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THI and KU receive 15 million euros for new alliance

Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt (THI) and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU) have been granted 15 million euros of funding for the next five years by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for their new initiative menschINBewegung (people on the move). The initiative is one of only 29 projects to receive funding through the German government's new innovative universities program. A total of 168 higher education institutions submitted 118 applications to the program. Fifteen of these applications came from institutions in Bavaria. The aim of the program is to strengthen the exchange between higher education institutions and players from business, culture, and civil society in order to stimulate innovation.



The launch for the menschINBewegung alliance in which researchers at Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt will investigate topics such as new forms of mobility and how well they are received: KU President Prof. Dr. Gabriele Gien and THI President Prof. Dr. Walter Schober take a look at a driving simulator at THI. (Photo: Klenk/Press Office)

‘We are proud that our joint application was successful. The KU and THI complement each other perfectly with their different strengths in technology, the humanities, and the social sciences. In our alliance we want to work on key topics that are crucial for the future of our region in collaboration with partners from business, civil society, and politics,’ THI President Prof. Dr. Walter Schober explains. ‘We see ourselves as a driving force for sustainable development in business and society, and we want to take on responsibility for the region,’ KU President Prof. Dr. Gabriele Gien

adds.

THI and the KU want to stimulate a wide-reaching and continuous dialogue in order to focus research and development more strongly on benefits for society as a whole and to make innovative ideas viable. In this way, businesses, the two institutions, and the general public will become co-producers of knowledge and innovation.

The project will be centered on four transfer clusters, each of which will focus on a specific topic that has an over-arching significance for the Ingolstadt region. The four clusters are:

Innovative mobility: In this area the two institutions aim to strengthen the inventiveness of one of the region's key industries, the automotive industry. To do this they will develop new mobility concepts with local companies and make them available to the general public. Alongside technical questions related to networked and automated driving, research in this area will also focus on the users' behavior and demands. In addition, the KU and THI want to identify the opportunities and risks that are associated with new forms of mobility and find out how well they are received by the public. In order to do so, engineers will collaborate with researchers from other fields such as psychology, sociology, and philosophy.

Digital transformation: The aim of this cluster is to strengthen the role of the KU and THI in digital learning. The two institutions want to provide learning opportunities and advisory services in the field of digital technologies for SMEs and members of the public, and to promote digital business models and start-ups in the region. They also aim to encourage an open and creative approach to using digital technologies. For example, in collaboration with civil society, researchers will investigate how digital media shapes public opinion on issues related to innovation.

Sustainable development: The KU and THI want to connect key players in the region with important initiatives at the state and federal level. The aim of this is to create awareness in local politics, business, and civil society of major topics such as the transition to renewable energy sources and dealing with climate change, and the resulting challenges for sustainable development in Ingolstadt and the wider region. This transfer cluster will include measures such as establishing regional sustainability standards, conducting studies on sustainable development in organizations, creating related professional development programs, designing new business models, and promoting start-ups.

Social engagement: The fourth transfer cluster will focus on the key questions of how the two institutions can help to increase the involvement of the general public in sustainable regional development and how the creative potential of civil society can be activated in order to increase quality of life and ingenuity. Plans include establishing a centralized point of contact where initiatives related to social engagement will be coordinated, introducing courses on the topic of knowledge transfer for students of both institutions, and developing specially designed advisory services and professional development programs that focus on the skills that are needed to promote and support social engagement. Researchers working on this cluster will also look at the engagement of children and young people in the region, and develop measures for teaching children about social responsibility in collaboration with partner schools.

The medium- to long-term goal of the *menschINBewegung* alliance is to establish a permanent network that will allow a continuous dialogue and transfer of ideas, knowledge, and technology to take place between the various parties who are involved. To achieve this, THI and the KU will develop a range of event formats that facilitate exchange between research, business, and society. In addition, they will set up a joint transfer office that will coordinate the activities that take place within the network. They will also make the results of the work that is carried out available to the

public. If the alliance proves to be successful, after the initial five-year funding period the two institutions plan to continue the alliance and expand the range of topics that are covered to include other areas such as health or demographics.

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