

**Interreg
Danube Region**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



Involving the Local Community

Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation, Successful Implementation of Action Plans, and Understanding the Importance of the Human Factor

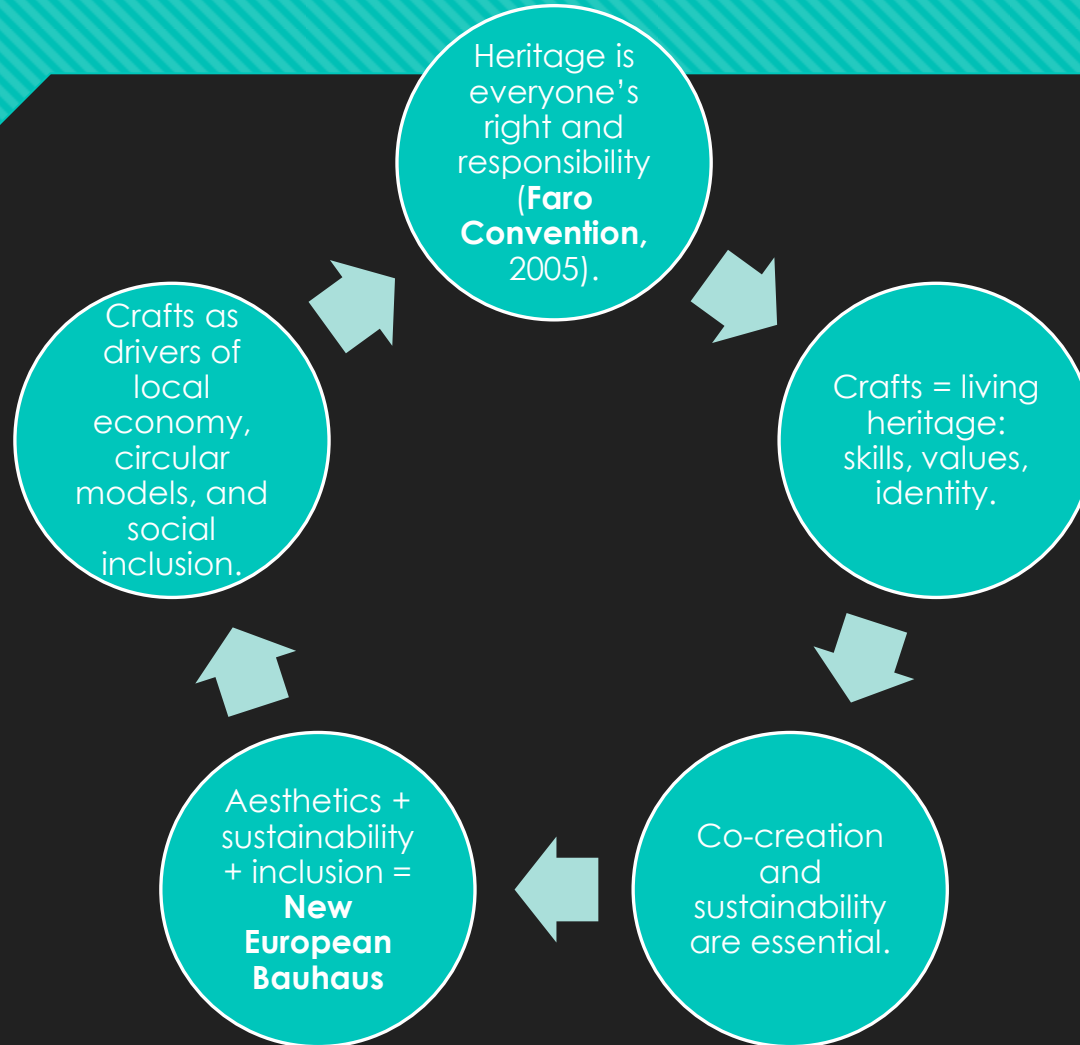
European Framework for Heritage Cooperation

Cultural heritage is
a fundamental part
of our identity,
memory, and
belonging.

It shapes how
people feel about
their communities
and future.

Traditional crafts are
part of our
intangible heritage
and social fabric.

Faro Convention & New European Bauhaus – Short Recap



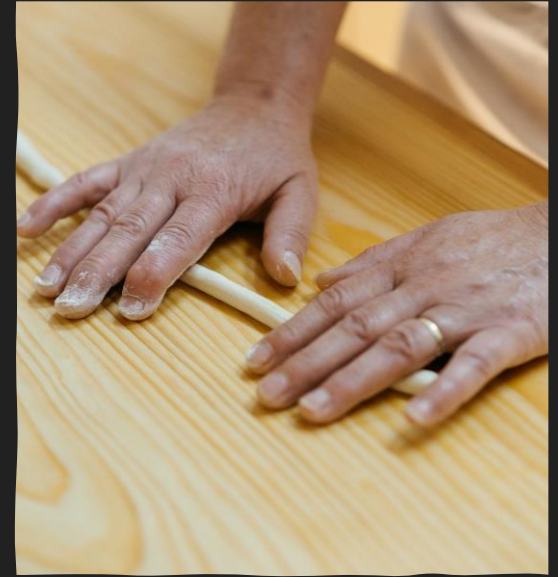
Together, the
Faro
Convention
and the **New**
European
Bauhaus invite
us to see
handcraft not
as a thing of
the past...

...but as a shared tool
for shaping a more
humane, resilient and
beautiful future





Pomelaj



The story of Pomelaj

Pomelaj – From Training Workshop to Cooperative to WISE to Handicraft Centre

Collaboration
with
municipalities,
companies, and
communities

Inclusion of
home-
based
craftspeople

Informal
training for
weaving
(corn husk,
willow
osier)



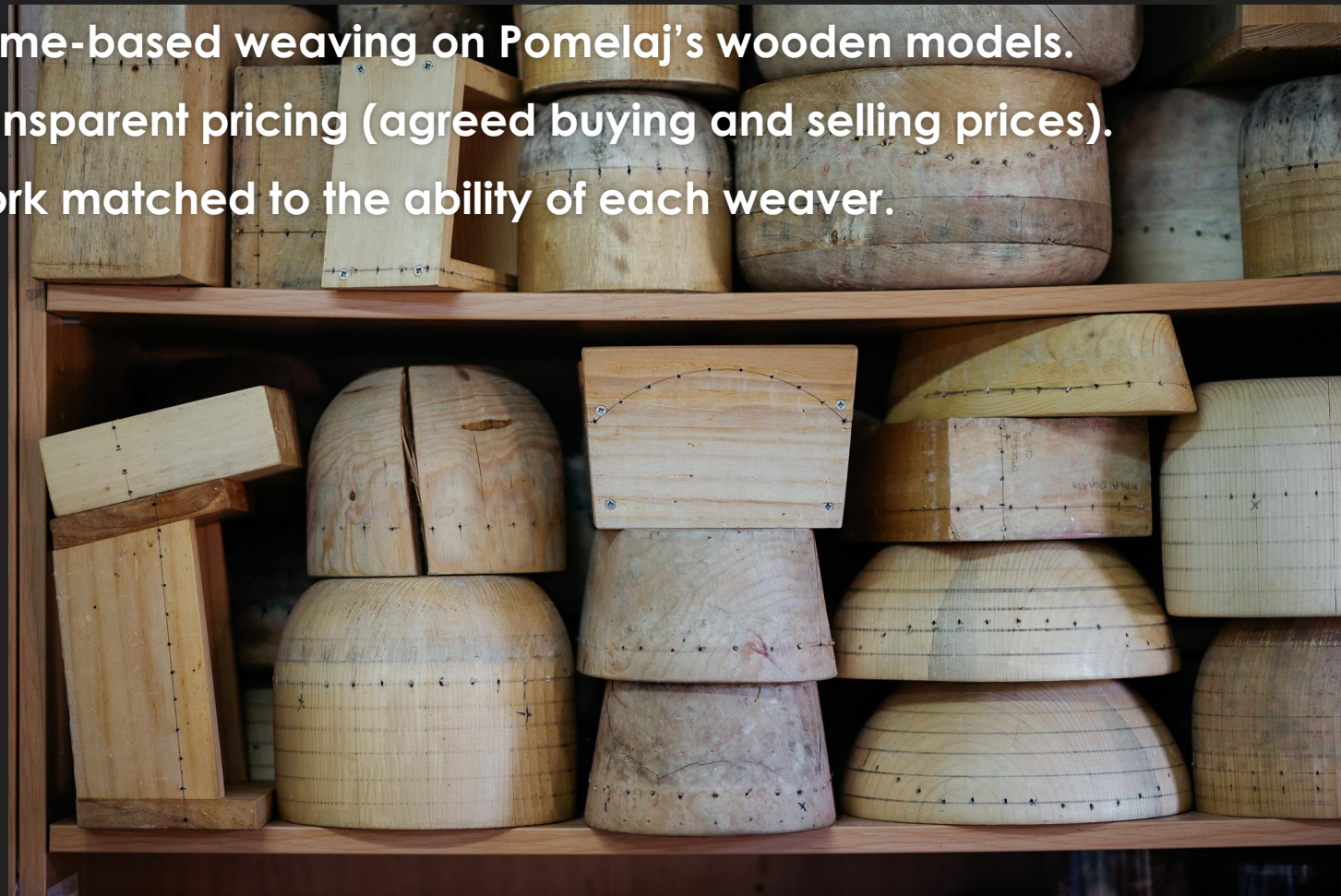
Infrastructure and Collective Learning

- Municipalities provided space and support.
- Companies contributed HR and market expertise.
- Joint learning process between staff and craftspeople.



Work Model

- Home-based weaving on Pomelaj's wooden models.
- Transparent pricing (agreed buying and selling prices).
- Work matched to the ability of each weaver.

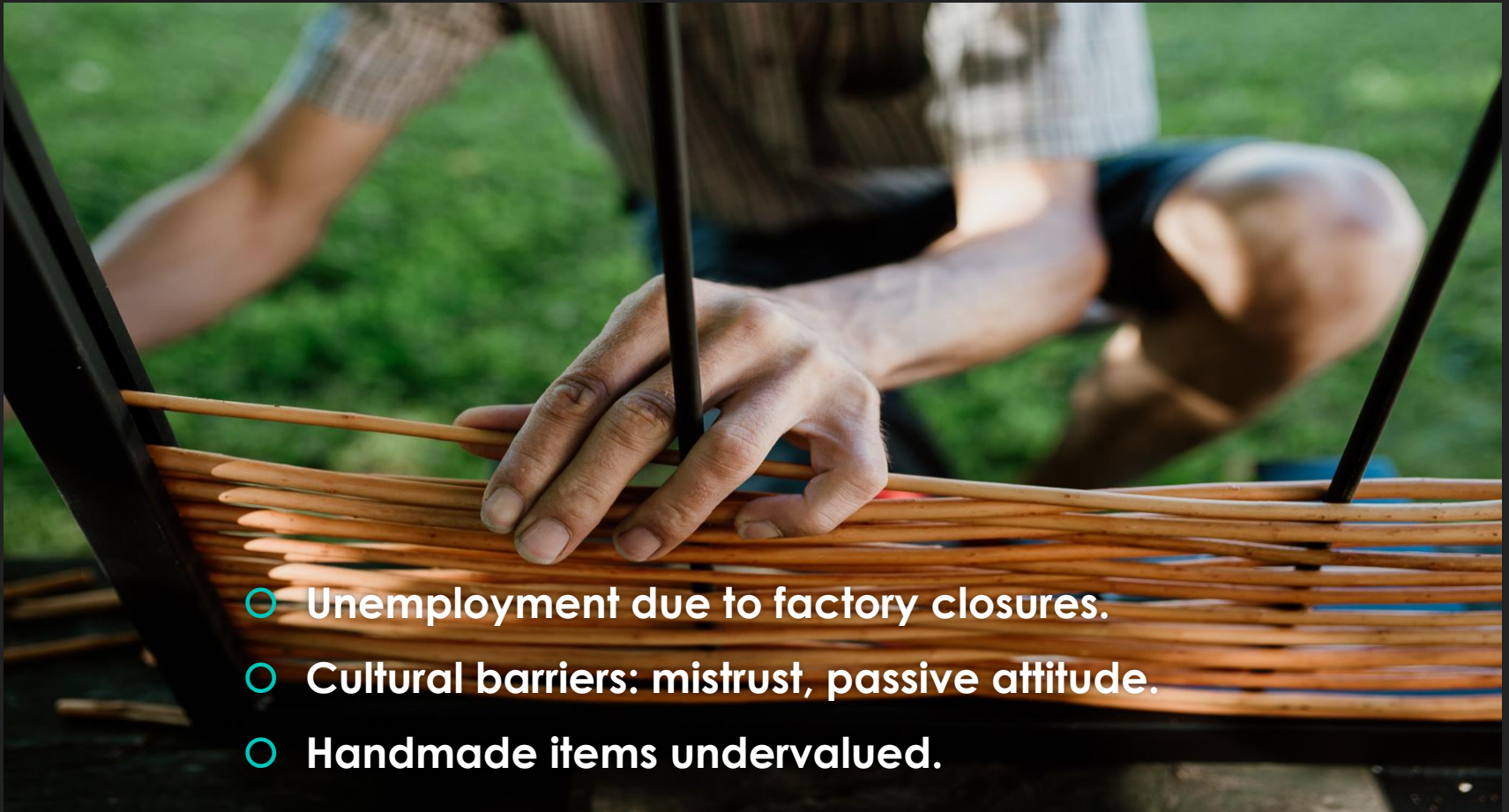


Demographic & Social Context



- Low formal education.
- High presence of vulnerable groups.
- Home-based work and crafts undervalued.

Challenges Faced



- Unemployment due to factory closures.
- Cultural barriers: mistrust, passive attitude.
- Handmade items undervalued.

Solutions and Innovations

- Personal trust-building (offer coffee and biscuits, and listen).
- Need to formalize, Pomelaj became a cooperative.
- Combined crafts with local food for appeal and impact.



Cultural Shift

- From factory obedience to co-creation.
- Promoted awareness of craft value and origin.



Sourcing Materials

- Pomelaj revived precious old corn variety for high-quality corn husk, in collaboration with local farmers.
- The community takes part in husking events – a much appreciated opportunity for bonding and receiving a helping hand.



Key Insights

- 
- Really listen and be culturally sensitive,
 - Build trust and personal relationships,
 - Develop a flexible, locally adapted business model that takes into account market realities and the human stories behind each product.

Impact

- Pomelaj became recognized employment and craft center.
- It supports employees with disabilities, preserves intangible cultural heritage, and helps handicrafts of all sectors to develop as one of eight Handicraft centres in Slovenia.



Fieldwork and Networking

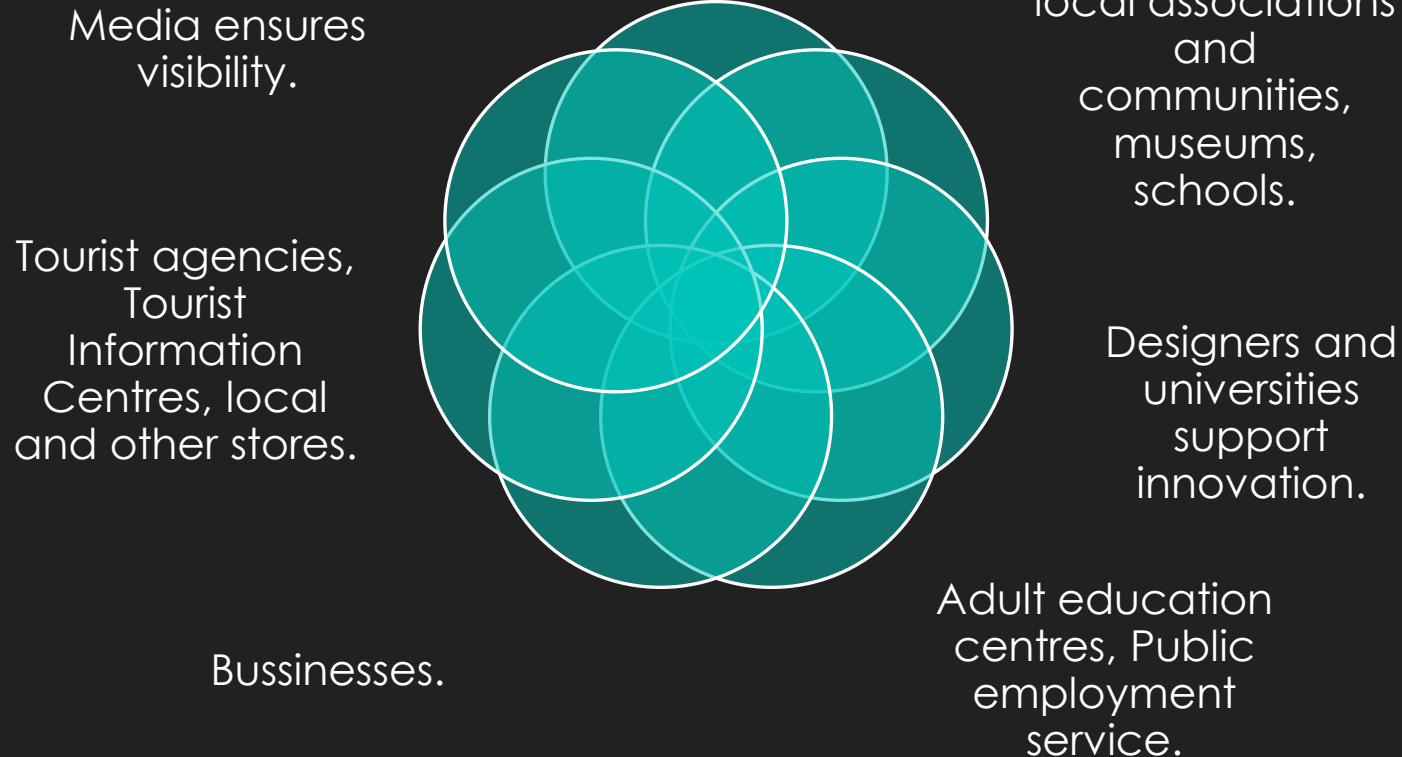
- Identify craftspeople via direct outreach and mapping.
- Visit their workshops, get to know them, and build trust.
- Ensure inclusive meetings and equal participation in projects.



Craftspeople's Needs

- Often older generations.
- Often without digital skills and lacking computers/printers/scanners or other modern equipment at home (important for maintaining contact and understanding their capacity for project participation).
- Often require significant support in understanding formal documents, tender requirements, preparing applications for certification, etc.
- Often need extensive support in promotion and sales (meaning we must handle a large part of the work and make it easier for them).
- Often have a low level of self-organization.
- Often do not recognize new opportunities.
- Often do not keep up with novelties.
- Often need support in valuing their work and products – they require encouragement and confidence-building.
- Often face financial difficulties.

Supporting Institutions



Building Trust



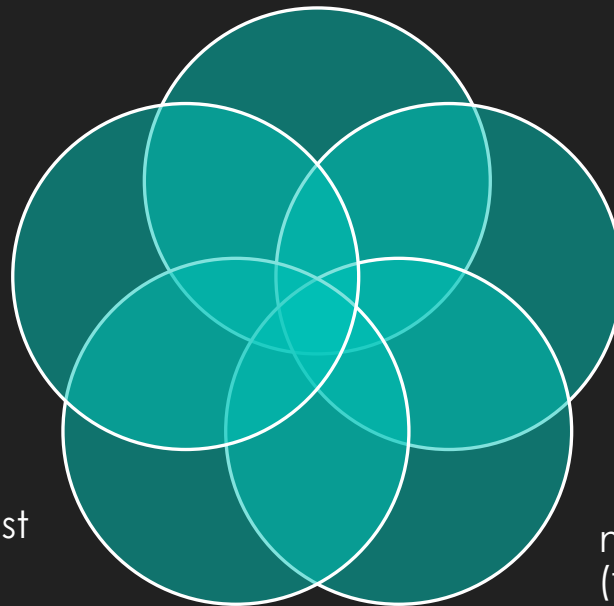
- Personal connection, active listening, and consistency matter.
- Emotional intelligence also opens doors to various institutions.

Insights and Recommendations

Fieldwork is essential: Nothing replaces face-to-face contact and trust-building. Persistence, patience, and personal connections are critical success factors – these are long-term processes.

Clear and open communication:
Set clear expectations and ensure transparency.

Co-creation:
Craftspeople must feel equally included.



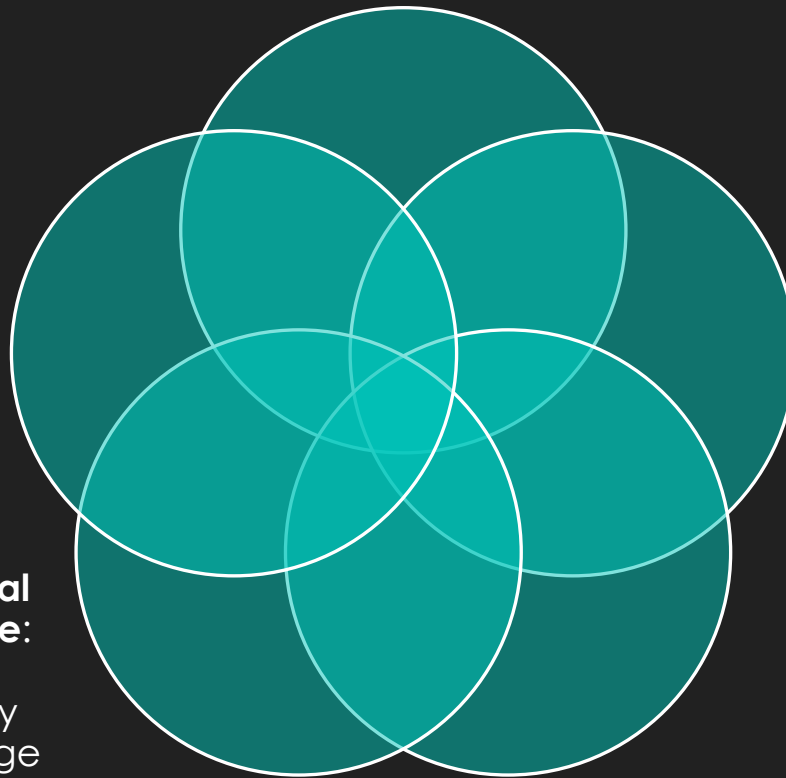
Systematic mapping and inclusion: Regularly update your data and continually seek out new stakeholders.

Think beyond craftspeople: From the start, build and connect as many support structures as possible (from municipalities to museums) to co-create projects.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula: Every region has its own specifics, but without a long-term vision and patient development, you cannot build such a model overnight. It is a gradual process where each step builds trust and lays the foundation for the future.

The importance of local knowledge and culture:

All solutions are only possible because they are rooted in knowledge of the local community and respect for its unique features.



Long-term support in sales and promotion: Build on shared interests and develop joint market pathways that emphasize authenticity and quality, while educating buyers on the value of handcrafted goods.

Absolutely essential is **media visibility**.

Practical part

1. Corn Husk Weaving

2. Co-Creation Sprint

- Objective: Group work to design a draft cooperation plan with a local stakeholder.

3. Mapping Ethical Impacts and Stakeholder Reflection

- Objective: Identification of key stakeholders and analysis of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of collaboration.



Homework (not part of the workshop, but reflection after it):

4. The story of a Master Craftsperson

Write a fictional or real story of a master craftsperson from your community who preserves cultural heritage:

How would they like the project to remember them?
What would they say about the collaboration?



POMELAJ, Rural Development Cooperative
Mala Polana 103
9225 Velika Polana
Slovenia

W: www.pomelaj.si
E: info@pomelaj.si



Photos by Pomelaj, Simon Koležnik and Sara Köleš Ribeiro.

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