

Press Release

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REMBRANDT, KLIMT & PICASSO FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Under the leadership of the AIT Center for Technology Experience, ten partners from Europe are working to provide older people with barrier-free access to museums, exhibitions, paintings and works of art using new technological ideas.

Physical impairments, limited mobility or poor eyesight, a stay in an old people's home or the need for care, a remote place of residence and no museum nearby – there are many reasons why older people are currently practically excluded from art and culture. Especially in the winter months, many older people are afraid to leave the house or injure themselves on icy paths.

This is where the [project BeauCoup](#) (Building Active User Experience to Bring Culture to the People), which is funded by the EU's Active and Assisted Living (AAL) programme, comes in. The aim is to give older people access to art and culture in an innovative way and with the help of new technologies – not in local cultural institutions, but where people aged 65+ live or spend time: At home, in retirement homes or even in senior citizens' clubs.

The target group is large: according to Statistics Austria, there are currently 1.78 million people aged 65 and over living in Austria alone (almost 20 per cent of the total population). "In this project, we want to give them all a new opportunity to discover art and culture for themselves and find their own personal, individual approach to art," says project manager Andreas Sackl, researcher at the AIT Center for Technology Experience. "Using a multi-sensory approach based on the needs of the target group, the aim is to enable older people to experience culture in a way that also promotes their cognitive abilities and interaction with other people," emphasises Sackl.

Three "toolboxes" for a wonderful "art experience"

In the BeauCoup project, three "toolboxes" were developed in close collaboration with the future users, some of which are based on the results of previous research projects by the individual partners: "The Bag", "The Box" and "The Screen". They offer different settings for barrier-free art experiences and wonderful art experiences.

"The Bag": The project developed its own specially designed "rucksack" with analogue and digital aids to help older people explore a city on their own. It includes tactile postcards, a tablet with special barrier-free functions, tactile reliefs and 3D-printed models. In addition, a mobile app offers content on different channels (e.g. audio descriptions or videos that can be customised to improve the video experience for visually impaired people) that provide interesting facts about the history, art and culture of a city and appeal to different senses.

"The Box": This collection includes analogue and digital tools that make it possible to experience art and culture on different themes and in different places. In addition, shared multisensory experiences under the guidance of experts give older people a completely new perspective on art and culture. For example, "The Box" allows people to read enlarged prints, experiment with taste and smell (e.g. "scent cards") and visit virtually curated pop-up exhibitions via tablet, which are supported by a sign language avatar. "The Box" also includes a tactile multimedia guide that allows users to experience interactive, multi-sensory content.

"The Screen": A special tablet app makes it possible to take part in themed tours of selected places and sights remotely. The app has an accessible and intuitive user interface that allows the 65+ target group to virtually take part in an interactive tour. Communication with the tour guide is just as possible as a lively exchange with other people.

Start of evaluation in March

With these three "toolboxes", an extensive study involving older people will be launched in March to test their usefulness and practical applicability. Around 200 people will take part across Europe. "Our aim is to work with older people to investigate how and whether this new type of art experience works in practice. We want to use new analogue and digital technologies to convey the joy and fun of art to senior citizens," says Andreas Sackl. Specifically, the tests will take place at the project partners' premises as well as in museums and retirement homes in Europe.

Funding:

The BeauCoup project is coordinated by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology. Partners from five different European countries are part of the consortium: in addition to AIT, the consortium includes the Hilfsgemeinschaft der Blinden und Sehschwachen, VRVis, NOUS and Sign Time (Austria), the University of Siena and the Fondazione Musei Senesi (Italy), the Terz Foundation (Switzerland), Santa Casa da Misericórdia Lisbon (Portugal) and Freelif (Slovenia). The project was launched in April 2022 and will run until autumn 2024; it is funded by the EU's Active and Assisted Living (AAL) programme. <https://www.beaucoup-project.eu/>

Age distribution Statistics Austria: <https://www.statistik.at/en/statistics/population-and-society/population/population-stock/population-by-age-/sex>

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