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## **Allianz Worldwide Partners rides digital wave to expand insurance footprint**

Allianz Worldwide Partners Group, an insurance subsidiary of Allianz Group, is taking advantage of China's economic and digital transformation to quicken its expansion in the Chinese mainland, the company's top management said.

The French company, which specializes in assistance and insurance solutions in road rescue, care and automotive, is betting on the great opportunities brought by China's fast digitization, according to Christophe Aniel, CEO of AWP Greater China.

Sylvie Ouziel, the company's Group CEO for Assistance, who is also responsible for the Asia-Pacific region, said, "It is very easy to build a profitable business in China but hard to continue. You have to keep on renovating to keep up with latest advances in the industry."

According to AWP Group's annual report for 2016, the company launched some 20 new apps in areas such as travel, roadside assistance and health across nine countries and three lines of business, in order to grasp the business opportunity brought by digitization.

"China is one of its most targeted markets," Aniel said.

Ouziel said that driven by technological innovations and new customer behaviors, the assistance industry has definitely changed.

"Facing the new challenges brought by cyber risks, our company is working closely with major partners from the mobile device and online retailer sectors, such as Huawei, to help better protect customers' digital life," said Ouziel.

She said, "These partnerships materialize our positioning in this market, offering Chinese consumers access to more comprehensive online protection."

Three months earlier, it introduced Cyber Shield, a solution combining insurance and services, helping consumers lower their digital risks as much as possible.

Specifically, it offers five fields of expertise—online shopping, online banking, e-reputation and cyber-bullying, data recovery and legal advice, all key concerns of Chinese consumers.

Meanwhile, the Belt and Road Initiative and the country's tightened regulation in the financial sector are seen as potential new opportunities.

"We are partnering with economies related to the Belt and Road Initiative on corporate risk, liability, property, and health sectors, to assist Chinese customers along the route by offering local services," said Aniel.

"In our business plan to 2020 around 30 percent of business will be related with the cross-border business on "One Road One Belt" initiative, and digitalization."

During the two-day National Financial Work Conference held in July, President Xi Jinping underscored the importance of tightened regulation to prevent systemic risk in the financial sector.

The China Insurance Regulatory Commission, for instance, recently issued a note on the motor insurance sector, further regulating the market by forbidding cash-equivalent discounts while allowing value-added services like roadside assistance in insurance policies.

"This new regulation demonstrates the value of roadside assistance, which is one of the core businesses of us in Greater China. And we believe it will bring positive impact on our business growth," said Aniel.

According to the company's annual report, AWP Greater China's revenue was roughly 215 million euros (\$257 million) last year, up 25 to 30 percent year-on-year.

**Sources: By Hu Yuanyuan and Zheng Yiran | China Daily |**