

Press release – April 28, 2016

Four weeks left until the opening of The Brain Forum

In exactly four weeks, leaders in brain science and finance will convene at the third conference of The Brain Forum, on 26 and 27 May in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Brain Forum is divided into two themed days with the first day dedicated to Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and the second day focused on Science.

During the **Entrepreneurship and Innovation Day**, entrepreneurs and investors will share their expertise in translating science from bench to business and discuss their ideas for the future. During the Keynote lecture **“Practical lessons in machine learning”**, Greg Corrado, a Senior Research Scientist working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, computational neuroscience, and scalable machine learning at Google Research, will explore aspects of machine learning, including deep learning and more classical algorithms. Much of Google’s work on language, speech, translation, visual processing, ranking and prediction relies on machine intelligence, which is set to become commonplace in our society.

The Brain Forum Innovation Award” will again offer opportunities for early-stage start-ups to connect with investors interested in the solutions of the future. More than 120 companies have already been pre-selected. The six start-ups making the final round will have five minutes to pitch their projects to the audience and a jury composed of thought leaders in innovation like Tej Tadi (MindMaze) and Markus Goebel (Novartis Venture Fund). The industry exhibition, held throughout the conference, will give established and start-up businesses the opportunity to showcase their products to potential investors and consumers. Innovative interdisciplinary projects like Sonic Womb and the NeuroOrrb will be unveiled. The former seeks to re-create the experience of hearing in utero in order to promote understanding of acoustic stress in premature infants. The latter is developing the “gym for the brain” to optimise human brain performance and tackle cognitive decline.

Dr. Jamil El-Imad, CEO of The Brain Forum, comments: “Technology moves quickly and often at a pace where large matrix organisations can’t keep up. Start-ups on the other hand, are small and nimble enough to keep pace with the speed at which technology moves. They often have some of the most innovative ideas and solutions, but perhaps not the right resources to propel their ambitions. The start-up competition aims to change that by providing a stage for these companies to gain exposure and acts as a potential matchmaking opportunity for start-ups to pair up with top scientists, clinicians and business people who can take them to the next level.”

The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Day will be closed by **“Act like you mean it”**: a reworking of Romeo and Juliet celebrating neuroscience in the 400th year since Shakespeare’s death. During this lecture–performance, the authenticity of actor’s emotions will be investigated from a theatrical and neuroscientific perspective. Prof. Thomas Grunwald, Medical Director at the Swiss Epilepsy Centre in Zurich and Prof. Anton Rey, dramaturge from the Institute of Performing Arts and Film at Zurich University of the Arts, will present their findings.



During the **Science Day**, The Brain Forum will welcome back the global brain initiatives that joined the platform in 2015. The session **“International Brain Initiatives: Progress, challenges and opportunities”** will give an overview of the world’s major brain projects, providing updates about their scope, aims and progress. Among them: the European based project Blue Brain Project, which aims to build biologically detailed digital reconstructions and simulations of the rodent and ultimately the human brain. On the other hand, the Chinese brain initiative China Brain is focused on developmental, psychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders with the objective of finding treatments primarily for Alzheimer’s disease and autism.

“The brain and mental health – Increasing awareness and reducing stigma” will contribute to tackling some of the biggest healthcare challenges of this century. It is devoted to recent advances in the understanding of the brain mechanisms underlying mental disorders, such as major depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia with a particular emphasis on novel methods and innovations aimed at improving mental health. Presented by Emily Holmes (University of Cambridge), Andreas Meyer-Lindenberg (Central Institute of Mental Health Mannheim) and Helen Mayberg (Emory University/USA), this session also includes a panel discussion with the goal to raise awareness of mental health stigma, which remains widespread, leading to discrimination and reduced quality of life.

“High-level meetings such as The Brain Forum are crucial to the advancement of research. They offer unique opportunities for scientists to meet, take the temperature of ongoing research and be aware of the latest advances in the field. Adding entrepreneurs to the audience of the event is also key to developing new tools and techniques for better diagnostic and treatment of brain diseases”, says Prof. Patrick Aebischer, President of EPFL and member of The Brain Forum’s International Advisory Board. “In an aging society, neurological diseases are an ever-growing source of cost for health systems, all over the world. Understanding them will result in better, earlier diagnostics and more efficient and cost-effective treatments”.

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About The Brain Forum – thebrainforum.org/

The Brain Forum, first launched in 2013, brings together novel thinkers and pioneers in brain research, technology, healthcare and the economy. Researchers, engineers, healthcare professionals, entrepreneurs, industrialists, investors, funding agencies and policy makers will meet at The Brain Forum 2016, to advance our understanding of how the brain works and to accelerate the application and value of this knowledge in society and the economy.

About EPFL – www.epfl.ch/

Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, in Switzerland, is one of the most international higher education institutions in Europe. It counts among its ranks roughly 10,000 students and 5,000 employees representing more than 120 nationalities. Education and research are organized into five schools and two colleges, with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary work. In 2013, the European Commission selected the Human Brain Project, an international effort at understanding the human brain, led by EPFL, as a “FET Flagship initiative”. The EPFL is also home to the Brain Mind Institute, which aims to understand the fundamental principles of brain function in health and disease, by using and developing unique experimental, theoretical, technological and computational approaches.

