cultural and heritage issues and can assist each other to resolve these issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understanding of common issues regarding dereliction and cultural neglect. A better understanding of how to approach and whom to ask for assistance in approaching various funding routes.</li> </ul>
Faro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demystifying the relationship between religion and heritage</li> <li>• Cultural heritage can be associated with many actions and not just the most “traditional” or “conservative”</li> <li>• Tourism is important but the basis of development, preservation of cultural heritage will have to be the local social dimension.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact with very interesting projects that can easily be replicated in my city. I believe that if we do that, we will look for the people and organizations that do it and with them learn to do and enhance the joint dimension.</li> <li>• I became more aware of the importance of preserving and recovering cultural heritage and my idea grew that the values of the Faro Convention are fundamental in the local strategy of cultural preservation.</li> </ul>
Sibenik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conversation with colleagues made me think about possible problems in future related to sacred heritage and its maintenance.</li> <li>• I learned about the ways to adapt the former sacred buildings to public use.</li> <li>• I am pleased because I got to know with projects related to sacred heritage and saw several examples of good practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply the learned knowledge in my environment as well.</li> </ul>
Silale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society is the main owner of cultural heritage, so when thinking about the preservation and dissemination of religious, industrial or other heritage, society should be considered the main beneficiary and based on this message, society’s awareness should be formed, and involvement should be increased.</li> <li>• The interests of several different actors usually overlap in the activities of preservation, adaptation, and use of cultural heritage, so it is necessary to develop the cooperation of different countries, to form the emergence of ecosystems that would support innovation.</li> <li>• In the field of cultural heritage, interdisciplinarity is also needed in order to reach a wider audience, to respond to the interests of different social groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will be able to adapt the ideas of my colleagues’ projects, for example, the open architecture format.</li> <li>• Apply to new funding programmes.</li> <li>• Join international knowledge networks and participate in their activities</li> </ul>

# USEFUL LINKS

## PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES PRESENTED DURING THE VISIT

**Liébana Centre of Studies**

<https://centros.culturadecantabria.com/the-centro-de-estudios-lebaniegos/>

**Future of Religious heritage**

<https://www.frh-europe.org/>

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ACTION

Sharing solutions  
in European  
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