

Press Release

ESA BIC Switzerland ready for launch

Startup programme brings space technologies down to earth

Zurich, 10 November 2016

A twing (“kite”) that produces next generation wind energy, solar cells that are twice as efficient as conventional products, and frequency combs that increase the data capacity of fibre optic cables by a factor of 200 – these are the three startups selected for the new ESA BIC Switzerland programme.

Many creative minds dream of outer space – in Switzerland too. While Switzerland will not be sending any of its own rockets into space, it does make a major contribution to space technology and its universities and startups make it a world leader in cutting-edge technology. That is why the European Space Agency (ESA) approached Switzerland’s State Secretariat for Education and Research and Innovation (SERI) to establish a Business Incubation Center in Switzerland alongside its existing ESA BICs. This technology transfer programme from the ESA will offer targeted support to startups in the field of space technologies and applications.

ETH Zurich was awarded the contract in September and is now ready to begin with the programme after just a two-month set-up period. SERI State Secretary Mauro Dell’Ambrogio, ESA Director General Professor Johann-Dietrich Wörner and ETH Vice President Research and Corporate Relations Professor Detlef Günther presented the first three startups for the first round of the Swiss ESA BIC programme.

Three startups ready for launch

The first three startups selected are companies that use technology from space research and make it available for use by society and business. The startup TwingTec, which was founded in 2013 by EM-PA and FHNW researchers, is developing wind energy 2.0, based on twing (“kite”) system. Satellite navigation is used to position the twing (“kite”) more precisely and optimise their output.

The startup Insolight develops solar cells for satellites. These cells are more than twice as efficient as conventional products for terrestrial applications. The third startup is Ligentec, a young company that designs frequency combs which increase the data capacity of fibre optic cables by a factor of 200. By using silicon nitride, it is possible to increase the efficiency by a material developed for space.

A step for ETH and a step for Switzerland

ETH Zurich has worked closely with the ESA on research projects for several years. More recently, it has also considerably intensified its technology transfer efforts, which is why Detlef Günther believes it was a logical step for ETH Zurich to apply for the ESA BIC Switzerland programme. Now the task is to ensure that Switzerland as a whole can benefit, as Günther explains: "If you want to conquer space, you can't be short-sighted. Switzerland has a lot to offer as a hotspot of research and innovation. ESA BIC will enable us to better promote activities in the field of space technologies and applications." The ETH Vice President also highlighted the close connection with the startup scene across Europe as a particularly new dimension for Switzerland.

Further information on the startups

[TwingTec](#) →

[Insolight](#) →

[Ligentec](#) →

Further Information

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ESA BIC Switzerland

ESA BIC is an initiative launched in 2003 by the European Space Agency's Technology Transfer Programme Office (TTPO). Its goal is to promote startups in the field of space technologies and applications. There are currently 15 ESA BICs across 12 different European countries. Another will open in 2016, and further ESA BICs are planned for 2017. ESA BIC Switzerland has the capacity to support up to ten startups every year. It collaborates with partners and sponsors to offer young entrepreneurs support for up to two years. In the first phase, the startups receive a total of €50,000 and can expect up to €450,000 in further support during the second phase, making it one of the most appealing programmes in Switzerland. The companies also benefit from individual coaching, networking activities and a Europe-wide network of industry and research contacts.

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