Media communiqué

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First-time announcement of the "Swiss Computer Science Challenges Award" in conjunction with the Swiss national year of informatics – informatica08

Wanted: Information Technologies Visionaries!

Which are the most important unresolved problems in the field of of information technology? And which main scientific challenges confront computer technologies today? These questions are to be answered by young scientists and researchers in the context of the competition for the first "Swiss Computer Science Challenges Award". In this competition, information technology specialists are called upon to point out the most prominent unresolved questions and problems and present them in an easily comprehensible form. Competition winners will be determined by a high-ranking ury panel of specialists under the direction of the Empa researcher and the project's initiator Lorenz Hilty. The award ceremony shall take place on November 13, 2008 at the ETH Lausanne as part of the official conclusion of the"Swiss national year of informatics – informatica08".

"With this newly announced competition, we want to show that computer science does not consist of clicking on programs as fast and as fancifully as possible, but rather that computer science compiles fundamental knowledge and this information has extensive social effects", stated Empa researcher Lorenz Hilty, who studied computer sciences and teaches the subject at the university of Zurich, while at the same time directing Empa's laboratory of "Technology and Society". With this Swiss Computer Science Challenges Award, Hilty hopes to create and promote a "consciousness for computer science as a socially relevant scientific discipline. And because computer science, as all other scientific disciplines, is best represented by its large unresolved questions and problems, we chose such topics for the competition".

The Swiss Computer Science Challenges Award is a cooperative project between the Hasler Foundation, the Empa, and the association of the "Swiss national year of informatics". The total prize sum amounts to 30000 Swiss Francs and can be divided into up to three futuristic and trend-setting research ideas. Prizes shall be awarded not for actual research work, but for the definition of the problem and first solution ideas. The Hasler Foundation may also consider start up financing for appropriate research projects which show excellent and promising ideas. All persons who are interested in the progress of computer science and who

are Swiss nationals or residents, can take part in the competition. Doctoral and other students of computer sciences are especially encouraged to apply.

The submitted suggestions will be judged by a jury panel, which consists of 15 leading industry representatives (see Box 2), and have to fulfill a set of criteria. They must deal with a recognizably difficult, possibly still unidentified specialized problem of computer science, to which so far no or only unsatisfactory solutions are present. In addition, the suggested solution should offer a gain in scientific knowledge, and/or a social use. And – last but not least - the problem definition and/or the potential application and use of the suggested solution are to be presented in an easily comprehensible and communicable form. Competition applications can be downloaded under http://www.informatica08.ch/challenges. Closing date is August 15, 2008.

Swiss national year of informatics – informatica08

The Swiss national year of informatics – informatica08 is a project for the promotion of computer science in Switzerland. This initiative is sponsored by the umbrella organization of the Federation of Swiss Computer Science and Telecom Associations ICT Switzerland and its various members. Also taking part are the Swiss Trade Association of Computer Science, Communication and Organization Technology (SWICO), as well as the Swiss Academy of Technical Sciences (SATW).

Large nation-wide meetings, regional events, as well as media and information campaigns in all language regions, will make the broad public conscious of the central meaning and role of computer science for the future development of economics and society. At the same time the initiative wants to arouse the interest of young people, and in particular also of young women, in computer science as an exciting and attractive scientific and vocational field. Thus, for example, the upcoming event „Vulnerability of the Computer Society", a joint project of Empa and the Foundation for Risks and Dialogue, to be presented in six evening meetings from March to November 2008, will highlight risks and chances which result from the dependence on computer and communications technology. These events will be open to the interested public at large, as well as to specialists in the field, and participants are invited to discuss and raise controversial questions and comments. Exact dates for the events and their topics will be published at http://www.informatica08.ch

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Jury Panel Members of the «Swiss Computer Science Challenges Award»

Project Management: Prof. Lorenz Hilty, Empa, St.Gallen

Prof. Abraham Bernstein, Universität Zürich

Prof. Hervé Bourlard, IDIAP, Martigny

Prof. Dominik Gruntz, Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz

Dr. Mélanie Hilario, Université de Genève

Dr. Matthias Kaiserswerth, IBM Forschungslabor Rüschlikon

Prof. Jürg Kohlas, Universität Freiburg

Prof. Friedemann Mattern, ETH Zürich

Dr. Stephan Murer, Credit Suisse, Zürich

Prof. em. Jürg Nievergelt, ETH Zürich

Prof. Laura Pozzi, USI, Lugano

Prof. Maia Wentland Forte, Université de Lausanne

Prof. em. Niklaus Wirth, ETH Zürich

Prof. em. Carl August Zehnder, ETH Zürich

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Further information

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