



## The Zero Project announces its 77 Awardees of 2025

*Vienna, Austria, December 3, 2024:* The Zero Project has announced the Zero Project Awardees 2025, centred around Employment, and ICT. 77 innovative solutions from 45 countries will receive a Zero Project Award at the Zero Project Conference 2025 in Vienna, Austria.

### **2025 Research Theme: Employment, and ICT**

The Zero Project is committed to supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), by researching, identifying, communicating, and supporting innovative solutions globally and across all sectors of society. This year's research cycle was dedicated to the themes of inclusive Employment, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

The CRPD emphasizes that persons with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others, as outlined in Article 27. This includes access to inclusive, accessible, and supportive employment opportunities without discrimination. The Zero Project's research has taken this commitment further, focusing on innovative solutions that address significant gaps in employment systems, which are critical for making inclusive employment a reality. These solutions address challenges such as transition models from education to employment, workplace accessibility, training for employers and colleagues, support for entrepreneurship, and technology-driven tools that enable full and equal participation in the labor market.

ICT has become very important for persons with disabilities. It is therefore addressed in each annual research cycle, identifying innovative solutions across a wide spectrum, such as Orientation Systems, Artificial Intelligence, and Computer Steering Technologies.

### **The Innovative Solutions of Awardees 2025**

From low-cost prosthetics to assistive technology accelerators, and from sign-language solutions to AI-based innovations; From women entrepreneurs to large company strategies, and from DPOs as facilitators for employment, to the Arts as job promoters, and employer certification initiatives – the Awardees 2025 provide a wide variety of innovative solutions, towards a world with zero barriers.

Please find the full list of Awardees on the Zero Project Website [zeroproject.org](https://zeroproject.org):

[Awardees 2025](#)

### **Global representation from all sectors of society**

The 77 Awardees come from 45 different countries and from all six continents, with Europe (27 Awardees), Asia & Pacific (18), North America (11), Latin America & Caribbean (8), Africa (10), and Australia & Oceania (3).

The countries with the highest numbers of Awardees are the United States of America (8); India, Austria, and Germany (4 each); Canada and China (3 each).

All awarded solutions are scalable, with many already operational in several countries. Notable additions to the geographical distribution are Guinea and Guyana, which are represented for the first time, and China joining the list of countries with the highest number of Awardees this year. Strategic partnerships of the Zero Project in South Asia and Latin



America have contributed to consistently significant numbers of cross-sectoral nominations and Awardees from those world regions.

## **Zero Project Research Process**

The Zero Project's annual research cycle is centred around four main areas of research: accessibility; employment; education; independent living and political participation. ICT-related innovations are specifically covered each year and receive dedicated attention within the Zero Project research cycle.

The Zero Project's research process is marked by its commitment to an extensive peer-review process and the three main criteria: innovation, impact, and scalability. Thanks to its vast global network, the Zero Project organizes a multi-step nomination, evaluation, and selection process, which culminates in the announcement of the annual Awardees. This year's selection process amounted to more than 300 hours of review, and the involvement of more than 350 experts with and without disabilities from around the world.

The Awardees receive the opportunity to showcase their innovative work at the Zero Project Conference 2025 and receive dedicated space in the annual Zero Project Report that will be shared online and in print with disability inclusion experts globally. In collaboration with partner organizations, the Zero Project operates initiatives and regionalised activities to enhance the Awardees' impact, such as the Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme, the Zero Project Technology Forum, and an Inclusive Arts Community.

## **Zero Project Conference 2025**

Following the announcement of the Zero Project Awardees 2025, the Zero Project will present and promote these during the invitation-only Zero Project Conference 2025 – #ZeroCon25 – at the United Nations Office at Vienna from March 5 to 7, 2025. For more information about #ZeroCon25, please visit: [zerocon25.zeroproject.org](https://zerocon25.zeroproject.org). More than 1,000 participants from 100 countries are expected to attend the conference in person, with many more joining online for livestreamed sessions, and on-demand content.

## **Quotes by Martin Essl and Michael Fembek**

### **1. On the topic of Employment**

**Martin Essl**, Founder of the Essl Foundation and the Zero Project:

"Employment is essential for ensuring equality and empowerment for persons with disabilities, and Zero Project Awardees are breaking down barriers to make inclusive employment a reality. Inspired by the CRPD, these awardees are developing solutions that address systemic gaps—whether through accessible digital training platforms, tools that help employers create inclusive workplaces, or assistive technologies that support persons with disabilities in their careers. Their work is a testament to the power of innovation in making employment truly accessible and inclusive for all."

**Michael Fembek**, Member of the Board of the Essl Foundation and CEO of the Zero Project:

"Zero Project Awardees are creating game-changing pathways to employment for persons with disabilities, advancing solutions that make workplaces inclusive, accessible, and supportive. From building ICT career paths for the deaf community and empowering young adults with paid internships, to government-led services that streamline accommodation requests, these innovators



are making inclusion a sustainable reality across sectors. By championing small organizations, establishing rigorous standards, and leading corporate inclusion strategies through DPO networks, our awardees are shaping a future where employment is truly accessible for all."

## **2. On the topic of ICT**

**Martin Essl**, Founder of the Essl Foundation and the Zero Project:

"Information and Communication Technologies play a vital role in disability inclusion for individuals' daily lives and self-determination. In this context, the Zero Project is delighted to present the exceptional solutions of our Awardees 2025. Each of these ICT innovations has proven its effectiveness. They are designed with scalability in mind and characterized by inclusivity."

**Michael Fembek**, Member of the Board of the Essl Foundation and CEO of the Zero Project:

"Zero Project Awardees are leading the way in harnessing ICT and AI to remove barriers and create opportunities for persons with disabilities across the globe. From developing digital training platforms that equip individuals with the skills needed for today's job market, to accelerating assistive technology innovations that make quality prosthetics affordable and accessible, these pioneers are changing lives. With Awardees tackling challenges across multiple domains—including real-time sign language support, accessible software for the blind, and devices geared towards persons with autism—we are seeing solutions that respond to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities. Their work is not just about technological advancement; it is about building an inclusive future where technology works for everyone."

### **About the Essl Foundation**

The Essl Foundation MGE gemeinnützige Privatstiftung is an Austrian Foundation established in 2007 by Martin and Gerda Essl, and their children, for social purposes and scientific research. Its mission is to support social innovation, social entrepreneurship and persons with disabilities.

### **About the 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, as intended and encouraged by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Contact:**

Judith Hermetter, Head of Communications  
[press@zeroproject.org](mailto:press@zeroproject.org)