

Press release  
4 November 2021

## **Taking hold of the future: MINI Switzerland launches design study for the steering wheel of the digital age.**

Simpler, smaller, smarter – what will the steering wheel of tomorrow look like? In cooperation with ECAL, the University of Art and Design Lausanne, MINI is exploring this question within the scope of a design project with 18 master's students.

**Dielsdorf.** For over a century, it has been the key element of interaction between the driver and their car – but what does the steering wheel of the future look like? MINI Switzerland is now exploring this question in a joint design project with ECAL, the University of Art and Design Lausanne. Young designers at the university have been invited to develop their vision for the steering wheel of the future. The MINI design team in Munich is supporting the cooperation partners in this process. Christian Bauer, Head of Interior Design MINI, gives the master's students valuable input for their work.

The steering wheel has evolved time and time again from its first use in vehicles to this day. After new production techniques, requirements and security specifications fundamentally changed its functions and aesthetics, the digitalisation and electrification of cars are bringing about a new surge of innovation. Technology for autonomous driving is pushing the limits of the traditional round steering wheel. It can become simpler, smaller and smarter. At the same time, it will maintain its role as the most important link between driver and car. After all, people still want to enjoy the usual MINI driving pleasure and have control over their vehicles. This is the starting point for the project work with which MINI Switzerland has now entrusted 18 master's students in the Product Design programme at ECAL in Lausanne.

Under the direction of ECAL designer Christophe Guberan, the students are working on the project to find an innovative way of transforming the steering wheel's form and function for the world of today. At three sessions over the course of the project, the students have the opportunity to work with Christian Bauer, Head of Interior Design MINI, and develop their visions further in dialogue with the experienced designer.

MINI Switzerland's cooperation with ECAL builds a productive bridge between the automotive industry and academia. The project is focussing on the creative process as a driving force for innovation. The key objective is reimagining the characteristic MINI design for the functionality and requirements of the digital age. Working together to find

Company  
BMW (Schweiz) AG

A BMW Group  
Company

Address  
Industriestrasse 20  
Postfach  
CH-8157 Dielsdorf

Switchboard  
+41 58 269-1111

Fax  
+41 58 269-1511

Internet  
[www.bmw.ch](http://www.bmw.ch)  
[www.mini.ch](http://www.mini.ch)  
[www.bmw-motorrad.ch](http://www.bmw-motorrad.ch)

Company-ID  
CHE-105.974.654 HR  
CHE-116.284.140 VAT

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the right design for the steering wheel of tomorrow is one more example of MINI's ability to generate new ideas and draw inspiration for aesthetic and technological innovations by interacting with the community and creative minds outside of the automotive industry.

**For further questions please contact:**

BMW Group Switzerland  
Sandro Kälin, Corporate Communications  
Email: [sandro.kaelin@bmw.ch](mailto:sandro.kaelin@bmw.ch)  
Tel.: +41 58 269 10 92  
Media-Website: [www.press.bmwgroup.com](http://www.press.bmwgroup.com)

**The BMW Group**

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2020, the BMW Group sold over 2.3 million passenger vehicles and more than 169,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2020 was € 5.222 billion on revenues amounting to € 98.990 billion. As of 31 December 2020, the BMW Group had a workforce of 120,726 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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**ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne**

Featuring regularly among the world's top ten universities of art and design (fifth in the Dezeen Hot List 2016), ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne benefits from numerous press articles and awards, an enviable number of exhibitions in famous venues, and the success of its graduates. ECAL currently offers a Foundation Course, six Bachelor, and seven Master/MAS programs in the fields of Fine Arts, Film, Graphic Design, Media & Interaction Design, Photography, Industrial & Product Design, Type Design, Design for Luxury & Craftsmanship.

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