Joint media release with Mindfire Foundation

Powerful alliance to launch national Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Zurich

Various stakeholders from science and business have joined forces to strengthen the position of Zurich and Switzerland as a research and business hub in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI). On October 24th, 2019, the "AI Moonshot Roundtable" kicked-off a new generation talent and research hub in the field of AI. The Department for Economic Affairs together with the Mindfire Foundation took on the leading role in shaping the initiative.

The first "AI Moonshot Roundtable" on artificial intelligence at the Hotel Belvoirpark in Zurich, a place full of history and the former residence of pioneer entrepreneur Alfred Escher, was marked by an unprecedented alliance between science, business and politics. In addition to the President of the Canton of Zurich and Head of the Department for Economic Affairs Carmen Walker Späh and Pascal Kaufmann, President of the Mindfire Foundation, several representatives of ETH, ZHAW, the University of Zurich, the University of Lugano and other research institutions attended the roundtable. Also present were renowned experts and scientists from abroad, representatives of various industries and companies (e.g. Swiss Re, ABB and NNAISENSE), investors, private individuals and representatives of the Swiss start-up scene.

The representatives from various fields share the vision that Switzerland, in particular Zurich as a business and research hub, must play a leading role in the development and advancement of human level artificial intelligence. The President of the Government Council Carmen Walker Späh welcomes this initiative. Her directorate and the Business and Economic Office within the Department for Economics and Labour supports the organisation of the roundtable and provided their network and know-how to the initiative.

Applying AI for the benefit of the people
At the roundtable the participants unanimously signed-off the "Belvoir Manifesto for AI", which foresees the construction of a "Robot Scientist" within the next decade. The robot scientist is envisaged to be embodied and to learn like a human child, merely by visual observation, conversations, interactions and by its own curiosity and creativity. The aim is to fundamentally accelerate research in particular in the medical field and to use artificial intelligence for the benefit of the people. The participants of the roundtable agreed to support the establishment of a highly interconnected AI talent and research hub and to execute concrete plans already by the beginning of 2020. Further "AI Roundtables" are planned.

The initiative aims to combine strengths and know-how by means of a concrete and ambitious new approach. An expert network shall be established throughout Switzerland and at a global scale. To this aim, a "Trans-disciplinary Robotics & AI Lab" (TRAIL) with premises in Zurich shall be set up, fully operated by an independent foundation and supported with know-how and resources by universities, companies and institutions. The initiative shall be coordinated by the Mindfire Foundation. The foundation is dedicated to the creation and application of human level artificial intelligence for the advancement and acceleration of research, in particular in the medical and scientific fields.