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Alpine Region Worth Living in: Digitalisation as the Key to Sustainable Tourism Development



Linz/Rosenheim (ots) -

The Alpine region is facing challenges from climate change and significant tourism pressure. A new project funded by the EU is investigating how digitalisation can contribute to making tourism more sustainable. With innovative approaches such as virtual avatars and interactive experiences, researchers from the universities of Linz and TH Rosenheim aim to develop new pathways for balanced recreation. Together with the local population, they strive for a future-oriented tourism model that protects both nature and the locals.

The Alpine region is under pressure. Climate change is taking its toll on nature here as well, and the immense popularity of the stunning landscape is a double-edged sword. Naturally, the region relies on tourism; many people depend on it, and locals also benefit from the expansion of leisure offerings and infrastructure. However, too many visitors burden nature, the environment, and communities alike, and the quality of experiences and recreation is declining.

It is time to leave the beaten paths and diversify the offerings. The role digitalisation can play in this is being examined in the project Alpine region worth living in. Funded by the EU, researchers from the universities of Linz and TH Rosenheim are simulating the tourism of the future. At the same time, they are developing concrete solutions and applications. For example, on the German side, the virtual avatar Maxi guides visitors through the exhibition on the salt pipeline in the town of Traunstein via mobile phone. The possibilities of Augmented Reality (AR) are far from being fully exploited but are set to revolutionise the entire sector soon, says Prof. Dr.-Ing. Andreas Straube, who leads the project at TH Rosenheim.

Digitalisation is the path from people to people, believes Irene Wögerer, the project leader at the University of Linz. The modern building on the outskirts of the city already hints from the outside that research into the future is taking place here. Large experimental series behind glass, small think tanks in sofa corners, and minimal walls. The architecture itself makes it clear that the view is unobstructed and holistic. The established tourism sector and its associations support these new pathways. It is accepted that the burden on the local population is high, sometimes too high, and thus everyone is pulling together, says Irene Wögerer. The goal: Balanced Tourism. Awareness has been raised, and now it is time to take the next steps and involve the local community.

Without the financial resources from the EU, this project would not be possible in its current form, emphasise all involved. The funder also allows for new formats for public participation in the project, so that at TH Rosenheim, project staff member Dr. Johanna Mahr-Slotawa has now started a research workshop with young people, collaboratively developing digital applications for cultural tourism in Traunstein. Sustainability works in the long term, but it must also be prepared accurately and, at times, painstakingly. Virtual avatars like Max are ready to soon present the history of their surroundings to locals and tourists in an entertaining and innovative way.

For more information about the project, please visit <https://lebenswerter-alpenraum.com>

Description of the project: Cohesion policy has defined clear objectives for the 2021-2027 funding period: A smart Europe through innovation, a greener, low-carbon Europe, a more connected Europe, a more social Europe and a Europe that is closer to its citizens. Sustainable challenges are becoming the focus of society, particularly in Germany and its neighbouring countries. The "EU4regions" project will produce high-quality multimedia and journalistic information on cohesion policy and then disseminate it widely. Within 12 months, Interreg projects from western and eastern Germany and neighbouring countries/regions will be presented to highlight local challenges. The countries concerned are Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. Our thematic focus is on sustainability, whereby we understand sustainability as a whole. Although climate issues are at the centre of attention, they are complemented by economic and social aspects. The aim is to show how EU cohesion policy affects regions and people.

EU4regions receives funding from the EU Commission.

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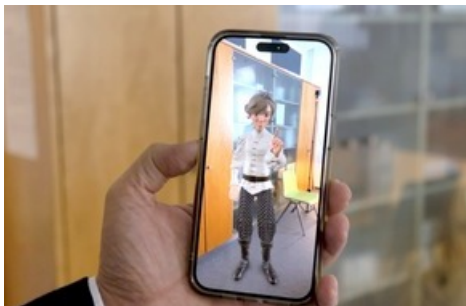
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The virtual city guide Maxi in the laboratory of the TH Rosenheim, Campus Chiemgau. / Photographer: EU4Regions / More information via ots and www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283 / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.



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