ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe (RDF-EUR)

Information and Communication Technologies for Attaining Sustainable Development Goals

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https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2019/RDF/Regional-Development-Forum.aspx

CONTRIBUTION BY Essl Foundation – Zero Project / Austria

TITLE: Cooperation between the ITU and ITU members with the Zero Project in research/support of outstanding innovations in ICT accessibility and digital inclusion

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Europe Regional Initiative: [Tick the relevant boxes or delete the irrelevant items]

- ☐ X EUR3: Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development

Year(s) of implementation: [Tick the relevant boxes or delete the irrelevant items]

- ☐ X 2019
- ☐ X 2020
- ☐ X 2021

Background

The Zero Project was initiated by the Essl Foundation. It is a platform where the most innovative and effective solutions to problems that persons with disabilities face, are jointly identified, explored, selected and shared. Its mission is to support the implementation of the UN CRPD: "For a world without barriers" (zero barriers).

The Zero Project takes a solutions-based approach to its work. Together with a continuously growing network of over 4,000 experts, with and without disabilities, in over 150 countries, the Zero Project seek to identify the most innovative and effective Policies and Practices that improve the lives of persons with disabilities. Those Innovative Practices and Policies are presented on a research database on www.zeroproject.org, in the annual Zero Project Report and, most importantly, at the Zero Project Conference which is organized every February in the premises of the UN in Vienna.

The Zero Project covers 4 topics: education, employment, accessibility and independent living in a 4-years-cycle. In 2019/20 the topic is education (which also includes accessible and inclusive ICT).

The work of the Zero Project is based on informal partnerships, with partners contributing their expertise in nominating, evaluating, voting, and at the same time using the Zero Project

Conference – and more generally the research and network – for their own work. The Zero Project has ECOSOC status and cooperates regularly with several UN bodies, including ITU.

Currently, the informal partnership with ITU is based on mutual conference participation and support. The ITU, for example chaired ITU-Forums in 2018 and 2019 at the Zero Project Conferences. The Zero Project presented Innovative Practices and Policies at "Accessible Europe" in December 2018 in Vienna. ITU and Essl Foundation are currently setting up a joint application for sponsoring a Side Event on Artificial Intelligence for the COSP in New York City in June 2019.

Proposal

The Zero Project and ITU have in place an ongoing partnership, in a joint effort to broaden the research base on efficient innovations in accessible and inclusive ICT and digital inclusion. The Zero Project uses its method and broad network to identify those innovative Practices and Policies that are needed most to support the mission of the ITU and ITU member organizations. Mutual support and use of entries for Zero Project and for 'Digital Innovative Solutions Competition' of Accessible Europe will be continued.

Research of the Zero Project and other outcome will be presented according to the needs of ITU, and might consist of joint publications, presentation at ITU Conferences, joint invitations of innovative organizations/project to Conferences etc. Zero Project offers a regular "ITU Forum" as part of every Zero Project Conference. The cooperation is based on an annual work-plan that both parties agree on.

ITU is actively engaged in the nomination and evaluation process, by sharing the call for nominations among members and staff. ITU is including the Zero Project and/or some of the selection Innovative Practice and Policy in the regular conference and meeting programme of ITU, as well as in joint publications and is also considering those in implementing new ITU Standards.

ESSL foundation continues partnering with ITU for upcoming Accessible Europe editions.