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ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences

EU Project "ExpAct" Launched: Maximizing the Value Potential of Retirees

When people leave the workforce to retire, valuable skills and expertise are lost to society. Researchers at ZHAW are collaborating with national and international partners in an EU project to create an Internet platform enabling seniors to pass on their know-how.

As the baby boomers are reaching retirement age, valuable experience and expertise are lost. In addition, the step into retirement often proves difficult to those affected. New Internet platforms aim to tap this valuable potential and make it accessible again to society. In collaboration with eight other partners in Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences is developing Internet sites that will enable seniors to offer their resources free of charge, for a fee, or by bartering. Potential users include enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and associations. The interdisciplinary EU research project is now ready to start. It is coordinated by the ZHAW School of Management and Law with the participation of the ZHAW School of Health Professions as well as a number of European partners.

Modular System for Internet Platforms

The project involves the development of a multilingual software kit with which to build online platforms that allow the expertise of seniors to be transferred and used. To enable these Internet platforms to be as marketable as possible, the development of a business model is of key importance from the very beginning. One of the challenges is how to take into account the needs of senior citizens. At the same time, according to ZHAW project manager Andri Färber, the requirements of potential users must not be neglected: "The modular system to be developed must satisfy the needs of all possible users including enterprises, nonprofit organizations, associations, and private individuals. These needs can be as diverse as the coaching and consulting of SMEs, piano lessons by retired music professionals, or advice offered in dealing with difficult life situations." Organizations will be able to build customized Internet platforms with a minimum of effort.

Improving Quality of Life

The EU research project "ExpAct", which will last for two years, has a volume of EUR 2.5 million. It is part of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL JP), which is jointly funded by the European Union and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) of the Swiss Confederation. AAL projects aim to develop innovative solutions with the help of new technologies. According to Andri Färber, "these products and services are meant to improve the quality of life of seniors and help them maintain their independence in their own personal environment. There is considerable demand all over Europe in the light of the current demographic development". In addition to the Institute of Business Information Technology and the Center of Human Capital Management of the ZHAW School of Management and Law as well as the Institute of Physiotherapy of



the ZHAW School of Health Professions, the following partners are involved: Aktivsenioren Bayern e.V. (DE), Alpnet Engineering AG (CH), Andrásy University of Budapest (HU), Ethical Software Coop. Soc. (IT), the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano (IT), KMU-Plattform (AT), the PowerAge Foundation (CH), and the University of Innsbruck (AT).

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ZHAW is one of the leading universities of applied sciences in Switzerland. Its approach is application-oriented and scientific, and its performance mandate encompasses degree programs and continuing education as well as research, services, and consulting. ZHAW graduates are sought after in national and international markets and in the intercultural working world. Students benefit from an internationally oriented university that places a special focus on developing social and personal skills. ZHAW consists of the following schools: Architecture, Design and Civil Engineering, Health Professions, Applied Linguistics, Life Sciences and Facility Management, Applied Psychology, Social Work, Engineering, and Management and Law.

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