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Verona’s 25 Million Euro Wine Hub Project Targets 350,000 Visitors and 700 Million Euro Economic Impact

New cultural center aims to blend innovation, education, and immersive experiences to boost Italy’s wine tourism and local economy

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Plans are moving forward in Verona, Italy, for the creation of a major international hub dedicated to wine culture and civilization. The project, led by Fondazione Muvin, aims to establish Italy's first large-scale center of this kind, comparable to renowned European institutions such as Bordeaux's Cité du Vin, Porto's World of Wine, and Spain's Vivanco Museum. The initiative is not being called a "museum" but rather a cultural hub, with a focus on innovation, education, and the broader significance of wine in society.

The proposed site for the hub is Verona's former "Icehouse" of the General Warehouses, a building recently restored by architect Mario Botta and previously home to Eataly. The location is considered strategic, situated near the Verona Sud highway exit, close to the city center and Porta Nuova train station, and directly across from Veronafiere, the venue for Vinitaly, Italy's most important wine fair. The project's backers estimate that the hub could open within two years, pending approval of public funding to reach the total investment needed, which is estimated at 25 million euros.

Preliminary studies on the cultural and architectural concepts have been completed, with further refinements planned as the project moves forward. The economic sustainability of the hub is supported by detailed analyses, and the business plan projects 350,000 annual visitors, 12 million euros in revenue by the tenth year, and the creation of up to 130 new jobs. The cultural impact is expected to extend well beyond Verona, reinforcing Italy's position as a leader in wine production and tourism.

Verona was chosen for its central role in Italian wine culture and its status as a key destination for wine tourism. The city is part of the "Great Wine Capitals" network, which connects major wine cities worldwide to promote trade, tourism, and academic exchange. The Muvin Foundation, a non-profit organization established in 2022 by a coalition of local economic associations, has received support from the Veneto Region and national politicians. The region funded the initial studies, and efforts are underway in Rome to secure government funding.

At a recent international conference in Venice, leaders from the wine industry, academia, and government discussed the vision for the new hub. Federico Bricolo, president of Veronafiere, emphasized the collective effort behind the project, which

brings together institutions, universities, businesses, consortia, and producers. Diego Begalli, president of the Muvin Foundation and former vice-rector of the University of Verona, highlighted the importance of authenticity, innovation, research, and sustainability in shaping the hub's mission. He described the initiative as participatory and designed to foster intergenerational dialogue through education and "edutainment."

Since 2023, with 300,000 euros in funding from the Veneto Region, the foundation has completed an economic impact analysis, business plan, strategic positioning study, scientific content design, and architectural plans. The foundation also launched "Winipedia," an online resource with over 100 entries on wine culture and economics curated by experts.

The hub will offer a range of experiences beyond traditional exhibitions. Plans include educational activities, wine tastings, a wine shop, restaurants, events, and temporary exhibitions. Enrico Ghinato, manager and board member of the Muvin Foundation, explained that the financial model is designed for economic autonomy. The initial investment is projected at 25 million euros, with an additional 7 million euros planned for updates in year six. Funding will come from institutional partners, government grants, and a mix of public and private investment.

Francesco Pecci, an economist from the University of Verona's Economics Living Lab, estimates that the hub could generate 700 million euros in value when considering both direct investments and visitor spending. This would provide a significant boost to wine tourism in Verona and the wider Veneto region.

Costa Edutainment, a leading Italian operator of next-generation museums, has expressed interest in managing the hub, though a public bid will be held for the role. Dea Capital Real Estate, owner of the proposed site, has agreed to lease the property.

The architectural concept, developed by Studio Ardielli Fornasa Associati and Mirko Scaratti, aims to blend digital and analog experiences in flexible spaces that encourage social interaction. The design includes landscaped areas for public use and seeks to create an open environment that integrates with the city.

An international committee led by Steve Charters, professor at Burgundy Business School and Master of Wine, developed the content framework for the visitor experience. The approach combines historical and cultural perspectives on wine with contemporary issues such as geopolitics and climate change. Graham Harding, a historian from Oxford University, contributed to shaping the narrative that will guide visitors through the hub.

Antonio Scuderi, CEO of Capitale Cultura Group and professor of Digital Heritage, explained that the visitor journey will use immersive technologies and artificial intelligence to personalize experiences. The hub will be accessible to children and people with disabilities and will include interactive laboratories where visitors can contribute to evolving content.

The project’s supporters believe that this new hub will not only enhance Verona’s appeal as a destination for wine tourism but also serve as a model for integrating culture, education, and economic development in Italy’s wine sector. The final name for the hub is still under consideration as planning continues.