

Zero Project Scaling Solutions: a global catalyst for disability inclusion

An international multi-disciplinary consortium of organizations joins forces to transfer and advance outstanding innovations for persons with disabilities to new countries and regions.

Vienna (Austria), August 31, 2023.

The Zero Project, an Austrian-based initiative with the goal of finding and sharing solutions to improve the lives and legal rights of persons with disabilities, has joined forces with Chilean Fundación Descúbreme, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, multinational IT-company Atos SE, and Norwegian consultancy Inclusive Creation to support the transfer of outstanding proven innovations for disability inclusion.

Replication of proven solutions for disability inclusion

The programme formerly known as “Zero Project Impact Transfer” was first initiated in 2018 by the Essl Foundation in collaboration with Ashoka, the network of the world’s leading social entrepreneurs. “With this programme we wanted to go one step further: not only find the best proven solutions for disability inclusion but use all our leverage, expertise and network-power to support these innovations for speeding up the process of sharing them across borders. I am deeply grateful to Ashoka for their invaluable contribution to building Zero Project Impact Transfer in the past six years”, says Martin Essl, Founder of the Essl Foundation. During that time, Fundación Descúbreme joined the partnership, and the programme supported more than 60 innovations from 26 countries. Although replications typically happen in a medium-term perspective, one third of participants have already successfully replicated their innovation within two years’ time.

“Zero Project Scaling Solutions”: strengthening future impact

The new collaboration with four powerful organizations and their vast networks and expertise under the name of “Zero Project Scaling Solutions” will serve as a catalyst to scale selected innovations worldwide. “We are very glad to work with such powerful partners for the ‘Zero Project Scaling Solutions’ and are excited about these new opportunities to expand our collaborative efforts for disability-inclusive innovations. We all share the common vision of a world with zero barriers, where the rights and equitable access of persons with disabilities are fully respected. Partnerships and innovations are the essential catalysts of change”, says Bernd Schramm, Head of Global Project on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities at GIZ, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

With Inclusive Creation as the programme’s facilitator, the programme will have a strong business-oriented approach. “We are excited to start this journey and we’re dedicated to enabling visionary founders to expand their solutions globally, aligned with our company’s mission of building an inclusive world. We’re enhancing the programme by tailoring it to the unique needs of disability innovation founders. Balancing business success and personal growth, our approach ensures comprehensive support for commercialization and scaling”, says Anthony Giannoumis, Chair of the Board.

10 innovators to form the first cohort with a focus on Inclusive Education and ICT

Each year, the Zero Project recognizes outstanding solutions in a specific field, with this year's call for nominations (ZeroCall24) centred around the themes of Inclusive Education, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Out of 523 nominations, a shortlist of 164 innovative solutions has been recently announced and will be further examined in a peer-reviewed process to identify this year's Awardees.

Shortlisted ZeroCall innovators are invited to apply and become one of ten "Scaling Fellows" to join the first Zero Project Scaling Solutions cohort in September 2024. Over the course of several months, Scaling Fellows will receive first class training – for their personal up-skilling and development of their organization, such as pitching, optimising their business plan, and developing their own replication model.

"As one of the world's leading IT companies, focussed on Advancing What Matters, Atos wants to ensure access and inclusion through digital technology and culture change. That is why we support innovation at its basis: Founders and innovators often lack the means, connections and external support in order to succeed with the scaling of their promising innovation. With Zero Project Scaling Solutions we provide this essential support to innovation", says Neil Milliken, VP-Global Head of Accessibility & Digital Inclusion at Atos.

Personal Advisors, Alumni and expert networks to share experience for sustainable replication

Personal Advisors will guide the Scaling Fellows in finding and adopting sustainable ways to replicate their products and initiatives. An alumni-network will continue to support innovators and each other even after completion of the Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme. In addition, they will be connected with the vast global networks – including peers, potential partners and funders – of all four partner organizations.

Public seminars: vetted resources for disability inclusion

Starting in spring 2024, the Zero Project Scaling Solutions will continue its series of public seminars, in order to make valuable know-how on sustainable and effective disability inclusion accessible to a large number of organizations and companies worldwide. Carola Rubia Duran, Executive Director of Fundación Descúbreme: "At Descúbreme we do believe in sharing know-how with the world through scaling training. We should be able to reach everyone in order to increase innovation and readiness to the disability inclusion ecosystem."

For detailed information about Zero Project Scaling Solutions, please visit <https://zeroproject.org/network/zero-project-scaling-solutions>.



Zero Project

The Zero Project's mission is working for a world with zero barriers. Worldwide, the Zero Project finds and shares solutions that improve the daily lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities.

The Zero Project's approach is research-driven and aims to identify, curate, and share inclusive solutions, as intended and encouraged by Article 32 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In order to achieve this objective, the Zero Project engages with a worldwide cross-sectoral network of innovators, decision-makers, and opinion leaders.

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Fundación Descúbreme:

Fundación Descúbreme is a Chilean, non-profit organization with the mission to promote the inclusion of persons with cognitive disabilities in all areas of human development. To achieve this goal, Fundación Descúbreme works at different levels with private, public and civil organizations in order to guarantee that persons with disabilities fully enjoy their rights.

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Atos:

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with 107,000 employees and annual revenue of c. € 11 billion. European number one in cybersecurity, cloud and high-performance computing, the Group provides tailored end-to-end solutions for all industries in 69 countries. A pioneer in decarbonization services and products, Atos is committed to a secure and decarbonized digital for its clients. Atos is a SE (Societas Europaea) and listed on Euronext Paris.

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Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH:



The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is a federal enterprise with worldwide operations. GIZ supports the German Government in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and is also engaged in international education activities around the globe. GIZ assists people and societies in shaping their own future and improving living conditions.

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Inclusive Creation:

Inclusive Creation is a Norwegian consultancy firm that specializes in fostering inclusive and equitable workplaces through universal design and social innovation. We conduct participatory design workshops and innovation camps, generating impactful ideas centered on social change and universal design principles. Positioned as a beacon of empathy and innovation in the digital landscape, we redefine boundaries and amplify voices that deserve recognition. Actively incubating social start-ups and initiating digital transformation projects, we establish partnerships with social enterprises, becoming a pivotal strategic ally across private, public, academic, and civil society sectors in regional and national development efforts.

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