



REVAB

Reuse and Valorisation of Agricultural Building
through training based on real experiences

MODULE 3

Experience of reuse and valorisation projects from european case studies:
Knowledge from Experience



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OBJECTIVES


By studying this module, students can acquire concrete knowledge about successful experiences of building reuse projects from all over Europe. The module takes the main types of reuse projects into consideration: commercial activities, cultural promotion, and rural tourism. Over the course of the module, students will analyse the main characteristics of these projects.

Students will learn about the strengths and critical points of these case studies to allow them to approach reuse in an informed way.





INDEX

1. General
 2. Experience from Commercial Projects
 3. Experience from Cultural Projects
 4. Experience from Tourism Projects
 5. Advice for Project Initiators
- 



1. General



The case studies bring together real life experiences from people who have undertaken reuse projects.

These case studies can be categorised into three main groups: Commercial Activities, Cultural Promotion and Rural Tourism. Different information can be taken from each of these groups which will be explored in more detail later in the module. For now, we highlight some common experiences that are common to all types of reuse projects for agricultural buildings.

These common experiences are grouped into 5 sections:

PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

ADDED VALUE

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

RESOURCES

PLACE, ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE

CONTEXT AND COOPERATION



1. General



PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

When considering implementing a reuse and valorization project for agricultural buildings, you should be aware that it is a process that will take some time.

From the moment the idea is conceived until the work is completed and the building is in use, there is a complex set of interrelated processes involving various stakeholders which generate different situations that have to be dealt with efficiently and effectively.





1. General



PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

- Due to their inherent complexity, you must understand that these projects develop and grow in different ways.
- It is important to dedicate the necessary time to the planning stage. Do not rush it, and take into account that there could be some hurdles with the bureaucratic, administrative and legal processes.
- The more defined and managed all the phases are, the less risk there is of unforeseen problems. Regardless of this, it is very likely that unforeseen problems will arise. Therefore, it is important to dedicate a percentage of the budget to cover unforeseen expenses. It is usually advisable to have a margin between 5-15% of the total, depending on the risks that are anticipated. Making a risk assessment and prevention plan will help you to prepare and make contingency plans.
- These projects require in-depth knowledge of local and national laws and regulations. You can try to acquire this knowledge yourself, or get it from professionals that are specialised in the field.



1. General



ADDED VALUE

To address each of the different phases and not get lost as the project progresses, it is vitally important to be clear about the main objective and new function of the building.

These will be defined according to the conditions of each building and location, the interests and knowledge of each owner or developer, and the resources that are available to them.

In addition to the main objective and purpose of each project, a series of secondary aspects or objectives can be established that reinforce and give the project added value that can help to achieve a successful outcome.





1. General



ADDED VALUE

There are some particular characteristics that have been crucial to the success of reuse and valorization projects regardless of the type of project.

- The multifunctionality and complementarity of different activities is a common feature of successful projects.
- When dealing with projects in rural environments, it is important to combine tradition with innovation in a creative way to achieve original and interesting results for the users.
- These projects are an opportunity to introduce social aspects that give value to the project, such as improved gender equality and accessibility, or special attention to intercultural activities and the integration of vulnerable people (those with different abilities, immigrants etc.).
- Economic and environmental sustainability is necessary to ensure the success of the project and its continuity.
- And finally, introducing ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) from the beginning of the project and as an essential part of the project can be a great ally in combining tradition with innovation.



1. General



SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Both in the design, execution, subsequent development and use of the project, it is essential to ensure that you have the necessary skills and competencies at hand.

The person initiating the project might have these skills and competencies, or they may be delegated to external agents that are part of some or all phases of the project

Keep this in mind from the beginning to do what you need to make sure you have the right skills or the right people with those skills.





SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

These are the most important skills and competencies that were key to the success of all of the case studies:

- It is important to adapt the scope of the project to the reality of the available human resources, skills and abilities. If you do not have the competencies in certain areas, you have to hire external staff.
- It is important to have good information sources (internet, books, university, etc.) to be able to acquire knowledge throughout the development of the project. It might also be helpful to take vocational training courses.
- When defining the tasks that require qualified personnel, knowing the availability of personnel in the project area facilitates their hiring and can reduce costs.
- The skills and competences associated with Project Management are fundamental in the design and execution process, and the skills and competencies of Organisational Management are fundamental for writing the Business Plan and the development of the activities.
- To get good coverage for the project and to ensure that the final product or service reaches its desired clients, it is vital to bring Marketing and Communications professionals on board.



1. General



RESOURCES

Having a financing and resource management plan is crucial for carrying out a reuse and valorization project. This should help ensure that the different needs are met, avoid problems, and help with planning and timing.

The resources are the set of elements that when properly coordinated will drive the achievement of the objectives set out for the project. Project success will depend on the appropriate choice, combination and harmonization of resources, and using them in the best way.





1. General



RESOURCES

Resources can be human, physical, intellectual and economic.

Here we highlight the most important characteristics related to economic and material resources.

- Taking advantage of existing infrastructure, space and materials can reduce costs in both the execution and maintenance stage. Secondhand resources can also be used in some areas of the project.
- This type of project is likely suitable for attracting grants and subsidies, such as EU Financing
- Programs and National or Local Rural Development programs. However, you must keep in mind that a large-scale project requires good planning and a well developed resource management plan in order to get the grants.
- In case external financing is not available, it is necessary to self-finance with your own capital. In this case, it is good to initially generate sufficient cash reserves before starting the project or to keep working another job during the project from which can get the needed resources.
- In the case studies, it was common to first earn money but then reinvest it again.



1. General



PLACE, ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE

The initial state of the architecture and the surrounding landscape, as well as the modifications to them, are fundamental factors in the success or failure of a reuse project.

In many cases, these buildings are abandoned or in semi-ruins. A project of this type can help to return value to the real estate and the landscape, which are part of the local cultural heritage on the whole.

Building rehabilitation and restoration can set an example for other buildings in the area and can even spur on a network around the reuse of old buildings and rural activities.





1. General



PLACE, ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE

It is generally better to restore existing buildings than to build new ones. Buildings work best if they are refurbished to perform the same function for which they were originally built, or are made compatible with other uses.

- An architectural project that integrates old and modern elements in a harmonious way helps to achieve a better result. It improves the acceptance of people for the building as it doesn't stand out too much in its surroundings.
- When looking for financing, it is good if the building is relevant for local heritage and public interest. In this case, respecting the building as much as possible, and explaining its original purpose helps to give it added value.
- Introducing sustainable and efficient practices in the architectural and landscape side of the project will improve the energy and economic efficiency, in addition to being better for the environment (biomass heating, photovoltaic panels, solar panels etc.).
- Hire trustworthy local companies for construction work. In addition to being specialised in this type of work, it is good for the local economy.



1. General



CONTEXT AND COOPERATION

Such a project can have a very positive impact on the local population and be an economic and social stimulus for the area.

It can become a pioneering project and spur on administration, companies and organisations in the area to favour similar projects.

For all this to happen, it is important to be aware of the cultural, economic-social and political situation, and of the people who can take part in the process at different stages of the project, and how to incorporate them effectively.





1. General



CONTEXT AND COOPERATION

The common characteristics to consider in order to generate a positive environment that allows all this to happen are:

- Generate synergies and establish a network with similar projects, cooperatives and organizations already established that may be related to your project
- It is important to get everyone involved in the project from the beginning, especially your family. Creating situations that are beneficial to all will generate a collective movement that enriches people and helps to have greater closeness and trust with the users or clients.
- To avoid problems with the people in the immediate environment, it is important to keep them in mind and establish a good relationship from the beginning, counting on them for what they can help with or simply keeping them informed.
- Good communication with the local, regional and the state administrations and institutions is usually necessary as they may be involved in some stage of the project and seek the support and collaboration of citizens.



2. Experience from Commercial Projects



COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES KNOWLEDGE

The most important characteristics to take into account when making a reuse and valorization project with a commercial use are the following:

- The new commercial activity should be based on something that you already know how to do.
- It is important to have a Plan B in case it does not work.
- Do not stop the current economic activity. You should combine it with the new one so that it serves as income until the new project is bringing in enough money to justify and drastic changes.
- Create diversity and variety with the product offering.
- Analyse the competition and offer something different and attractive.



Pizzeria in Kirchdorf, Germany



Pharmacy in Kasak, Bulgaria



2. Experience from Commercial Projects



- Ecological production, innovation and the creation of ecological and local brands can influence the sustainable development of the area and give added value to the business.
- Combining production with other activities for income, such as events, offering training etc.
- Business models based on the quality of the products they offer and the landscape in which they are. Look for a quality certificate and show the production chain to the client to generate trust.
- Not using agricultural machinery increases personal labor but decreases some costs and pollution.



Soc. Agricola Fierli, Siena, Tuscany, Italy.



Soc. Agricola Fierli, Siena, Tuscany, Italy.



3. Experience from Cultural Projects



The most important characteristics to take into account when developing a reuse and valorization project with a cultural purpose are the following:

- Improved awareness of building conservation and recovery of architectural heritage should be one of its objectives.
- Promotion of the surroundings and increased awareness amongst people about the cultural heritage and traditions of their own land.
- It is a good idea to join a territorial network of public and cultural buildings.
- Creating multifunctional spaces is a good idea e.g. a museum with a conference hall and outdoor space).
- Priority projects for the EU are 'bottom-up' projects.



"Museum of coalmen" Cetica, Tuscany, Italy



Headquarters of the Rural Development Group of Guadix, Granada, Spain



3. Experience from Cultural Projects



- New proposals and perspectives based on the promotion of local traditions can be innovative for the social and economic life of rural areas.
- Having a rural advocate is very important. This person must be able to organize events, involve local people and visitors, seek financial support, and promote the communication and marketing strategy.
- In this kind of project, it is important to encourage participation from existing communities in the area (associations, cooperatives, groups) from the beginning of the project design so that these people feel part of the project and give life to the building once it is time to use it.



Center for the interpretation of wood culture and a museum, Cazorla, Jaen, Spain.



4. Experience from Tourism Projects



The most important characteristics to take into account when developing a reuse and valorization project for a tourism purpose are the following:

- Generating a conscious rural tourism project is a way of adding value to the region and the territory and can also mean additional income for the local population.
- Combining productive and commercial activities e.g. an ecological shop or catering company, with other cultural activities such as tourism, education or recreation and relaxation, gives added value to the whole project offering.
- It is favorable to link the productive/economic activity with family life, and to live in the same place that is restored to combine agricultural activities with the tourism activities.
- Have a cultivated area for produce self-sufficiency, thus favoring the sustainability of the business.



Residential and stable building, “Wild Farm”,
Gorno Pole, Bulgaria



4. Experience from Tourism Projects



- Before starting the project, it is important to exchange experiences with other entrepreneurs in the area and with similar projects.
- The suppliers should be local and trusted enterprises to establish a network.
- Implement ICT (mobile applications, social networks, internet, etc.) in tourism activities to improve their potential.
- The tourism offer can be part of the overall program of activities of the municipality or territory.
- Good team work is essential to create a climate of trust that resonates with customers.



Hosting, direct selling and restaurant
“Il Poggiolo” Florence, Italy.



5. Advice for Project Initiators



- Maintain an entrepreneurial approach and be practical and prudent.
- Be courageous, accept challenges and maintain a positive attitude.
- Hone your management skills and keep an open mind.
- Don't underestimate the importance of communication.
- A good project is worth investing in, even if it requires a lot of time and strong conviction. The effort is immense and requires 100% motivation.
- Always think ahead and about future generations.
- Have a good team behind you and strong support from your family members.
- Concentrate on what is really important!