venture kick supported start-ups created over 1600 new jobs

venture kick donated nine million Swiss francs within the last five years to 247 start-up projects from Swiss universities. And the success is there: the funded start-ups generated about 1600 new jobs and a financing volume of CHF 300 million that contributed directly as added value to the Swiss economy.

St. Gallen/Zurich/Lausanne, 26th of September 2012. - The privately funded initiative venture kick, which supports innovative start-up projects with up to CHF 130’000, celebrates its birthday. Five years ago, a jury pool of investors and experts met for the first time to carefully evaluate promising business ideas from Swiss universities. The balance sheet is impressive: so far, 247 projects have benefited from more than 9 million CHF. Their corporate valuation already exceeds the mark of a billion CHF.

At inception, the business idea is often there, but what is still missing for many venture entrepreneurs, is the necessary start capital. venture kick was launched five years ago as a privately funded initiative in order to “give fuel” to innovative projects. Set up as a pre-seed fund, it was initiated by the Gebert Rüf Stiftung, the ERNST GÖHNER STIFTUNG, joined by the OPO-STIFTUNG and the AVINA STIFTUNG. In recent years, Lombard Odier Fondation as well as Debiopharm Group, the first private enterprise to act as a sponsor, also joined the circle of donors. IFJ Institut für Jungunternehmen has the mandate of operational management. On September 26, the 5 year anniversary will take place at the “Härterei Club” to celebrate the success of the initiative. Prior to the event, a media roundtable on the topic of startup promotion in Switzerland compared to international examples will be held.

The objective is to double the number of spin-offs at universities

Each month, eight projects get the chance to present themselves to a jury. The four most promising receive CHF 10’000 and automatically qualify for the second round held three months later, where the two best teams receive another CHF 20’000. In the third and final round, taking place six months later, the winner is granted CHF 100’000. Through this process, two million Swiss francs are invested “à fonds perdu” each year in around 50 innovative start-up projects. The privately funded initiative aims to double the number of spin-offs by speeding up the founding process and turning start-ups to be more attractive for investors.

Already more than CHF 9 million start-up capital distributed

Since the launch of venture kick on September 26, 2007, 247 project teams have benefited from more than CHF 9 million. It contributed to the creation of more than 1600 newly created jobs and a financing volume of around CHF 300 million. These results show that this approach offers a great return for the Swiss economy and its enterprises. Thanks to venture kick, start-ups learned how to win customers and convince investors more rapidly. Are eligible all young talents with innovative ideas, which have not yet founded their company and are enrolled or employed at a Swiss University: students, postgraduates, researchers and professors.
Today a cornerstone of the Swiss startup scene
“The consortium of foundations which initiated and supports the initiative is only investing private funds. It can therefore afford to promote the most promising projects by also taking high risks. Our success confirms this strategy”, says Pascale Vonmont, board member of the strategy committee of venture kick and deputy director of the Gebert Rüf Stiftung. venture kick supports projects from various high tech fields: from medical technology and biotechnology, clean tech to ICT. But with Aiducation International and BOOKBRIDGE having received the full 130’000 Francs, it also shows that projects of social entrepreneurs belong to the winners. From 1000 applications received since September 2007, a third comes from candidates of ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne. The rest is distributed to over 20 Swiss universities. Projects from the ICT sector are submitted the most.

The “Initial spark” and the correct “kicks” towards success
Many of the previous “venture kickers” see the program as an initial spark for their company, such as Mathias Hausmann, co-founder of Uepaa which sells an emergency app for alpinists: “Without venture kick I certainly wouldn’t be where I am today with my company, venture kick was instrumental towards launching the company and successfully funding it.” Numerous start-up companies that now belong to the “big players” in the start-up scene have benefited from the pre-seed capital and the boost of “kickers camp”, such as HouseTrip (Europe’s leading web site for vacation rentals), Climeworks (filtering of CO2 to produce fuel), or Lemoptix (developer of the world’s smallest micro projectors). This success is reflected in the current TOP 100 Swiss startup list: 48 are venture kick supported start-up.

The potential of the universities is still not fully exploited
The work of venture kick has borne fruits in the past five years. However, an unbelievable potential is still to be found in the laboratories and students of Swiss universities. Not the lack of ideas, but the scarce resources and adequate “kicks” are the limiting factor to fully promote all potential entrepreneurs and their good-quality projects. Further foundations and companies that want to engage in innovative start-ups and the development of the Swiss economic location are therefore welcome. The program managers Jordi Montserrat (Romandie) and Beat Schillig (German speaking Switzerland) are convinced: “Despite the already remarkable success of the projects supported by venture kick, we’re just at the beginning. Many of these award-winning young enterprises are starting to grow rapidly, and they will create thousands of high-quality and sustainable jobs in Switzerland. We are looking forward to the next five years!”

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Selection of supported start-ups

- Bettina Ernst, Preclin Biosystems, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.preclinbiosystems.com
- Manuel Aschwanden, Optotune, ETH Zürich (Optics), www.optotune.ch
- Patrizia Fischer, Pearltec, ETH Zürich (Medtech), www.pearltec.ch
- Martin Bartholet, Celeroton, ETH Zürich (Electronics), www.celeroton.ch
- Marc Gitzinger, BioVersys, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.bioversys.com
- Sadik Hafizovic, Zurich Instruments, ETH Zürich (Electronics), www.zhinst.com
- Wolfgang Moritz, InSphero, Uni Zürich (Biotech), www.insphero.com
- Stefan Tuchschmid, Virtamed, ETH Zürich (Medtech), www.virtamed.com
- Stephane Doutriaux, Poken, IMD Lausanne (Electronics/Internet), www.poken.com
- Jochen Mundinger, RouteRank, EPF Lausanne (Internet), www.routerank.com
- Vincent Schickel, Prediggo, EPF Lausanne (Internet), www.prediggo.com
- Florian Kowalke, Aducation International, ETH Zürich (NPO), www.aiducation.org
- Benoît Dagon, Imina Technologies, EPF Lausanne (Nanotech), www.imina.ch
- Ralph Schiess, ProteoMediX, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.proteomedix.ch
- Christof Roduner, Mirasense, ETH Zürich (Internet), www.mirasense.com
- Christoph Gebald, Clemworks, ETH Zürich (Cleantech), www.clemworks.com
- Michael Dupertuis, Geroco, HES-S0 Valais (Cleantech/Internet), www.geroco.com
- Marcus Aebi, Malcibo, ETH Zürich (Biotech), www.malcibo.com
- Jean-Christophe Zufferey, SenseFly, EPF Lausanne (Electronics), www.sensefly.com
- Alfredo E. Bruno, Advanced Osteotomy Tools, Uni Basel (Medtech), www.aot-swiss.com
- Francesco Dell’Endice, QualySense, Uni Zürich (Industry), www.qualysense.com
- Nicolas Durand, Abionic, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.abionic.com
- Thorsten Schwenke, ZHAW, Thekin (Electronics/Medtech), www.theokin.com
- Martin Odersky, Scala Solutions Sàrl, EPF Lausanne(ICT), www.scalasolutions.com
- Susanne Wechsler, Uni St. Gallen, BOOKBRIDGE (Social), www.bookbridge.org
- Dominik Bell, Aeon Scientific, ETH Zürich (Medtech), www.aeon-scientific.com
- David Bonzon, Pandora, EPFL (Electronics), www.pandora-uwe.com
- Amin Shokrollahi, Kandou Technologies,EPF Lausanne (ICT), www.kandou.com
- Nils A. Reinke, Winterthur Instruments, ZHAW (ICT), www.winterthurinstruments.com
- Timo Hafner, Gastros AG, Uni St. Gallen(Food / Materials), www.gastros.ch
- Andreas Brühlhart, Bcomp, Hochschule für Wirtschaft Freiburg (Materials), www.bcomp.ch
- Matthias Haussmann, Uepaa, ETH Zürich (ICT / Mobile), www.uepaa.ch
- Serguei Okhonin, ActLight, EPF Lausanne (Energy), www.act-light.com
- Andreas Graber, UrbanFarmers, ZHAW (Cleantech), www.urbanfarmers.ch
- Ricardo Beira, DistalMotion, EPF Lausanne (Medtech), www.distalmotion.com
- Olivier Küng, Pix4D, EPF Lausanne (ICT / Multimedia), www.pix4d.com
- Emile de Rijk, SWISSsto12 EPF Lausanne (Electronics), www.swissto12.ch
- Daniel Lepori, Designery SA, SUPSI/ISAAC (Energy), www.designery.ch
- Yann Tissot, L.E.S.S – Light Efficient SystemS SA (Energy), www.less-optic.com

Complete list of the start-up projects of venture kick: www.venturekick.ch/startups