

PRESS RELEASE

SWITZERLAND INVITES INTERNATIONAL STARTUPS TO DISRUPT KEY INDUSTRIES

Kickstart, one of the largest multi-corporate accelerators, officially launches its second cohort with the inclusion of new regions and verticals

ZURICH, 1 February 2017 – Kickstart Accelerator, one of Europe's largest multi-corporate, zero-equity technology accelerators and an initiative of digitalswitzerland, has today announced that applications are open to international startups for its second programme, predominantly based out of ewz-Unterwerk Selnau, the old transformer station in center of Zurich.

Kickstart Accelerator will select a shortlist of up to 30 startups who will participate in an 11-week programme designed to help them develop their ideas and products across one of the programme's verticals; Food, FinTech, Smart Cities and Robotics & Intelligent Systems. In order to tap into the unexplored innovation potential, Kickstart Accelerator has entered into a partnership with BaseLaunch (initiated and operated by BaselArea.swiss) to offer a healthcare-specific vertical in the life sciences hotspot Basel.

Successful applicants will be international startups with promising business ideas that have the potential to disrupt the chosen verticals and benefit the wider society. The accelerator will be operated by Impact Hub Zurich, which is part of the largest international network of entrepreneurship and innovation centers, giving the startups access to the brightest talent across the globe.

Patricia Schlechter, Programme Manager at Kickstart Accelerator, said, "Our inaugural year saw over 850 applications from across the globe and so we are looking forward to seeing the calibre of this year's innovators. The Swiss ecosystem offers startups the opportunity to work with like-minded entrepreneurs, experienced mentors and some of the biggest corporate players to deliver impactful innovations to key industries."

This year's shortlisted startups will meet with over 15 corporate partners and mentors, including Switzerland's largest ICT provider Swisscom, multinational insurance firms Swiss Life and AXA Winterthur, Swiss financial services companies Credit Suisse, UBS and Raiffeisen Switzerland, global consultancy firms EY and PwC Switzerland, as well as Switzerland's largest food retailers Migros and Coop among others.

The 2016 cohort led to six partnerships between the startups and corporates. Applicants for 2017 will also have the opportunity to secure a 'Proof of Concept' trial with one of the corporate partners. These trials will allow the startups to test the application and scalability of their products in a demanding corporate environment. The trials will also provide the startups with the best possible chance of exploring longer-term commercial partnerships with leading corporate titans and the opportunity to further develop their market offering.

"Innovation is a key area of focus for our business and we are committed to working closely with other companies to promote and strengthen Switzerland's status as an innovation and digital hub. We are particularly interested in 'smart cities' as they will strongly influence society's mobility and have a major impact on the insurance industry," says Carola Wahl, Head of Transformation & Market Management at AXA Winterthur. "Cooperation between the startups and corporate partners

will allow the entrepreneurs to benefit from the corporates' know-how and large customer networks, as well as enable them to develop new technologies and disruptive products together."

The programme will begin on 4 September, with the official Opening Ceremony taking place on 7 September in the accelerator space at the ewz-Unterwerk Selnau. The Final Demo Day and closing event will be held on 17 November, where each team will present their products to investors, corporate leaders and the media. The ewz-Unterwerk Selnau, an 8,611 sq ft. (800 sq m) industrial building, will house co-working areas, meeting rooms, brainstorming areas, pitching stages and relaxation zones designed from old shipping containers to create a collaborative environment for creativity and success.

Kickstart will not be taking any equity from the participating startups. Founders will have the chance to win up to 25`000 CHF, as well as receiving a monthly founder stipend and masterclass sessions with mentors from the corporate partners and the Swiss innovation ecosystem. Kickstart aims to develop close collaboration between the corporate partners and the startups, as well as between the startups themselves across the different verticals, during and beyond the duration of the programme.

Nicolas Bürer, Managing Director of digitalswitzerland, commented, "With the second edition taking place in Zurich and the extension of the programme to Basel, Kickstart will be one step closer to becoming the largest European startup Accelerator. digitalswitzerland is also looking to extend the scope of the programme and is carrying out research ahead of establishing Kickstart Accelerator and additional verticals in Lausanne. This is another step towards establishing Switzerland as a leading digital innovation hub worldwide."

To apply for the programme, please visit: www.kickstart-accelerator.com.

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About Kickstart:

Kickstart Accelerator is the most ambitious Swiss startup programme to date. Never before has had Europe a multi-corporate and zero equity startup accelerator of such scale, welcoming 30 startups from around the world. Backed by academia, leading corporates and the local startup ecosystem, it aims to put Switzerland on the global map of innovation and entrepreneurship. For 11 weeks it brings 30 of the most promising international startups in the areas of FinTech, Food, Robotics & Intelligent Systems and Smart Cities to Zürich. For 2017, Kickstart Accelerator has entered into a partnership with [BaseLaunch](#) (initiated and operated by [BaselArea.swiss](#)) to offer a healthcare-specific vertical.

Kickstart Accelerator was launched 2015 by [digitalswitzerland](#), a cross-industry association which is driven by the goal to make Switzerland a leading digital innovation hub in Europe. The

programme is operated by Impact Hub Zurich, which is part of the largest network of entrepreneurship and innovation centers across the globe. Kickstart Accelerator's corporate partners include Credit Suisse, UBS, Swisscom, Raiffeisen Switzerland, Coop, Migros, Swiss Life, Gebert-Rüf-Stiftung, AXA Winterthur, EY and PwC Switzerland. The programme is also supported by Stäubli as well as the city of Zurich.