

Zero Project International announces leadership transition

Anna Königseder and Robin Tim Weis will take over as Executive Directors; Michael Fembek transitions to President.

Vienna, April 16, 2026 — Zero Project International is entering a new chapter of leadership. Martin Essl has appointed Michael Fembek to the newly created role of *President Zero Project International*, where he will be responsible for the initiative's overarching strategic development. Effective 1 May 2026, Michael Fembek will hand over the operational leadership of Zero Project International to Anna Königseder and Robin Tim Weis, who will jointly serve as *Executive Directors*, leading all activities of the global platform.

Since its founding in 2008, Michael Fembek—working in close partnership with Initiator and Chairman of the Essl Foundation, Martin Essl—has built the Zero Project into a unique, cross-sector, and global platform. Its core focus remains innovation research and networking to advance the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

“The remarkable development of Zero Project speaks for itself — it is a testament to Michael's exceptional dedication and vision, which we are truly grateful for,” says Martin Essl. “With Anna and Robin, we are making the right choices for the future. I very much look forward to working with this new constellation in our leadership team as we continue to work with the growing Zero Project Network worldwide to achieve our shared mission of a world without barriers.”

Continuity and new perspectives

Founder Martin Essl will continue as Chairman of the Essl Foundation and Michael Fembek will retain his seat on the Essl Foundation's Board. Zero Project Inclusive Arts and Zero Project Austria will also continue to be led directly by Martin Essl. The transition is designed to ensure continuity of the Zero Project's core mission, while bringing renewed energy and new perspectives to the organization's expanding international activities.

“After 17 years of building the Zero Project from the ground up, this transition comes at a pivotal and energizing moment. The challenges ahead — in disability inclusion, in multilateral advocacy, in systems change — make the work of the Zero Project more necessary than ever,” says Michael Fembek. “I am delighted to hand over operational leadership to Anna and Robin, who bring exactly the skills, passion, and global perspective needed to shape the Zero Project's activities and its partnerships in the years to come.”

Anna Königseder has been part of the Zero Project team since 2019, most recently as Director of Business Partnerships and Operations. She brings professional experience from the private and industrial sectors in Austria and internationally, with a particular focus on operations, data-driven processes, and the integration of new technologies in line with the organization's mission. Anna Königseder has also played a central role in engaging the business sector in the Zero Project's research and global event formats, a dimension she will continue to develop as Co-Executive Director.

Robin Tim Weis joined the Zero Project in 2021 as Director of International Affairs. His background spans science diplomacy and international affairs, with experience in convening global stakeholders, translating complex policy into actionable initiatives, and building international partnerships in support of disability inclusion. In his new role, he will draw on these experiences to strengthen the Zero Project's international positioning and expand the reach of its global network and activities.

Cross-sector collaboration and partnerships

Under its new executive leadership team, the Zero Project will continue its close collaboration and continuous exchange with experts of the global and cross-sectoral network to inform its strategy and activities.

The Zero Project's annual research cycle will launch in May 2026 with a global call for nominations for innovative solutions related to the topics of Independent Living, Political Participation, and Assistive Technology.

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 International

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.

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