

**ud network report 01
Successful Kick-off:**

**ud-cologne: pretty&practical
„Universal Design and Demographical Change in Rhineland/ Germany“**

January 18th, 2010 **BestAge Consulting** started its interdisciplinary dialogue „**ud-cologne: pretty&practical**“ with an opening reception for representatives from economy, politics and society and the presentation of an universal design exhibition. Christiane Schwager and Klaus Strippel will continue the dialogue with further exhibitions, events and expert talks on the potentials of intelligent design. The aim is to build up an international network on universal design and to involve the municipal of Cologne into the national and international discourse about the impacts and chances of the demographic change.

The touring exhibition of the **International Design Center Berlin (IDZ)** is promoted by the **Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth** and the **Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology**. It was presented in Cologne from January 18th - 24th, 2010. With the integration in the official program of the design festival „PASSAGEN 2010“ the exhibition was put into a high-level design context.

The great success of the exhibition made obvious that „universal design responds to a worldwide intergenerational, comprehensive trend which connects service, usability, sustainability, aesthetics and social inclusion,“ **Christiane Schwager, BestAge Consulting**, stated when asked about the potentials of Universal Design.

Official partner for presenting the exhibition was **GALERIA Kaufhof GmbH**, one of the biggest department store chains in Europe which supplemented the exhibition with own in-house products. Galeria Kaufhof signed the „Berlin-Declaration“ for an active corporate engagement on the demographic changes under consideration of the potentials and interests of the older generation as well.

In front of seventy invited guests, **Dr. Norbert Walter-Borjans, Director of the Economic Development Department Cologne**, stressed in his opening speech the particular importance of the creative industry for the city of Cologne. Demographic changes offer an enormous chance to compete international successfully. This is especially true for the creative industry and a design of products which more strongly take into account the diversity of the potential users. Dr. Walter-Borjans: „Even if Cologne is still growing and - based on German average - has a comparatively young urban population, it is also true for us: We become older and more multiethnic.“

Lovro Mandac, Chairman of the Management Board of the GALERIA Kaufhof GmbH, put the meaning of functionality and design into the centre of his speech: „Humans who bought aesthetically beautiful products with 20 years of age will do that also with 40, 60 and 80 years.“ Instead of always developing new variations of existing products Universal Design offers the huge chance for companies to develop innovative product ideas which make life more comfortable even for older customers: We meet the demographic change with a holistic approach" , said Mandac. For this reason Galeria Kaufhof implemented the position of a demography-assigned representative within the company.

Aesthetics and quality were the key aspects of the engaged lecture of **Professor Caster, Dean of the Faculty for Architecture of Cologne Polytechnic:** „Universal Design needs to develop into an overall design requirement for organisation to be able to win the entire market through the quality of design.“

With this thought Caster turned against the term of "barrier freedom", „because this does not claim a quality standard. Just because something has no barrier doesn't mean it's really good.“ This statement surely would have been supported by most of the audience of the opening reception and the visitors of the exhibition in the following days.

Between 1.500 and 1.800 PASSAGEN visitors used the opportunity to visit the exhibits, to try out the products and discuss with the organizers. It proved right that the concept of taking the exhibition out of the special interest area and placing it into a top-class design context was a perfect step. Also **Marita Reinecke, Commissioner of the Handicapped of the City of Cologne** (left in the picture with Klaus Strippel, BestAge Consulting) supported the exhibition and was impressed by the appealing location and the well attended opening event. About 70% of the exhibition visitors were between 20 to 40 years old. A high number of them young designers who were impressed by the showcased products and concepts as well as convinced of the growth potential and creative possibilities of Universal Design.

And they did not stand alone:

Also seniors were impressed by the functional design of the exhibited products. At a panel discussion organised by Galeria Kaufhof Bettina Wegner, senior trainer (in the picture left with Annette Polster, Galeria Kaufhof) found clear words for her demand for more beautiful and practical products for all generations. Approximately 90 guests followed an invitation of Galeria Kaufhof Cologne to this panel discussion. Under the slogan „Stylish or embarrassing - Can products be attractive for all generations? ", Carola Ferstl, well-known nTV-moderator, discussed with **Stefan Koziol, Managing Director of koziol ideas for friends GmbH;**

Professor Martin Toppel, Bergische University of Wuppertal Industrial Design; Claudia Reinery, Member of the Management Board of GALERIA Kaufhof GmbH; Barbara Wegner as well as **Carla Otto** and **Lea Böhmer, Cologne International School of Design (KISD)** and owners of the KISDshop.

Among the guests were students and training bodies of the senior study of the University of Cologne, students of the Cologne Polytechnic, designers and design-interested from Cologne and the surrounding countryside. In the discussion Professor Toppel wanted to accept Universal Design only conditionally as a new design philosophy. He particularly hold manufacturers and dealers accountable („design answers to demand “). On the contrary, Carla Otto and Lea Böhmer declared universal design as „new, but interesting “. Bettina Wegner as a senior trainer criticized the frequently negative age picture of the society and stressed that good design determines purchase decision even of the older ones.

In the following days these and further topics were deepened with different participants. Under the slogan „Universal Design - does creative economy in the Rhineland miss a global trend?“ **Klaus Strippel, BestAge Consulting** discussed with **Iris Laubstein, Chairwoman of the German Industry Designer Association, Ioanna Paraskewa, owner of the CONTAIN Gallery Cologne** and **Konrad Peschen, Director for Creative Economy of the City of Cologne** about possibilities to better integrate Universal Design in the creative economy. Apart from concrete ideas for further events and expert talks it was discussed under the topic „training “ to bring Universal Design and demography also to schools and universities.

This proposal was as well integrated in the UD-dialogue on Thursday: „Walk in the shoes of your customer - Universal Design as trend for service and communication design? “ **Professor Birgit Mager, Head of the Service Design Department of the Polytechnic Cologne** and foundress of the service design research center “sedes research” and **Andrea Fergner Heiter, demography-assigned for GALERIA Kaufhof GmbH**, took up the question in order to discuss innovative services and service offers.

There was a consent between the participants that there is a clear intersection between universal design and service design – nevertheless a field with little research yet.

With the topic “serious games” BestAge Consulting entered new ground in the UD-discourse. Christiane Schwager opened the dialogue with **Roland Weininger, Deputy Chairman of the SME Federal Association of the Creative Economy „KulturGilde “**, over the topic „Technical solutions for challenges of the future - Universal Design as innovative driver for ICT and health economy “. Weininger, expert for silver games and initiator of a pre-congress to the

3. Ambient-Assisted-Living-congress, reported of current trends in the serious games segment, which also increasingly places older target groups into the focus.

At the last day housing was the main topic: „Living, how I want - flexible homes for each life phase! “. **Michael Krumbé, Architect** and expert for generation living, presented his successful concept „chosen neighbours “ and discussed with Klaus Strippel and guests the substantial difficulties to find suitable apartment and house objects in the Cologne city centre - despite a huge demand for it. The housing topic will also be taken up in the ud-dialogue 2010, with a focus on intelligent homes and secure living in older age as well.

Outlook

BestAge Consulting will continue the dialogue „**ud-cologne: pretty&practical**“ in the course of this year with further meetings, forums, workshop discussions and courses of lectures. The goal is to discuss with participants from different industries against the background of the demographic changes, to exchange experiences and learn from best practice examples. Topics will be: products & packing, services, communication & marketing, architecture & town planning, ICT, tourism & mobility, cultural offers & lifelong learning. Interest public as well as specialist are invited to bring themselves actively into the dialogue and take part in the UD-network in North Rhine Westphalia/Germany.

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