

Toyota Mobility Foundation and Partners Establish Digital Platform to Help Support People and Industry in Rural Germany

Toyota Mobility Foundation joins forces up with Eifelregion Bitburg-Prüm and other partners to launch platform to help local people in need

Use of smart technology to support current social issues in times of COVID-19 and beyond

Smart Village Platform "Eifelkreisverbindet.de" with "Lokalhelfer App" live "Ecoshare App" to follow

Bitburg, Germany – June 2, 2020 – The Toyota Mobility Foundation, the Rhineland-Palatinate Eifel district of Bitburg-Prüm and the Cologne-based Digital Innovation Lab Erlkoenig.io have joined forces to enhance people's lives and improve the competitiveness of industry in rural areas through digital solutions.

This initiative sets out to ensure the provision of basic services to the community, especially for older people and those with limited mobility. It aims to facilitate the supply to the regional economy of available labour, and to meet these goals, the TOYOTA MOBILITY FOUNDATION and its partners are developing a digital platform for networking the various players.

With 234 municipalities and towns, in a rural environment, the Eifel region of Bitburg-Prüm faces an ever-increasing challenge to ensure the comprehensive provision of basic services for the population. The Eifel region is representative of many rural regions in Germany and Europe that want to maintain good living conditions for their citizens and provide the framework for the further development of the local economy. This digital platform enables the region to play a pioneering role with the support of the TOYOTA MOBILITY FOUNDATION, and at the same time ensure that learnings and developments can also be shared with other regions.

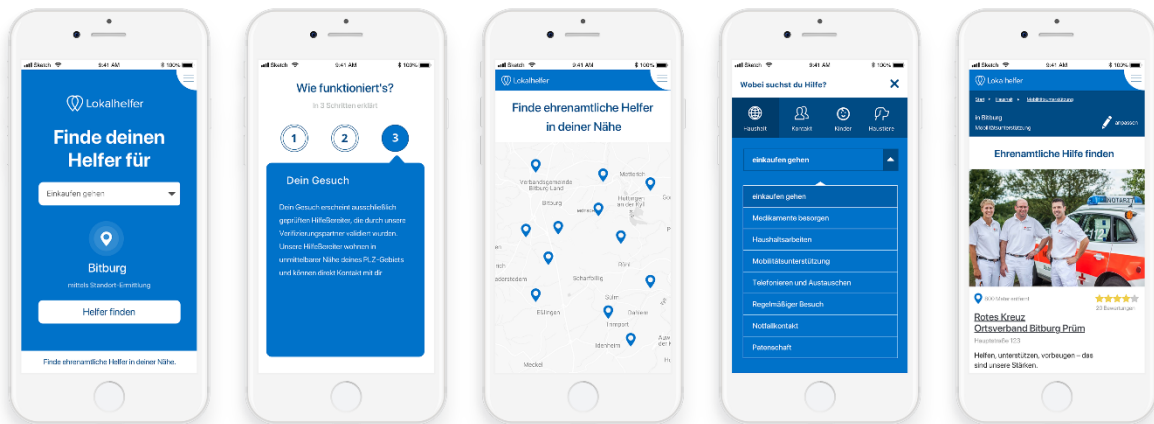
This joint undertaking with Bitburg-Prüm is the first stage in building a holistic Smart Village Platform (EifelkreisVerbindet.de) to serve the district. The platform, as envisaged by the partners, will integrate e-government, health services, utilities, and other regional functions up to innovative mobility solutions. While the initiative predates the COVID-19 outbreak, it meshes with current government efforts worldwide to lend assistance to individuals and businesses that are especially vulnerable and find it difficult to cope with the crisis. Following the launch, the project partners will evaluate the potential for extending their approach in Bitburg-Prüm to other regions to ease the COVID-19 crisis, but also maintaining the support after the pandemic.

Smart digital platform acts as a matchmaker

EifelkreisVerbindet.de, a smart matchmaking platform will be the initial service and is based on an algorithm which both matches and prioritises the services offered in relation to the proximity of the

'helpers' with those seeking help. A call center will support the platform with phone functionality, providing contact for people who lack smart phones or other internet connectivity. In addition, this central contact point can arrange for so-called "godparents" from one of the local associations or aid organisations who, among other things, offer voluntary tablet training for the older population groups.

The platform connects people who are willing to help with people in need from the surrounding area. Anyone who wants to help can register free of charge on the platform and indicate the activities in which he or she can support another person. If, for example, a person is looking for support in carrying a heavy shopping load, the platform will suggest the helper who can provide this help and who lives the closest. Services that are especially popular at the moment include providing support within the household, shopping or dog-walking, and anyone seeking assistance can search the services offered on the platform to find the right support depending on the type of help and distance.



EifelkreisVerbindet.de will augment its assistance for people in need by tapping into skills and capabilities available in the labour market. This includes mobilizing individuals who have lost their jobs on account of COVID-19.

The project partners will launch the initial service on June 1st 2020 with the launch of the "Lokalhelfer App", while the "Ecoshare App" will follow shortly. The DSGVO-compliant platform is a modular, scalable, open source development of individual smart linked services, which allows for an efficient further development of to a holistic regional ecosystem. The API-First, 100% open system approach, allows full cooperation with any other system. It can be used on any type of terminal device; the only requirement is a web browser. The service offerings will gradually be expanded in the following weeks taking user feedback into account.

Andy Fuchs, General Manager Toyota Mobility Foundation - Europe:

“We at the Toyota Mobility Foundation are proud to be undertaking this project with the district of Bitburg-Prüm, the local welfare organizations, and Erlkoenig.io. The first stage in the project will provide access to mobility for individuals who otherwise lack that access, and it will include measures for fulfilling industry’s productive potential in Bitburg-Prüm. We view this undertaking as a first step in a larger digitization strategy for underpinning the quality of life and optimizing industry in rural areas.”

Landrat Dr. Joachim Streit - Eifelkreis Bitburg - Prüm

We as the Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm have been dealing with the chances of digitalisation for rural areas for quite some time. With the launch of the platform "EifelkreisVerbindet.de" and the solutions of the "Lokalhelfer App" and the "Ecoshare App" contained therein, we can implement the first partial components of our district development concept and the associated strategy in the area of digitization for our district. Especially the "Lokalhelfer App" can help to support the high level of voluntary work and neighbourhood help, which already worked excellently in many of our local communities before the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, and to connect people and their help offers even better with each other".

About the Toyota Mobility Foundation

The Toyota Mobility Foundation was established in August 2014 to support the development of a more mobile society. The Foundation aims to support strong mobility systems while eliminating disparities in mobility. It utilizes Toyota’s expertise in technology, safety, and the environment, working in partnership with universities, government, non-profit organizations, research institutions and other organizations to address mobility issues around the world. Programs include resolving urban transportation problems, expanding the utilization of personal mobility, settling energy issues, and developing solutions for next generation mobility.