



MEDIA RELEASE

Biel, 7 June 2022

Research project seeks to bring new life to Upper Valais village centres

In the village centres of Upper Valais, more and more buildings stand empty because the historic buildings do not meet modern standards for home comfort. However, the refurbishment of such buildings is costly and time-consuming. In the VETA/NOVA project, researchers from the Institute of Timber Construction, Structures and Architecture IHTA and the Institute for Digital Economy in the Construction & Wood Industry IdBH of Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH, in collaboration with regional and national business partners, have developed guidelines and model solutions to make converting old buildings easier and thus more attractive.

Wood weathered by the sun, roofs covered with stone slabs or shingles: the centuries-old buildings in Upper Valais village centres are veritable gems. Until now, however, they have often not been popular as places to live. The degree of home comfort was too low, the uncertainties of the approval process and the cost of conversion too great. But all that is about to change. Guidelines and model solutions enable authorities, private builders, architects and engineers to convert and renovate old buildings with less time and expense. The historically valuable village centres can now be preserved and revitalised – the old, “Veta”, is to be turned into the new, “Nova”. The guidelines were developed as part of the VETA/NOVA project by researchers from the Institute of Timber Construction, Structures and Architecture IHTA and the Institute for Digital Economy in the Construction & Wood Industry IdBH at Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH in collaboration with regional and national business partners. The project was supported by the Swiss Innovation Agency, Innosuisse.

Eight guides cover the entire process

Over a period of three years, the project team developed a guide for each thematic area involved in the conversion process. A total of eight guides provide information on building permit processes and methods of building analysis, make recommendations for design and conversion, and present solutions for appropriate fire protection and earthquake safety checks. The processes and model solutions were coordinated with each other as well as with municipalities and cantonal authorities, resulting in a high degree of reliability in planning and implementation. The measures also have a positive financial impact, as they reduce the consultancy expenses as well as the refurbishment costs.

National and regional project partners involved

For the implementation of the project, twelve regional companies from the fields of planning, architecture, timber construction and complementary trades teamed up to form the “Village Centre Renewal Upper Valais” working group. The five national partners involved – Fisolan AG, GUTEX Schweiz GmbH, James Hardie Europe GmbH, JOMOS Brandschutz AG and SIGA Cover AG – besides contributing their product-specific know-how, ensure that the solutions developed are also relayed beyond the borders of Valais to other regions of Switzerland and applied to buildings e.g. in the Jura, Central Switzerland or the Grisons.

The project was supported in a consultancy capacity by an advisory group in which the following partners were actively involved: Valais Cantonal Office for the Preservation of Historic Buildings, Office for Spatial Development of the Canton of Valais, energieregionGOMS, Binntal Landscape



Bern University of Applied Sciences
Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering
Communication

Solothurnstrasse 102
CH-2500 Biel/Bienne

Tel.: +41 31 848 50 12

anna-sophie.herbst@bfh.ch

www.ahb.bfh.ch

Park, Pfyn-Finges Nature Park, Upper Valais Regional and Economic Centre AG and Swiss Mountain Aid.

More information

vetanova.ch

[Project page “VETA/NOVA – renewing building fabric simply”](#)

[Institute for Timber Construction, Structures and Architecture \(IHTA\)](#)

Contact:

Thomas Näher, Project Manager, Institute for Digital Economy in the Construction and Wood Industry (IdBH), Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH, thomas.naeher@bfh.ch, Tel. +41 32 344 03 49

Monika Holzegger, Managing Director VETA/NOVA, info@vetanova.ch

Anna-Sophie Herbst, Communication Specialist, Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH), anna-sophie.herbst@bfh.ch, Tel. +41 31 848 50 12