

Preliminary Report TAO-Project -- Collaboration Wikipedia- and Senior Communities in Switzerland

In the eve of the last general assembly in March 09 in Berne, Beat Estermann (BFH) submitted the idea to launch a cooperation among WM-Switzerland and the platform of Seniorweb.ch to promote e-Inclusion. Due to time limits, the issue couldn't be discussed. Some consultations in the aftermath of the GA showed however a certain interest for the issue in the WM-community (see my mail from 29/03/2009 and related responses). Beat Estermann und die BFH mandated me with a consultancy to verify premises and requirements for a project collaboration with WM-CH, Seniorweb.ch and WM-DE – the Community level – and to assist the BFH for the submission of a project proposal in the frame of the AAL-programme of the European Union (EU).

In 2008/09 there was a debate at Wikimedia-Germany how to include elderly people – the generation 50plus – who are not yet part of the community in its activities. The TAO-project wanted to link those debates and to initiate a model project between WM-chapters and senior communities – see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Generation_50plus/Projektideen.

As the AAL-TAO project proposal had to be submitted at the beginning of May 09, there was a need for clarification regarding community interests and their willingness to participate in and to contribute to the project – in case the project would be approved. In April 09, intensive talks were held among the potential community partners WM-CH, WM-DE und Seniorweb.ch, partly already with Seniorweb-NL. Manuel Schneider, Jürg Studer, Wolf Ludwig repeatedly met Beat Estermann and representatives of Seniorweb.ch in Berne. The consultations with WM-DE (Alice Wiegand, Sebastian Moleski and Frank Schulenburg from WP-Foundation) were done by Mail exchanges and phone calls. These talks showed a great willingness among partner representatives in such a collaboration; letters of intention for the creation of a project consortium were sent to the BFH. On 5 May the AAL-TAO proposal was submitted in due form and time.

In June 09, Beat Estermann and Wolf Ludwig met Sebastian Moleski and the new project collaborator for 50plus, Elvira Schmidt, from WM-DE in Basel. Goal of the meeting was a further exchange of information and clarification of modalities for a cooperation, in case the project would be approved. In summer 09 other meetings with seniorweb.ch and the President of WM-CH were conducted. To assure the participation of the Swiss community partners (not covered in the AAL-proposal) funding proposals were submitted to MIGROS-Kulturprozent (from BFH) and the Schweizer Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft (SGG).

The first informal responses from Brussels indicated decent chances for an approval. On 29 October 09, the AAL-TAO proposal was formally accepted. By this confirmation a major part of the project's research expenditures are covered, the funding of the community partners remains still uncertain. For further planning reasons, a meeting with the partners was convened in Berlin at the beginning of November 09. In the eve of this meeting the CH-community partners met again in Olten and Manuel Schneider with Wolf Ludwig in Basel. As decisions regarding our pending funding proposals (MIGROS-Kulturprozent and SGG) were not due before "spring 2010", Beat Estermann und Wolf Ludwig met with representatives of the Swiss OFCOM in Bienne to verify chances for an initial funding (Anschubfinanzierung) by the federal office. At this stage it became clear to the project coordinator (Beat Estermann) and the community partners that further preparations with the communities will be time consuming and cannot be done on a mere volunteer level any longer (organisation of meetings, briefings, get-togethers, events etc.). To avoid disparities at the start-up phase, a proposal for initial funding for the CH-communities was submitted to the OFCOM by Werner Affentranger and Wolf Ludwig in December. At the end of January, it was partly approved with minimal amounts but under the condition that "further funding is assured".

In January 2010, another planning meeting with the research partners, Seniorweb-NL, Senioweb.ch und WM-CH was organised in Berne. On 1 February, we had to learn that our first proposals for community funding were not approved by the institutions mentioned above – what makes new strategies and funding sources necessary. From the reservations and objections raised so far we can conclude:

- Further funding applications for the communities must be tailored down in smaller financial contributions;
- Community activities in the frame of the TAO-project need to be elaborated and described in details and in a replicable way;
- Without self-commitment and contributions (via donations) from the communities, it will be difficult to convince others for allocation of grants.

Our partner seniorweb.ch is on its way to launch an improved version of their platform offering better opportunities for regional and local community building and thus promoting collaboration and the TAO-project.

Next steps

Board and association of Wikimedia-Switzerland – if still interested in the TAO-project and participation of its community – need to discuss the following steps:

- Detailed briefing and discussion on the Board level (February/March),
- Creation of and mandate for a TAO-steering group (besides those involved already like MS, JS and WL and representatives from regional/local WM-groups and Board members / March).
- Briefing, in-depth discussion at and mandate from the next GA in April 2010,
- Launch of a donation campaign for the project (to generate the own funding share).

There are plenty of project-related documents available already (yet most of it in German). For any further information and briefings of Board and other members don't hesitate to contact me (wol.ludwig@comunica-ch.net).

Neuchâtel, February 2010 / Wolf Ludwig