

## **Boosting SME adoption of exoskeletons in construction and manufacturing industries**

- **As many as 44 million workers in the European Union (EU) are affected by workplace-related musculoskeletal disorders**
- **Exoskeleton use could alleviate 10-40% of muscle peak loads for passive exoskeletons and up to 80% for active**
- **The EXSKALLERATE project will increase the adoption of exoskeletons by the manufacturing and building industry. This will reduce occupational health issues and enhance SME competitiveness in the North Sea Region while creating a worldwide leading exoskeleton ecosystem**

*Barcelona, May 6, 2020.* A new initiative aims to accelerate the adoption of exoskeletons into construction and industrial manufacturing SMEs across Europe's North Sea Region. EXSKALLERATE, which launched in January, will over the next three years enhance SME competitiveness and occupational health by transforming the North Sea Region into a leading exoskeleton ecosystem.

As many as 44 million workers in the European Union (EU) are affected by workplace-related musculoskeletal disorders. Exoskeletons have the capacity to decrease the number of musculoskeletal injuries and increase quality of life at work, thereby reducing costs for a company in the long run.

Manufacturing and construction workers, in particular, undertake physically strenuous activities which increase their risk of health problems, disability and sick leave. This leads to lower job attractiveness and job candidate scarcity, resulting in unfilled job openings that slow growth and competitiveness. This is particularly true for many SMEs in the North Sea Region, who are unaware of available solutions via exoskeleton adoption as solution developers tend to target large corporates.

EXSKALLERATE aims to tackle these issues by focusing on boosting SME adoption of exoskeletons in the construction and industrial manufacturing industries, where heavy physical work leads to severe health issues. According to research conducted by the EXSKALLERATE partners, exoskeleton use could alleviate 10-40% of muscle peak loads for passive exoskeletons, and up to 80% for active.

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***“People have to work for longer periods in our ageing society. We strive to help people in the manufacturing and building industries to do that in a healthy and happy way by accelerating the uptake of exoskeletons. Once established in these industries, we expect that other industries, such as logistics and agriculture, will follow rapidly”*** says Anton Duisterwinkel, coordinator of EXSKALLERATE at InnovationQuarter.

The consortium of business support organisations, clusters, and research institutes from the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden, will co-design field labs according to the main SME challenges identified, where next-generation exoskeletons integrate improvements. The partners will also host several informative workshops for SMEs where exoskeleton experts will present tools to support SME decision making in exoskeleton adoption, a key challenge limiting current adoption.

EXSKALLERATE, co-funded by the Interreg North Sea Region Programme 2014 - 2020, welcomes construction and industrial manufacturing SMEs to get involved and reap the benefits of exoskeletons.

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### **More information**

Website: <https://northsearegion.eu/exskallerate/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/exskallerate>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/exskallerate>

The EXSKALLERATE partnership of 6 NSR countries:

- **The Netherlands:** InnovationQuarter, TNO Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, University of Twente
- **Belgium:** VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), KUL (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), POM - West Flanders
- **Germany:** MoWiN - Regionalmanagement Nordhessen, HAWK University of Applied Sciences and Arts,
- **United Kingdom:** Construction Scotland Innovation Centre, Edinburgh Napier University
- **Sweden:** University of Gävle
- **Denmark:** Aalborg University, Centre for Information Technology and Architecture (KADK)

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