Media Release

3 startups, 3 regions, 390,000 Swiss francs for a ‘historic’ final

St. Gall / Zurich / Lausanne, May 23, 2017 – For the first time in ten years, Venture Kick selected three startups instead of two at its latest final. The ‘historical triple kick’ of CHF 390,000 (CHF 130,000 for each startup) was given to MaxWell Biosystems from ETH Zurich, Darix from EPFL Lausanne and BeeHelpful from Ticino. The winners come from the three bigger regions of Switzerland, illustrating the national reach of Venture Kick. Since January, Venture Kick already granted CHF 1,1 million in cash to 45 projects, out of CHF 3 million total support to be invested in 2017. This leaves CHF 1,9 million to be invested until end of year in our country’s best startup projects.

MaxWell Biosystems (ETHZ), Darix (EPFL) and BeeHelpful show the outstanding quality of Swiss startups, which Venture Kick aims to turn into thriving businesses. They developed products and services ranging from a platform to accelerate drug discovery against neurodegenerative diseases to a lifesaving augmented reality system to empower firefighters during rescue missions, or a novel hive to stop the dying honeybee issue:

MaxWell Biosystems: Assessing clinical potential of drugs to fight brain diseases more efficiently

The technology developed by the ETH-spinoff MaxWell Biosystems provides unprecedented live-cell imaging, enabling researchers to drastically shorten the process of characterizing the function of every cell from several months to a few weeks. With ‘MaxOne’, their first product brought to market, MaxWell aims to support the advance neuroscience research and accelerate drug discovery, which will also contribute to a significant reduction of animal usage. During the Venture Kick program, MaxWell incorporated the company, launched the commercialization of MaxOne, and made its first sales in several European countries and Japan to customers such as the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research or the Danish Research Institute of Translational Neuroscience of the Aarhus University. As recent winners of the venture leaders Life Science prize, they will be part of the Swiss National Startup team flying to Boston in June to meet investors and business experts to further advance their expansion in the US and international markets. ‘Thanks to the extensive experience of the Venture Kick team, they efficiently helped us to focus on developing our business and get things moving fast’, says Urs Frey, co-founder and CEO of MaxWell Biosystems. ‘And the intensive kickers camps turned out to not only be intense work, but a lot of fun, too.’

External links:
Website of MaxWell Biosystems
Darix: What if you could see the invisible?

Darix’s augmented reality solution, ‘Vizir’, allows firefighters to see through smoke and better understand their environment. Vizir comes with a mini infrared camera and transparent screen installed in the oxygen mask, providing firefighters with two images in their field of view: what their eyes see – which can be close to nothing in extreme condition of firefighting, and what the thermal imaging camera records and displays in real time – which enables to see what was previously invisible. The patent pending augmented vision solution increases the firefighters' safety and allows them to be much more efficient, enabling shorter intervention times and lowering fire and water damages. The system was ergonomically designed with Swiss firefighters. Darix has already sold pilot projects in Switzerland and attracted strong interest from the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. The product launch is planned for early next year. The EPFL startup aims to develop more augmented reality applications for professionals. ‘Winning the 3rd stage of Venture Kick will really kick us forward. The powerful mix of financial support and coaching at the kicker's camps have accelerated us in a massive way, and will definitely give us an even bigger boost for the future!’ says Martijn Bosch, co-founder and CEO of Darix.

External links:
- The technology of Darix in video
- Website of Darix

BeeHelpful: Solving the dying honeybee issue

The current world’s honeybee crisis affects agriculture as well as the economy. Because of diseases, parasites and pesticides bees are dying and the human food chain production is at risk. The Lugano based startup BeeHelpful designs, produces and sells new bee hives and bee managing solutions, which can help beekeepers and governments solve the dying honeybee issue. Their product, a new hive solution called ‘PrimalBee System’, induces new advantages to honeybee colonies. It also means less effort for bee owners and results in cost savings. To grow new bee generations, it requires thermal energy. Whereas in conventional hives the thermal energy loss is enormous, the new hive tunes the thermal control. BeeHelpful’s patented solution went through field tests in Switzerland, Italy and Israel and it is now going to be tested in the USA. In June 2017, they’re going to start the hive series production. Gianmario Riganti, co-founder and CEO of BeeHelpful, is very happy about the great achievement: ‘Venture Kick’s support is fundamental for BeeHelpful to scale up on the next year providing then an advantaging solution for the worldwide food chain’.

External links:
- Profile of BeeHelpful
About Venture Kick

The philanthropic initiative Venture Kick provides up to CHF 130,000 to seed stage startups. On top, it offers a well-structured entrepreneurial path towards building a winning business. Startups present in front of a jury at three stages to obtain funding as well as direct feedback and access to an international network of successful entrepreneurs and investors.

Since 2007, 463 Swiss startup projects have received CHF 19,750,000 from Venture Kick. This resulted in 303 active companies with 3,881 jobs. Startup companies supported by Venture Kick attracted CHF 1,347,000,000 from investors so far. And 54 startups from Venture Kick made it into the TOP 100 Swiss Startups 2016. In 2017 Venture Kick will pay out CHF 3,000,000 to idea-stage startup projects to bring Swiss science to global markets. More: Venture Kick annual report 2016.

The Venture Kick Foundation is supported by Gebert Rüf Stiftung, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Fondation Lombard Odier, Debiopharm Group, Fondation Pro Techno, Rising Tide Foundation, European Space Agency, Engagement Migros, Swisscom, André Hoffmann, Hansjörg Wyss and Martin Haefner.

www.venturekick.ch

All startup projects supported by Venture Kick: www.venturekick.ch/startups
Follow the success stories of our Venture Kick Alumni on Facebook, Twitter und LinkedIn.

Contact

German-speaking Switzerland:

Beat Schillig, Co-Managing Director, +41 (0)79 358 04 19, beat.schillig@venturekick.ch
Tsering Ngorkhangsar, Media and Com, +41 (0)79 655 63 72, tsering.ngorkhangsar@venturekick.ch

Romandie:

Jordi Montserrat, Co-Managing Director, +41 (0)78 708 18 04, jordi.montserrat@venturekick.ch
Lara Rossi, Media and Com, +41 (0)79 425 13 26, lara.rossi@venturekick.ch