

Press release

A recap of Cybathlon 2024

Seeing-eye canes and robotic guide dogs

Zurich, 27 October 2024

This past weekend, 67 teams from 24 countries competed in ETH Zurich's Cybathlon – fighting not only for victory, but also for the advancement of assistance technologies that are more suitable for everyday use. The third edition of the competition for people with disabilities and experimental assistive technologies was a complete success.



Samuel Kunz from Team RSL at ETH Zurich with his two assistants. (Photograph: Alessandro Della Bella / ETH Zurich)

After three days of intense competition in the Swiss Arena in Kloten, Switzerland and seven local hubs around the globe, today the third edition of the Cybathlon came to a close. A total of 67 teams from 24 countries put their assistive technologies to the test after years of preparation. The overall goal of the competition is to create a world without barriers by advancing assistive technologies for persons with physical disabilities and to create a dialogue with society. Competitors take assistance systems such as arm and leg prostheses, wheelchairs, and canes for the blind and optimise them for everyday use. A total of 6'000 spectators were there live on site, with another 15'500 people following the competitions in regional hubs or from home.

From Switzerland to the world

Taking part in Cybathlon 2024 were 9 teams from Switzerland and 4 from ETH Zurich. Teams from

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Europe, Asia, and Africa also travelled to Zurich for the competitions; 6'000 visitors were there to support the international teams and cheer on the pilots. A further 10 teams connected virtually from hubs in the US, Canada, Hungary, Korea, Thailand and South Africa, turning it into a globally networked event. In addition, around 15'500 visitors worldwide tuned in to follow the Cybathlon virtually.

Two new disciplines celebrated their premiere

Cybathlon pilots competed against each other in a total of eight disciplines. There was a virtual race with thought control, a bicycle race with electrical muscle stimulation, and obstacle courses with prosthetic arms, prosthetic legs, robotic exoskeletons, and motorised wheelchairs. This year, two new disciplines were held for the first time: an obstacle course for vision assistive technologies and an Assistant Robot Race. These disciplines, once again, showed what a range of different technical solutions that the teams presented, including robotic arms mounted on wheelchairs and even a kind of robotic guide dog. In the Vision Assistance Race, teams presented a chest harness with a handle that guides the pilot via kinaesthetic feedback, as well as an intelligent cane for the blind and a special app for smartphones.

Samuel Kunz, who completed the course together with a four-legged robot and is competing as a pilot for the second time, says, "I really enjoy taking part in the Cybathlon because I can push myself, compete with others, and achieve something together as a team. I am particularly pleased that there are no losers in this competition: Every participation advances research and brings us one step closer to an improved life for many people."

A successful event and its future

"The Cybathlon impressively demonstrated how important it is to have people at the centre of technology development," says Robert Riener, initiator of the Cybathlon and professor at ETH Zurich. "We create the best technological solutions when we incorporate the needs of users into the development of assistive technologies right from the start." Anni Kern, co-director of the Cybathlon, was also pleased with how the event went this year, "Each time, what really moves me is the camaraderie at the Cybathlon. This positive impetus not only enables us to drive technological development forward, but also to draw attention to the needs of people with disabilities."

After a purely virtual Cybathlon 2020 event due to the pandemic, this third edition of the Cybathlon offered a more accessible and sustainable hybrid competition that took place in front of spectators at the Swiss Arena in Kloten and at seven local hubs around the world. However, Cybathlon 2024 was the last time the competition will be held in Switzerland for the foreseeable future. We anticipate that the next Cybathlon competition may be scheduled in Asia in four years' time.

Further information

Results of all races: <https://cybathlon.ethz.ch/en/cybathlon-2024/results?event=5267&discipline=49> →

Image and video material: <https://cybathlon.ethz.ch/en/media> →

General information: <https://cybathlon.ethz.ch/en> →

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