Digitalization makes new forms of cooperation possible. House of Digitalization and DIHOST are two examples of new solutions that link know-how carriers and companies. In times of the Corona crisis, they have proved particularly effective and were able to react quickly to new needs. There is a lot to learn from this for the time to follow as well.
Since the COVID-19 restrictions entered force, Essmeister has been working feverishly to bundle the capacities of the DIHOST consortium partners towards the realization of an application that can remedy this situation. The result is meinschaufenster.at, a free service that allows small and medium sized businesses to connect with customers directly through WhatsApp. The implemented technical solution allows access without previous knowledge and without a digitally recorded product catalogue. The retailer can show the prospective customer around the store using the camera from a smartphone or laptop and recommend products that suit customer needs, which are then shipped. Business people can decide for themselves how much time they want to spend on a call and how many salespeople they want to use at the same time with one mobile number.

“We set up the technical solution for this within six days, this is only possible in such a consortium”, reported Essmeister about the intensive time of development. Various scientific institutions have combined their strengths to achieve this. “FH St. Pölten contributed its know-how on digital media technologies, while IMC FH Krems is analyzing various payment models,” explained Essmeister. Nine programmers from FOTEC, the research subsidiary of the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt, were on duty almost around the clock for the operative implementation.

The House of Digitalization had also already done good preparatory work, which could be used in view of the corona measures. Particularly at the Wieselburg node, ideas and structures had emerged from the FH e-commerce study program which could now help. The head of the course, Rainer Neuwirth, founded myproduct.at which develops web shop solutions for customers in all industries. In addition, the munic-
The city of Wieselburg has launched a delivery service that provides free delivery for all goods ordered online at www.wieselburg-handelt.at.

**Course units for the time to follow**

The experience gained under these special circumstances should also be very useful for the time “following Corona”. “We, at ecoplus, have also switched to working from the home office and learned a lot. Many companies are currently experiencing such a learning effect,” said Zeppelzauer. That is Brandstetter’s assessment as well. “The way we work will change permanently because many companies are seeing how much they could actually handle online,” Brandstetter is convinced. This has numerous advantages. Many things can be done in less time and with greater efficiency. The CO₂ footprint is smaller as well. “This is a win-win situation because it addresses two key priorities of the innovation strategies at state and federal level: digitalization and greening,” said Brandstetter.

The House of Digitalization is particularly committed to this goal. The www.virtuelleshaus.at website will soon be relaunched. “It is a solution that is growing continuously and is very well accepted. More than half of the users are companies,” said Zeppelzauer. “The relaunch will build on this experience and optimize some functions.” The next stage of development will be a real House of Digitalization in Tulln, which is intended as a meeting zone and showroom for players of the digital transformation. It is in the planning phase at the moment. The aim is also to demonstrate the possibilities offered by digitalization for optimizing building technology and thus for the sustainable operation of such a building, as Brandstetter explained. However, the data exchange with the energy supply company required for this necessitated special attention to aspects of cybersecurity. “We are currently discussing this with industrial partners such as EVN or Verbund,” explained Brandstetter.

The fact that the network nodes, which have been set up, are already well established is demonstrated by the large number and variety of projects that have been launched by the network part...
Farming” or “Virtual Reality” for shop solutions. Meetings took place for example on “Smart people every time,” said Brandstetter. Such individual locations are attended by 50 to 60 specific projects,” Zeppelzauer added.

“In addition, we have launched a crowdsourcing campaign that has already resulted in ”consciousness“,” Essmeister added. In 2018, digital nodes were set up in St. Pölten, Krems, Tulln, Wieselburg, Klosterneuburg, and Wiener Neustadt, where specific competencies already existing in the state are bundled and networked with each other. The second step was to build a “virtual house” with ten levels. As a third step, a real house of digitalization will be built in Tulln by 2022.

Translating “Computer science” to plain English

Essmeister can only agree with this. “The language of computer scientists is the new Latin, which is only spoken by the class trained in it. This must be translated into a language that is understood in small businesses.” An example: If you tell a tiled stove builder about the “Internet of Things”, he won’t be able to visualize it’s relationship to his working world. “But if you explain to him that the aim is to get the temperature of the tiles to the residents’ smartphones, ten minutes later he will have three ideas on how to use it,” says Essmeister.

In order to use the expertise of the DIHOST consortium for the benefit of the regional economy, it was therefore important to find out what the companies really need. And that presupposed the creation of “awareness”. Essmeister toured all 23 Lower Austrian district offices of the Chamber of Commerce to create awareness and collect ideas. “In addition, we have launched a crowdsourcing campaign that has already resulted in specific projects,” Zeppealzauer added.

The topics that could be taken up are extremely varied. On the one hand, completely new formats of qualification and further training were created. The first block chain summit was held at the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences, which was attended by 60 companies. A summer camp is being organized at which mechatronics apprentices learn programming and teachers at building construction polytechnical colleges are trained in the field of Building Information Modelling (digital 3D models of buildings are created which can provide a consistent database from the planning to the management of a building).

Some more far-reaching technical solutions have also already been implemented. Together with the Food Cluster of Lower Austria, for example, a system for estimating the risk of late frost in viticulture has been established. The small-scale measurement of small weather data is carried out by sensors, the continuous data transmission is energy-saving via a Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN). Another project created a route optimization app for bakers.

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THE PROJECT

The “Digital Innovation Hub East Austria” (DIHOST) is one of three projects funded within the framework of the BMDW’s “Digital Innovation Hubs” call for proposals. DIHOST was commissioned by the Lower ecoplus Austrian Business Agency. In addition to the Province of Lower Austria, Burgenland and the business chambers of Vienna, Lower Austria, Burgenland and Upper Austria are also involved in the project. In terms of content, the company intends to focus on the priorities of 3D printing, blockchain & IT security as well as the Internet of Things, sensor technology & connectivity and has brought on board the expertise of the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences, IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems, Fotec, ABC Austrian Blockchain Center and Research Burgenland.

www.virtuelleshaus.at

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