



WOODFOOTPRINT

The urban footprint of wood industry

WOOD FOOTPRINT

1ST NEWSLETTER

Dear readers,
We are pleased to present you the first newsletter of **Wood Footprint project**.

Wood Footprint - Big buildings challenges and urban impacts of the wood industry in European cities is a project that addresses the thematic area of Urban Renewal of **URBACT** programme and aims to develop urban policies and share practices for assessing the industrial ecological footprints of European cities, namely in the wood furniture sector due to its heavy urban inheritance of abandoned showrooms, in order to contribute to a sustainable development.



Context

Manufacturing and selling big items requires big spaces as factories and large showrooms. During the prosperity years of manufacturing sector in Europe, industry dependent cities have witnessed a pop-up of such buildings along the main road axis and suburbs, strongly marking urban development. Nowadays the rapid transformation of these sectors led to the abandon of most of these, leaving a giant urban footprint that is a serious challenge to cities that have inherited it and a warning to others.

Our Partners

The project gathers **10 European cities** with a common strong influence of a wood furniture sector that now faces a transformation process due to production and sales decay.

Meet the partners and its particular areas of focus in the project:



Viborg (Denmark)

Focus: New Uses:

The unused industrial buildings that are often not taken care of are a signal of decay that affects the suburban neighbourhoods and potential new investors as well as new citizens in our municipality.



Larissa (Greece)

Focus: Employment:

Create employment, either by reinforcing the main wood furniture sector of activity or by diversifying into other sectors bringing together major businesses of the sector that are or used to be dealing with furniture production in Larissa.



Wycombe District (UK)

Focus: Attractiveness:

Attract international investment for the existing 9 Business Parks and transform people and places together, raising skills and aspirations in neighbourhoods that have lost large amounts of industrial employment.



Lecce and Sternatia (Italy)

Region Strategy: Lecce and Sternatia region view to increase competitiveness by creating a new strong commercial and industrial area for the most competitive sectors in the region, such as: agri-food sector, wood and furniture, fashion, tourism and renewable energy sources – Learning with others avoiding mistakes.



Paços de Ferreira (Portugal)

Focus: Identity:

Enhance economic development and create employment, either by reinforcing the main sector of activity or by diversifying into other sectors AND address the showrooms urban footprint that has remained from the huge investments made until the 90s.



Roeselare (Belgium)

Focus: Cultural Heritage:

Making inhabitants proud of the brewery and its rich history is a major challenge for the redevelopment of the old brewery. People living near the brewery should become once again the ambassadors of the brewery, thus creating a positive image and atmosphere around the brewery site.



Tartu (Estonia)

Focus: Dilemma:

Urban footprint left by the company that moved to industrial park VS city decision about public equipment's (e.g. school, sports park, conference center) that could revitalize the area and stimulate private investment.



Border Agency, Monaghan (Ireland)

Focus: Diversification:

The declining role of traditional industries represents a key challenge for Monaghan. More importantly however, is the opportunity that these material assets (buildings) provide in that they are existing buildings that provide a link with our past and would cost less to bring back into use than new-builds.



Yecla (Spain)

Focus: Resource Optimization:

Conciliation between the development of the furniture sector, and the positioning of the Yecla annual furniture fair as a key event in Europe opening the conference hall to other European scale events.

These cities will work together to promote innovative urban policies that contribute to minimize or erase the industrial footprints.

Framework

In the framework of **Wood FootPrint project** are defined five thematic groups, addressing different industrial footprint aspects, under which will be carry out joint actions:

1. **Abandoned buildings: what urban policy to deal with this issue?**
2. **Skills and employment - Requalification and new employment opportunities for blue collar manufacturing workers**
3. **Industrial parks**
4. **Diversification - Social factors of manufacturing districts**
5. **Public Private Partnership**

Transnational Events

Transnational events will be developed in each partner city to stimulate the networking of policies. These meetings will gather not only the partners, but also relevant stakeholders in order to develop **Local Action Plans** that will allow the continuation of the activity developed once the project finished.

Take a look at our first meetings and follow the development of Wood FootPrint activities



The project was launched in 1st of May 2012 and will run until 30th April 2015

MEETINGS

1st Transnational Study Visit,
Wycombe District, UK
09-11 October 2013

After the kick off meeting that took place in **Paços de Ferreira**, the Portuguese capital of furniture, **Wycombe District** hosted the consortium first meeting.

A multiplicity of interactive sessions were organized in this meeting with the purpose to promote the dialogue and stimulate ideas about urban renewal in wood sector as well as to reinforce the knowledge about each city of the consortium regarding 'assets' and 'challenges' so each partner could share their experience and vision.

Delegates reflected on the thematic groups and to note down on Post It Notes 'intelligent responses' based on either experience or plans that are being looked at in their municipalities. This was followed by a 'selling and buying' exercise where delegates reviewed all of the responses and 'bought' the ideas they would like to investigate/develop further with their Local Support Groups.

Some Ideas

- *Business cluster*
- *Fab Lab*
- *Intrepreneurship and entrepreneurship*
- *Entrepreneurship – in particular how we teach business skills and 'learning by doing'*
- *'Come Home' initiative to encourage students to go back to their own 'city' after the university*
- *Buy Local*

Among many other ideas...



This activity had the purpose to contribute to the development of **Local Action Plans (LAP)** carry out by the partners to be implemented in the cities. The purpose of the LAP is to capture the 'ideas', 'actions' and 'resources' according to a coherent set of tangible actions with a clear timeline.

The consortium had the chance to visit some sites around Wycombe district which represented an opportunity to know more about this problematic and it is a way to help to find out solutions for the problems that the sector is facing.

- **Timber Research and Development Association in Hughenden Valley**
- **Bucks New University and the National School of Furniture**
- **VERCO Office Furniture**

2nd Transnational Study Visit,
Roeselare, Belgium
5-7 February 2014

The key point of this meeting was the diversity of visits that were made to several sites which allowed partner cities see in loco examples of strategic plans addressing urban renewal.

We highlight the visits to:

- Local factories - A&S Powerplant and Spanogroup
- Buda Factory is part of a larger project which gave a new destination to the 'Buda-Island', a small island in the centre of the city which had lost its activity.
The plan to revert this situation was to attract artists from all over the world to the island that could create here top-end projects. The Buda Factory has also a fab lab
- Three different environmental friendly Business Parks in the region: Evolis, Blokken and Esserstraat
- Transfo-site in Zwevegem is an abandoned building of 9 hectares that used to be an electric power plant since 1911 and has being reconverted into a place where there is room for MICE, adventurous sports, art, recreation, housing, tourism, business
- Old Brewery-building that is the subject of the Local Action Plan of the Miummm/Roeselar



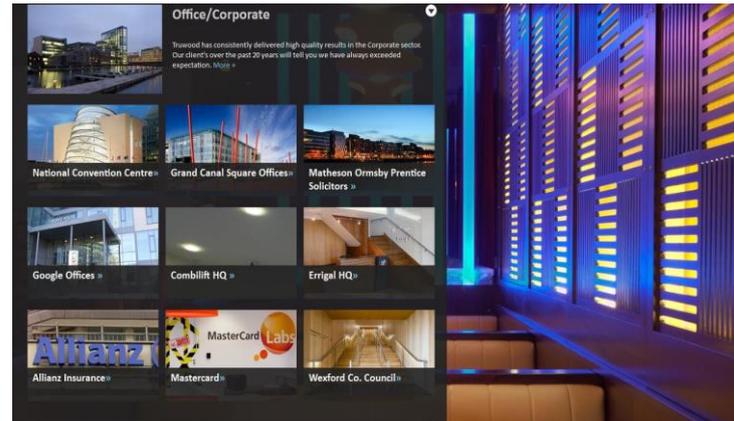
3rd Transnational Meeting in Monaghan, Ireland

12-14 March 2014

In Monaghan the partners had the chance to visit some sites in order to understand the current state of development of the sector and **involve relevant local stakeholders (Local Support Groups) in the project.**

- **Truwood** is a small rural company, specialist in interior fit-out with expertise in the hospitality, health, education, leisure, retail and commercial sectors. All the manufacturing is done in the local office. The company expressed a keen interest in the project and in work with other business in developing products and services.
- **Drumbriston Furniture Factory**
During the visit, participants were given a full tour of the factory in Carrickroe, North Monaghan where they were brought through the full manufacture process in the making of sofas and ended with a tour of the show room and type of products they provide.
- Visit to **John E Coyle and McNally and Finley Sites**, two of the largest vacant factory sites located in Monaghan Town.

The purpose of this visit was to demonstrate the task facing the ULSG in dealing with vacancy within former manufacturing buildings. The interest point to the group was also the fact that the Drumbriston Furniture Company now occupies the show room within the Mc Nally and Finley site which demonstrates that the active furniture businesses could share and use some of the infrastructure that remain following the closure and cessation of business within some other factory sites.



Stay tuned for the next Wood FootPrint activities!

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