

Markus Assfalg has been the Director of the Business and Economic Development Division at the Office for Economy and Labour of the Canton of Zurich since 2009.



Biomimicry and Zurich go together

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The Canton of Zurich is sponsoring the Biomimicry Europe Summit, which will take place in the beginning of September in Zurich. Markus Assfalg, in charge of Business and Economic Development at the Office for Economy and Labour of the Canton of Zurich, hopes that the summit will provide new momentum to the different clusters in Zurich. The subject could one day even find a place for itself in the planned National Innovation Park.

Why is the Canton of Zurich supporting the Biomimicry Europe Summit?
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Markus Assfalg:

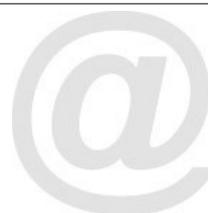
Biomimicry is a promising subject for Zurich. It's about sustainability, but also about new technologies such as 3D printing. As you may know, we're also planning a national Innovation Park, and we would like to place the Zurich hub in Dübendorf.

Where are there links to the business sectors that are important for Zurich?

Assfalg:

There are links in the IT sector, in medical technology, and in 3D printing. There is also the financial centre, which is one of the most important clusters here in Zurich. But the financial industry needs to develop new services, and subjects such as biomimicry could help in this regard. We've defined six clusters for Zurich, and their participants can easily connect with each other across cluster boundaries.

What role do the universities in Zurich play?



Assfalg:

They play a very important role. In addition to conducting basic research, they bring their research results into the economy as a whole in the form of spin-offs and various collaborations. The ETH Zurich is the best university on the continent, attracting entrepreneurs and companies alike.

Is the focus of your clusters on existing companies, start-ups or foreign companies that have relocated to Zurich?

Assfalg:

All of these elements are important to us. We don't promote individual companies but instead work towards creating good conditions for everyone.

Which are the most dynamic clusters?

Assfalg:

Definitely the creative industries and ICT clusters. With respect to life sciences, Zurich specialises in medical technologies, and this is also developing in a very dynamic manner. One of our flagship projects is the planned Innovation Park, and I can easily imagine activities related to biomimicry finding a place there.

What will the Innovation Park focus on subject-wise?

Assfalg:

Part of this will be decided on a political level, and I can't yet predict what the results of this process will be. But it will most likely include subjects such as sustainability, life sciences, health, medical technology and information technology. The process of choosing who can be in the Innovation Park will be very difficult, and whoever wants to be in has to be innovative and marketable. This will likely be decided on by a panel of experts.

The Innovation Park is a long-term project for Zurich, which has a strong emotional attraction and also inspires an entrepreneurial spirit. The ETH will certainly be at the core of this.

From Zurich to the Biomimicry Summit: It will be jointly organised by partners in Europe and the United States. How important is this type of collaboration?

Assfalg:

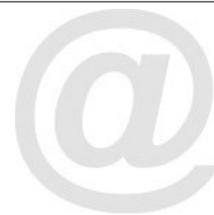
Very important. You can't get very far these days without international cooperation. Added value is no longer found in just one location. The same holds true for our cluster approach. Of course our main purpose is to create jobs and added value in Zurich, but the companies here have to network internationally, too.

Zurich already has a range of such partnerships, including one with Chongqing in China. In the field of biomimicry, we have partnerships with the zoos in Zurich and San Diego

But we're also always on the search for such partnerships on a national level, for example like we have with swisscleantech in the cleantech industry. It's all about networks and networking, especially in a location like Zurich where

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SMEs play a central role. 98 per cent of the 108,000 companies in the canton are SMEs.

What do you hope to get out of the biomimicry summit?

Assfalg:

We hope to make new contacts and establish new projects that we can work on together. The summit also opens up networking opportunities for entrepreneurs.

We will also showcase Zurich as a location with its high concentration of businesses and universities and its outstanding quality of life. This will be the second Biomimicry Summit in Zurich, and it would of course be nice if there would be a third and a fourth.

I'm also excited about the Da Vinci Index

, which was developed by

Point Loma University

in San Diego. I can imagine that it could even be used for our cluster approach in a methodical manner.

Biography

Markus Assfalg has been the Director of the
Business and Economic Development Division
at the

Office for Economy and Labour of the Canton of Zurich

since 2009. The Canton of Zurich is one of the partners of the Biomimicry Europe Innovation and Finance Summit, which will take place in Zurich on September 4 and 5.