

Press Release

## **Industry and academic leaders discuss the impact of Virtual and Augmented Realities (VR/AR) on Swiss R&D and economic sectors**

- > **Innovation Forum Lausanne organizes third annual conference at EPFL Lausanne**
- > **Kick-off event for Virtual Switzerland, the new National Thematic Network supported by the Confederation**
- > **400 researchers, entrepreneurs and corporates consider the potential of VR/AR**

***Lausanne, Switzerland, 03 April 2017***

**Innovation Forum Lausanne (IFL)** today held its third annual conference titled “Virtual & Augmented Realities – how they are shaping our future”. These VR/AR technologies are rapidly transforming both private and professional environments. Today we live between two worlds: our natural physical state and in an overlapping digitally-created sphere known as augmented reality or AR. When we are immersed in an entirely computer-generated environment, this is virtual reality or VR. Speakers and delegates at the conference considered the significant implications of these disruptive technologies for human behaviour and economic sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and entertainment.

The event held today at the Rolex Learning Forum at EPFL Lausanne also marked the kick-off of the new **Virtual Switzerland** national network, supported by the Federal Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI), promoting technology transfer between the academic and corporate spheres, as well as the immersive technologies and simulation of virtual environments developed in Switzerland. It motivates new start-ups, SMEs, and thriving companies to push ahead with innovative projects to play an active part in Industry 4.0.

Over 400 participants heard from keynote speakers at leading companies and institutions, including EPFL, University of Lausanne (UNIL), HEPIA, Microsoft, Swisscom, and VirtaMed as well as from inspiring start-ups such as Somniacs (Birdly®) and Idezo. The public was also able to try out these technologies with exhibitors on site.

**Prof. Marianne Schmid Mast, UNIL/HEC Lausanne**, commented: “Why – other than for fun - should you walk around in a virtual environment and encounter virtual humans if you can walk around in real environments and meet real people? Because some real environments are too dangerous and some human interactions are too difficult in real life! VR enables us to train and learn in a “safe” environment. There are some major implications for human behaviour and skills.”

**Mark Melnykowycz, Artist-Engineer, Idezo**, said: "Much of the acceptance of VR and AR products will revolve around not only the technology maturing, but also the intelligent design of immersive environments and the unique value the products bring to users."

**Beatrice Volpe, President of Innovation Forum Lausanne**, observed: “Today’s ‘immersion’ in VR and AR showed us how much we can already profit from these technologies in our daily life and which high innovative potential they carry. As Innovation Forum Lausanne we decided to dedicate our third annual conference to these disruptive technologies to inspire our audience to think out of the box and to leverage the power of scientific entrepreneurship to create innovations that matter.”

**Caecilia Charbonnier, Virtual Switzerland, President of the Committee**, stated: “After Internet and mobile phones, VR/AR technology is the next revolution that will radically transform industrial processes. This will totally change the way we work, communicate, and access information.”

Full details of the conference program and speakers can be found at:

<http://lausanne.inno-forum.org/event/virtual-reality-shaping-future-immersive-technologies/>

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**About Innovation Forum** [www.inno-forum.org](http://www.inno-forum.org)

The Innovation Forum (IF) is a non-profit organisation led by entrepreneurial-minded scientists and young professionals. **Its mission is to foster the next generation of scientist-entrepreneurs.** IF is a **global network** of innovative companies, entrepreneurs, investors, researchers and policy makers with branches located at 16 top universities in Europe, Asia and North America. This gives the organization the **unique ability to think and act in an international, cross-cultural context** and to enable global synergies for members and partners.

**Innovation Forum Lausanne (IFL)** aims to leverage the current highly interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial ecosystem and to further strengthen the position of Lausanne as a global innovation hub. During 2015 and 2016, its first two years of existence, IFL organised ten events, allowing more than 1,100 people from different generations and with diverse profiles to engage with each other: students, academics, investors, industry representatives, entrepreneurs and policy makers.

**Innovation Forum Lausanne** gratefully acknowledges the support of its partners:

- Cabinet Privé de Conseils
- Bühler
- Kellerhals Carrard
- Frontiers
- Venturelab
- Baselaunch
- Agepoly
- Johnson & Johnson Innovation
- George James Ltd
- Vistra

About Virtual Switzerland [www.virtualswitzerland.org](http://www.virtualswitzerland.org)

**VIRTUAL SWITZERLAND**, the National Thematic Network (NTN) created in cooperation with the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI), aims to **spark ideas and foster synergies to grasp the full extent of virtual, augmented, and mixed realities**. It means bringing together the academic and economic spheres around those technologies and **linking R&D experts in Swiss universities with those in start-ups or thriving companies**, thereby promoting private as well as academic research laboratories or incubators. Welcoming progress in Swiss industries will **increase market dynamics, as well as efficiency** by improving quality control, maintenance standards, and brand visibility.

Four business sectors are targeted, which together encompass most of the Swiss economy: **medtech, architecture and construction, manufacturing, tourism and culture**. Hence, members of those fields who join Virtual Switzerland's national network contribute to **shaping tomorrow's economic landscape by opening a world of new opportunities** via virtual, augmented, and mixed realities.

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