

## Press Release

Top 16 for the 2018 W.A. De Vigier Award

### **„We wish we could award even more startups“**

Solothurn, 21.2.2018. **Five Swiss startups will receive a prize of CHF 100'000.00 from the W.A. De Vigier Foundation on May 30th. Out of a record number of more than 220 submitted projects, the jury chose their top 16 candidates. Some ideas even foster hope - for disappointed hearing aid users, for a sustainable agriculture or for people with sepsis.**

"We were literally flooded with 221 applications this year", says Regula Buob, Managing Director of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation. "There were so many brilliant projects that at some point, the selection committee members looked at each other and wished we could award more startups. We consider it a privilege to be able to choose from the crème de la crème of the Swiss startup scene every year and are well aware that there are many outstanding startups we simply can't consider. Fortunately, other foundations, organizations and private investors are also looking to support local startups at an early stage to get them to market fast enough," says Buob. For nearly 30 years, the foundation of the entrepreneur Bill De Vigiers has been promoting young entrepreneurs with the highest endowed startup prize in Switzerland.

Now, the top 16 will go through an assessment and will have in-depth interviews with the foundation board. Aspects such as leadership and entrepreneurship will be explored as selection criteria. In mid-April, the Top 10 will be announced. They will present their ideas at the award ceremony.

#### **The Top 16 (in alphabetical order)**

##### ***ACUBE Technology AG from Nidau (BE) - Access by Smartphone Instead of Tickets and Badges***

Handling tickets, badges and garage door remote controls is a nuisance, both for users and for technical service providers. ACUBE uses the smartphone for easier access and automatic payment. Thanks to the combination of a patented proximity positioning system with a mobile app, misplaced tickets and embarrassing arm-stretching maneuvers in front of the parking garage barrier will soon be a thing of the past.

##### ***AgroSustain GmbH (VD) - Organic Fungicides for Sustainable Agriculture***

Producers of agricultural goods are under pressure. To avoid crop and storage losses, chemical fungicides are used regardless of their negative impact on biodiversity and our health. AgroSustain develops ecological products for the prevention and treatment of a wide range of pathogens. These products are of interest to storage companies, the timber industry, gardeners and farmers.

***AUDATIC GmbH from Zurich (ZH) - Better Performance of Hearing Aids in Noisy Environments***

Hearing aids often let their wearers down in noisy situations. AUDATIC uses the latest artificial intelligence methods to filter out background noise and significantly enhance the listening experience. Whether in a restaurant, on the road or at a business meeting - thanks to AUDATIC's technology, hearing-aid users can once again participate in conversations with more joy and self-confidence.

***GratXray AG from Villigen (AG) - Reliable and Painless Detection of Breast Cancer***

The spin off from ETH Zurich and the Paul Sherrer Institute is developing an imaging technology that produces volumetric 3D images with unprecedented density resolution. The advantages over classic 2D mammography: The image information allows more reliable and more specific diagnoses, thus largely avoiding misdiagnosis. In addition, the procedure is painless for the patient, because the breast doesn't have to be compressed.

***GRZ Technologies AG from Sion (VS) - Efficient Storage of Renewable Energy***

The fluctuating nature of renewable energy poses energy storage challenges. Hydrogen-based solutions seem attractive, however they take up too much space. GRZ Technologies stores hydrogen on special materials and can drastically reduce storage space. The Valais startup offers a safe and efficient way of storing hydrogen thereby providing a solution for the storage of renewable energy.

***hemotune AG from Zurich (ZH) - Revolutionary Blood Purification in Sepsis***

Hemotune's procedure can remove toxins from the blood that are usually hard to access. Specially developed magnetic nanoparticles bind to the toxins and can subsequently be separated magnetically. The dialysis machine is equipped with an additional device in which these nanoparticles are mixed with the blood and removed together with the toxins. The first application is being developed for the removal of endotoxins in acute sepsis.

***IDUN Technologies AG from Zurich (ZH) - Novel Sensors For Health Monitoring***

The signal quality of today's wearables is insufficient, which complicates data evaluation. The soft sensors of the Zurich-based startup are more comfortable to wear on the skin. Thanks to the optimized surface contact, the signal quality is very high even without applying electrolyte gel. Long-term applications and measurements in difficult environments become possible.

***inVoli from Renens (VD) - Safe Integration of Drones Into Our Skies***

Collisions between drones and aircrafts are becoming increasingly dangerous. inVoli provides the infrastructure for secure integration of unmanned aerial vehicles into existing air traffic. The technology of inVoli will make air traffic data openly accessible and can equip participants as well as the flying objects with the necessary instruments to make the sky safer and more efficient.

***Myoswiss AG from Zurich (ZH) - Wearable Muscles For People With Mobility Impairments***

Myoswiss develops the Myosuit: A clothing layer of wearable muscles that supports daily life activity. The solution combines robotics and functional textiles in a convenient product that weighs less than five kilograms. Novel algorithms coupled with sensing and actuating technology control the assistive forces applied throughout the user's movements.

***nanoleq GmbH from Zurich (ZH) - A New Generation of Cables***

Cables are vulnerable. This a problem, especially with medical devices or factory robots. nanoleq has developed a fundamentally new kind of cable technology. Under mechanical stress, the Zurich Startup's FlexOne cable has up to a hundred times longer service life than a standard cable while retaining its high flexibility. Nanoleq's target markets are in med tech, high-end audio applications and robotics.

***onCyt Microbiology AG from Zurich (ZH) - Monitoring Water Quality in Real Time***

Clean water is vital. Today's microbiological quality monitoring is based on isolated samples, which deliver results with limited expressiveness after 24 to 72 hours. Problem detection is not guaranteed and the time delay prevents fast intervention. With the onCyt technology, water can be continuously monitored in a fully automated manner and in real-time to quickly and reliably detect quality changes.

***Sensoryx AG from Zurich (ZH) – A More Immersive Experience in the Virtual World***

Previously, users had to hold disruptive controls in their hands instead of interacting directly with the virtual world. VRfree is a mobile 3D tracking system that fully maps hands and fingers in cyberspace, allowing you to have literally tangible experiences in the virtual world. This solution combines different sensor types and provides realistic, real time mobile motion detection.

***SUN bioscience from Lausanne (VD) - 3D Cell Cultures For More Effective Treatment Decisions***

SUN bioscience launches a platform for standardized organoid 3D cell cultures that allows patient-specific testing for the direct efficacy of treatments. Today's methods based on biomarkers are often insufficiently reliable. SUN bioscience's solution optimizes medication decisions and thus avoids ineffective therapies. This leads to billions of dollars in healthcare savings.

***SwissDeCode GmbH from Renens (VD) - Rapid Test For Higher Food Safety***

Food can be contaminated on its way from the farm to the plate and consuming spoiled food is potentially life-threatening. DNAFoil is an on-site DNA test that can be performed by warehouse operators without any special equipment. While traditional laboratory testing can take four to seven days to deliver results, with DNAFoil results are available within 30 minutes.

### ***Touchless Automation GmbH from Biel (BE) - Contactless Handling of Microcomponents***

Touchless Automation offers innovative solutions for every industry that processes microcomponents. As soon as the sensitive microcomponents are touched, there is a risk of scratching, soiling or other damage. The solution offered by the Biel based startup can move components of all materials - completely contact-free.

### ***TWIICE from Lausanne (VD) - Tailor-Made Exoskeletons Instead of Wheelchairs***

Exoskeletons are already on the market, but they are too expensive and don't fit properly. TWIICE wants to improve the situation and developed a solution with a modular architecture. The exoskeleton can thus be tailored specifically to the needs of the wearer without breaking the budget.

### **About the W.A. de Vigier Award**

The W.A. de Vigier Award is the oldest and highest endowed prize for startups in Switzerland, giving away five awards of CHF 100,000.00 each. In 28 years the foundation has distributed over CHF 10 million of seed money. The results are about 80 flourishing startups, successful IPOs, multiple company exits and above all, many newly created jobs.

The following aspects are relevant for the evaluation of the projects: The entrepreneurial personality, the degree of innovation, the value for society as a whole, the technical and financial viability, market prospects and the potential for job creation.

### **Application for the W.A. de Vigier Award 2019**

From October 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 until January 7<sup>th</sup> 2019 startups can apply for the W.A. de Vigier Award 2019. The intended audience are young entrepreneurs domiciled in Switzerland, who are usually younger than 45 and whose role in their company is the realisation and marketing of an innovative, future-oriented product or service.

## **INVITATION FOR JOURNALISTS**

We would be happy to welcome you at our award ceremony!

Date: Wednesday, May 30th, 2018

Time: Opening of the garden: 3:30 pm, beginning of the award ceremony: 4:30 pm

Location: Untere Steingrubenstrasse 25, 4500 Solothurn

RSVP: Please let us know if you're coming. See contact details below.

### **Contact details for questions and RSVP**

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