

Silver Palace - Activity Centre for the Elderly

A municipality used CAP funds to convert an historical building into a multifunctional space for local residents vulnerable to isolation.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Metlika, Slovenia

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion & local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding: Total budget 62 762.91 (EUR)

EAFRD 50 210.33 (EUR)

National/Regional 12 552.58 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2018 to 2019

Project promoter: Metlika Retirement Home

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Summary

A considerable proportion of the population of Bela Krajina, a region in south-eastern Slovenia, are vulnerable to isolation. This is a particular challenge for the elderly and people with disabilities. The municipality of Metlika, supported by the Dolenjska and Bela Krajina Local Action Group (LAG), initiated a project to convert a disused historical building - part of a large local heritage site - into a sociocultural activity centre for the residents of three neighbouring municipalities.

Project results

The Silver Palace has supported around 100 people in addition to the residents of the Metlika Retirement Home. This is a considerable number for a small community.

The Silver Palace programme has created one new permanent job.

'The Past of Komenda' programme adds to the local tourism offer.

Lessons & Recommendations

This social inclusion project relied on cooperation between a wide range of stakeholders, including the municipality and its service providers, educational institutions, private companies and local citizens.

Context

A 2013 survey conducted in Bela Krajina, a region in south-eastern Slovenia, indicated that 20% of respondents struggled with loneliness and isolation. In response, the Dolenjska and Bela Krajina Local Action Group (LAG) included loneliness as a priority to be addressed in its Local Development Strategy. It aimed to revitalise, renovate and enrich community facilities in order to improve the services offered to residents in its territory.

The Metlika Castle complex is a 15th Century historical landmark located above the old part of the town of Metlika. It has served multiple functions over the years and is currently home to some local museums and a retirement centre, but some of its buildings and structures are underused and/or in poor repair. Therefore, a plan was put forward to renovate one such building and convert it into a day centre - The Silver Palace - to provide a programme of cultural activities and social services for elderly people and people with physical disabilities from the surrounding municipalities.

Objectives

The aims of the project were to revive a disused historical building and improve the services offered to local residents, especially the elderly and those with physical disabilities, who are vulnerable to isolation.

As a trusted operator of local social services, the Metlika Retirement Home was selected to coordinate and lead the project and ensure the ongoing provision of The Silver Palace programme. As project partners, the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Novo Mesto oversaw the delivery of healthcare services, and the Lintvern Institute arranged the logistics and transportation of participants to and from the surrounding municipalities. Finally, a private company, Jazon d.o.o., was commissioned by the project partners to create the tourism component.



Activities

Initially, the necessary equipment to operate The Silver Palace was purchased by the Metlika Retirement Home. The Lintvern Institute organised the logistics and transport of elderly residents as well as residents with physical disabilities from the three municipalities to the facility. The Metlika Retirement Home's own residents were also transported to The Silver Palace to take part in the activities once a week.

Alongside creative workshops, participants received healthcare-related information and advice according to their needs. Most importantly, they had an opportunity to socialise and ease their feelings of loneliness. All activities were designed and delivered by the Metlika Retirement Home and the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Novo Mesto. As an alternative solution for elderly and isolated people who were not able to come in person to The Silver Palace, they could talk with an employee or other participants on the phone via the centre's 'Silver Phone' service.

The project partners also worked with an external contractor, Jazon d.o.o., to prepare and test a new tourism product called 'The Past of Komenda', which included digital and guided tours of the castle complex as a historic site.

In Črna na Koroškem, the municipality purchased two wooden sales huts and eight wooden stalls, all of which are mobile and can be set up in any location. In addition to this, the municipality purchased extra wooden huts and stalls for two of its larger settlements (Rudarjevo and Žerjav), carried out repairs of paved areas and installed waste bins, benches and signposts. Črna na Koroškem also worked with the Črna Tourist Society to launch a communications campaign (print materials) to promote the launch of the new markets and introduce the various producers and traders.

Main results

The project contributed to improving the quality of life of residents in the area by easing their loneliness and providing them with better access to healthcare-related information. The Silver Palace has supported around 100 people in addition to the Metlika Retirement Home residents. This is a considerable number for a small community.

Participants pay a small fee to enrol in The Silver Palace programme,

and this income has enabled the Metlika Retirement Home to create one new dedicated staff position. The Silver Palace Programme Coordinator oversees the delivery of the in-person social and health activities, the Silver Phone service, and 'The Past of Komenda' tourism programme (a guided presentation and virtual tour of Komenda's history).

Key lessons

This social inclusion project relied on cooperation between a wide range of stakeholders, including the municipality and its service providers, educational institutions, private companies and local citizens.

The creation of a tourism offer alongside the repurposing of part of the castle complex ensures that the history of that building is not lost in its transition to fulfil a new, contemporary social function. Locals and visitors alike can hear the story behind the building and understand how it has been used throughout history as part of the wider site.

"Many elderly people feel empty and alone and are physically handicapped due to age-related changes. So we provide them with an opportunity to socialise. Those users who want to talk but do not want or cannot be included in a group, are offered individual treatment and conversations on the Silver Phone. Users like workshops where they can learn about various diseases and the alleviation of problems they encounter. At workshops, they like to share their experiences, exchange practical advice, and ask questions they are interested in."

Anica Puhek
Head of the Activity Centre – Silver Palace

Additional information:

fzv.uni-nm.si/sl/raziskovanje/programi_in_projekti/las_dbk_2017



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