**Press Release**

W.A. de Vigier Awards 2020

**Numerous Cleantech Startups in the Top 16**

Solothurn, March 11, 2020 **16 startups are one lap further in the race for five coveted W.A. de Vigier Awards. The startups were selected from 60 young companies who presented their ideas to the foundation board, investors and invited guests on Selection Day in mid-February. Finally, five startups will receive CHF 100,000 each at the award ceremony on June 3, 2020.**

On "Selection Day" on February 13th, the top 16 were chosen from 60 pre-selected startups. A total of 192 registrations were received this year.

"Everyone at our foundation is very happy that we do not only see the startups on paper, but that we get a live and personal impression of the applicants during their 3-minute pitches," says Regula Buob, Managing Director of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation. "We are very pleased with the Top 16. This year, there was a particularly large number of Cleantech startups among the applicants, which is also reflected in the Top 16," continues Buob.

Now the Top 16 will go through a leadership assessment and have an in-depth interview with the Foundation Board. Aspects such as leadership, team leadership and entrepreneurship will also be evaluated as selection criteria. In addition, expert reports will be prepared. The ten best are then selected during two presentation days. On May 19th, the ten finalists will be chosen and will present their highly innovative products to an invited audience at the Award Ceremony on June 3, 2020.

**These are the Top 16 (in alphabetical order)**

***Annaida Technologies AG from Lausanne (VD) - Non-Invasive Embryo Screening for Better IVF Outcomes***

Embryo metabolism is crucial to viability, but it remains inaccessible. EPFL-spinoff Annaida has developed the breakthrough device „EmbryoSpin“ that gives access to crucial metabolic information directly from inside the embryo, without even touching it. Thanks to magnetic resonance technology doctors will be able to assess embryo viability within one hour and with unprecedented sensitivity, thus contributing to higher success rates of IVF treatments.

***Bloom Biorenewables AG from Renens (VD) –Sustainable Alternatives to Fossil-Based Molecules***

Today, the production of sustainable materials is scarce and inefficient. Bloom Biorenewables has developed a unique method to efficiently convert non-edible plant material (wood or agricultural waste) to renewable materials and chemical building blocks. These molecules are specifically designed to replace fossil-based molecules in tomorrow’s sustainable products, such as plastics, packaging, food additives or cosmetics.

***BLP Digital AG from Zurich (ZH) – Faster and More Reliable Info Extraction from Documents***

Manual information extraction from documents is tedious and prone to error. For documents containing fine-grained table data (e.g. delivery notes or invoices), traditional information extraction software falls short and needs manual rework. ETH-spinoff BLP Digital AG combines deep learning algorithms for vision and NLP to fuse visual features of documents with its textual information. This solution is very accurate and offers high cost savings.

**CompPair Technologies AG from Lausanne (VD) - Healable and Sustainable Material Solutions**

CompPair’s material solutions reduce repair time from hours to minutes and improve circularity in the composites industry. The EPFL-spinoff delivers an efficient, smart and bio-inspired solution for extending the lifetime of composite structures. CompPair’s products reduce maintenance costs, increase product lifetime and improve global sustainability while keeping standard specifications of the composites industry.

***DePoly from Sion (VD) – Profitable PET Recycling with Eco-Friendly Chemicals***

The current recycling system can’t deal with dirty PET plastic, PET plastic in the presence of other plastics, or downgraded PET plastic. DePoly turns the low valued post-consumer PET waste into its high valued original chemical components (TPA and EG). The raw material the startup produces can be remade into virgin PET, meaning that their recycling centers become profit centers, while decreasing our reliance on the petroleum industry for PET plastic production. With this new technology, time, money and resources can be saved while helping clean up the environment.

***DOKOKI AG from Hindelbank (BE) – A Good Night’s Sleep Thanks to Health Monitoring of Babies***

Many parents worry about the health of their baby at night. The DOKOKI SleepGuard integrates state of the art vital sensor technology in a comfortable romper and informs parents via smartphone about the baby's health in real time and remotely. An intelligent algorithm detects critical situations early on, so that parents can react as quickly as possible. Nightly checks and constant worry are a thing of the past.

***EH Group Engineering AG from Prangins (VD) - Innovative Fuel Cell Technology for Clean Energy***

Hydrogen and fuel cells will play an important role in climate change mitigation – but they remain too bulky, complex and expensive.  EHG's innovative fuel cell technology is based on a wholly re-designed microstructure and production process. It delivers a significantly more compact and lightweight energy generator at a sharply reduced cost.

***FenX AG from Zurich (ZH) – Sustainable High-Performance Insulation for the Building Industry***

Based on a patented foaming technique, this ETH-spinoff transforms mineral waste into highly porous and nonflammable foams with remarkable insulation properties. The foams, processed into insulation panels for buildings, generate low CO2 emissions and are 100% recyclable.

***Juvabis AG from Zurich (ZH) – Next-Generation Therapeutics Against Bacterial Infections***

Increasing antimicrobial resistance threatens to turn the clock back to a situation that resembles the "pre-antibiotic era" with corresponding consequences on worldwide mortality and life expectancy. Juvabis fights antimicrobial resistance by developing new therapeutics for the treatment of highly drug resistant infections. Juvabis holds a worldwide exclusive license for an innovative technology platform and various compositions of matter patent families.

***LiVET AG from Berne (BE) – Rapid and Reliable On-Site Testing for Infectious Diseases in Animals***

LiVET develops and produces rapid molecular point-of-care test kits for veterinary diagnostics. Based on the startup’s proprietary platform technology, veterinarians can diagnose infectious diseases right on-site and within 30 minutes. This allows for immediate and specific treatment which reduces the spread of infectious diseases, fights antimicrobial resistances and increases animal health. LiVET’s first panel test for respiratory diseases in horses will be available this year.

***Logic Flow AG from Zurich (ZH) – AI Bot for Automated Code Migration***

Code migrations are a necessary evil with high costs and low immediate return for CIOs, who are pressured to migrate their legacy code to remain competitive. LogicFlow's automated migration system works like a “Google Translate” for code that allows companies to migrate their code at a fraction of time and cost. Migrating a single line of code that would take 10 to 20 minutes manually, can be migrated in under a minute with LogicFlow.

***MEMBRASENZ GmbH from Lausanne (VD) – Membranes for More Efficient Hydrogen Production***

MEMBRASENZ has developed membranes, which serve to produce hydrogen as a clean energy carrier.

Water electrolysis is the only green commercial process for the production of hydrogen and membranes are the core components of electrolysers. The EPFL-spinoff’s patented membranes increase the efficiency of the hydrogen production and reduce the hydrogen price for the end user.

***Microcaps AG from Zurich (ZH) – Precise Microencapsulation on an Industrial Scale***

Microcapsules transport active ingredients such as drugs, aromas or fragrances to their destination and protect them at the same time. Until now, the production of these capsules has not allowed precise control of capsule size. However, this has a direct influence on the release of the active substances - same size equals same release. This ETH spin-off’s patented technology enables precise size control and thus the influence on when, where and how active ingredients are released.

***Oxara AG from Zurich (ZH) - Transforming Excavation Materials Into Sustainable Building Products***

Billions of tons of excavation materials, removed to build foundations, are landfilled each year. Oxara developed a patented admixture technology that allows transforming this **excavation waste** into **sustainable building bricks without cement.**The ETH-spinoff’s building materials are 90% more eco-friendly and 60% cheaper than conventional concrete while having the same processing advantages as concrete.

***REA from Lausanne (VD) – A Smart Pad for At-Home Preterm Birth Diagnostics***

In developed countries, more than 16% of pregnant women are hospitalized for risk of premature birth but only 30% of these patients will deliver prematurely. REA, a spinoff project from EPFL, developed the first at-home test for preterm birth diagnostics. REA's Smart Pad analyzes vaginal secretions, screening for proteins that are indicative of birth. A negative test result reassures a pregnant woman that she won’t give birth in the next seven days and relieves her from stress and costly visits to the hospital.

***Sevensense Robotics AG from Zurich (ZH) – Turning Manual Ground Machines Into Mobile Robots***

ETH-spinoff Sevensense empowers manufacturers to provide their ground robots with self-driving capabilities in crowded and changing environments, without the need for any expertise in robotics. The solution entails a multi-camera sensor and proprietary navigation algorithms powered by advanced machine learning techniques. With Sevensense’s technology, mobile robots can support humans in a much broader range of dirty, dangerous and dull tasks and boost operational efficiency.

**About the W.A. de Vigier Awards**

The W.A. de Vigier Award is the oldest prize for young entrepreneurs in Switzerland and, with annual prize money of CHF 500,000 (five times CHF 100,000), is one of the most highly endowed startup prizes in Switzerland. Over the past 31 years, the foundation has distributed over CHF 11 million of seed money. The results are over 90 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.

**Contact details for questions**

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