

Research, conservation and development plan of the heritage site of Santa María Cathedral under visitors eyes.

Since 1996, research and restoration work have been carried out in the Cathedral, focused on a increase of the social behaviour of the conservation works.

The Foundation has established a programme to carry out activities focused on enhancing value and raising public awareness of all interventions. They are grouped together under the motto OPEN FOR WORKS to show that the comprehensive intervention process is visible every step of the way, including planning, execution and results explained to the public.

Furthermore, related activities are generated leading to greater identification with the cultural heritage site, such as conferences, courses and social events.

The intervention process is structured in three phases:

1. Historical and architectural research of the monument following the Master Plan, 1996-2008
2. Rehabilitation of the building and site functions following the Restoration Draft, 2006-2020
3. Ongoing conservation and activities under the Conservation and Development Plan (2020-2040) will be drawn up classified into four lines of social progress:
 - innovation in the objectives and methods for enhancing value and raising public awareness of cultural heritage
 - technology applied to the different restoration and awareness-raising activities
 - inclusivity of all social sectors, especially those in functional or financial difficulty
 - sustainability of the different economic and environmental parameters

Resources needed

The budget in 2017 reached 1,916,000 €: Provincial Council 39.87%; City Council 9.40%; Bishopric 9.40%; Basque Government 7.83% and the remaining 33.50% was a result of revenue from private sponsors.

5 people work at the Foundation; 18 people for the visiting services and 15 on restoration works.

Evidence of success

During the practice to date, over one and a half million visitors have been registered who have learned about the cathedral and its conservation, guided by specially trained staff.

Some 94,000.00 people take the guided tour each year and some 10,000 people attend the different cultural activities yearly. More than 250 cultural events have been held based on the history, conservation and cultural significance of the building and the city.

Difficulties encountered

Keeping a monument that is undergoing building work open in its entirety requires strict safety and accessibility conditions in order to protect visitors. Coordination between the activities is necessary to provide the practice with legal and economic security.

Potential for learning or transfer

1. The organisation of open activities in settings that are usually closed, such as structural repair works on monuments or the archaeological excavation of its subsoil, is innovative as it overcomes the exclusivity and isolation in which specialists usually carry out their work and extends the social environment of reference for the site
2. The new Development and Conservation Plan may serve as a model for the introduction of lines of social innovation in heritage intervention and management
3. Opening all activities to the public may be an example of transparency and democratisation of heritage intervention processes
4. The improvement of the physical and cultural accessibility achieved during the interventions is a reference point for expanding the target public, with the inclusion of groups at risk of segregation
5. Participation in projects at European (ECHOES Cluster) and international level (Monuments Trust of San Juan in Puerto Rico)

Main institution

Santa Maria Cathedral Foundation

Location

País Vasco, Spain (España)

Start Date

January 2000

End Date

Ongoing

[Further information](#)