

Press Release

30 new companies founded

A successful year for ETH spin-offs

Zurich, 6 January 2020

In 2019, 30 new spin-offs have been founded at ETH Zurich. The predominant topic of this year climate change also reflected in the new spin-offs. A remarkable number is dedicated to the development of sustainable materials.

ETH Zurich looks back on a successful year for spin-offs. The number of spin-offs grew strongly from the previous year: 30 new companies were founded by ETH Zurich researchers in 2019. Furthermore, the high level of investments in ETH Zurich spin-offs is proof of their appeal; for example, GetYourGuide became the first ETH spin-off to achieve a valuation of more than USD 1 billion before going public. As in previous years, many new spin-offs were founded in the field of information and communication technology. The area of advanced materials has seen particularly strong growth. Six of the new spin-offs focus on sustainable and eco-friendly materials.

Environmentally friendly membrane and insulation from industrial waste

Although the spin-offs work with different materials, they share a common goal: their products are designed to protect the environment. FenX transforms industrial waste into a porous foam suitable for building insulation. Unlike other sustainable insulation materials, it is non-flammable and inexpensive to produce. ETH spin-off Neustark also uses the old to create the new and has set itself the goal of recycling concrete cost-effectively. This enables a significant reduction in CO₂ emissions, which are enormous in the production of cement. Spin-off Dimpora, meanwhile, is developing an environmentally friendly membrane for outdoor jackets that does not require fluorinated compounds, but is just as breathable as conventional membranes.

Dynamic growth in university spin-offs

Detlef Günther, Vice President Research and Corporate Relations, is delighted with the number of spin-off companies: "In recent years, many have told me that ETH Zurich is in a position to found even more companies. My answer has always been that provided the right ideas are there, our researchers

will not shy away from the risk.” He asserts that for ETH Zurich it is crucial that promising technology and ideas arising from basic research are translated to companies with high growth potential, thus creating new jobs. Surviving long-term in the market is a challenge and poses a high risk to the company founders. However, as Günther concludes, “prospects for starting a company at ETH Zurich are excellent, as a central concern of the university is to bring innovations to society swiftly.”

More investment than ever before

The overall volume of investment in ETH spin-offs also developed positively last year. More than CHF 630 million have been invested – a volume never seen before. Although GetYourGuide stands out, many other spin-offs also reported large financing rounds last year; for example, Nexxiot and Beekeeper raised CHF 50 million and USD 45 million respectively. The 2019 ETH Zurich spin-off Planted Foods produces a meat substitute from peas and closed a first financing round of CHF 7 million.

Further Information

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ETH spin-offs: facts and figures

Since 1996, 437 spin-offs have been founded at ETH Zurich. A helpful overview can be found on the [spin-off website](#). Recognised ETH spin-offs are supported by ETH transfer, the technology transfer office at ETH Zurich, through the founding process and their first years of operation with advice, licensing of ETH technology and contacts. With the help of the [Pioneer Fellowship Programme](#), funded by the ETH Foundation, young researchers can develop innovative products and services based on their scientific work at ETH Zurich. The fellowships are awarded competitively by the Vice President Research and Corporate Relations and a jury consisting of ETH professors, ETH transfer technology managers and industry representatives. The [Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab](#) (ieLab) brings together ETH talent and experienced industry entrepreneurs.