UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

DEPARTEMENT D'INFORMATIQUE
DEPARTEMENT FÜR INFORMATIK

INFORMATICS COLLOQUIUM

Speaker:

Dr. Laurent Balmelli, Citrix

Build Before You're Ready: Lessons From Two Startups, Two Acquisitions, and a Lot of Doubts

Abstract:
Students often ask: "How do I know if I'm ready to start something?" The honest answer is: you usually don't—and waiting for certainty can be the most expensive decision you make.
In this talk, Laurent Balmelli shares hard-earned lessons from building two startups from scratch through acquisition. He unpacks what "build before you're ready" looks like in real life: choosing a problem worth suffering for, turning technical insight into a product people actually want, finding early believers, and learning to make decisions with incomplete data.
It's not a highlight reel. It's the behind-the-scenes reality—rejection, doubt, long stretches of ambiguity—and the mental models that help you keep moving anyway. If you're a student considering entrepreneurship or product-building, you'll leave with practical ways to start earlier, learn faster, and choose a path that's meaningful, even when it's not the easiest.

Bio:
Laurent Balmelli is a Swiss computer scientist, entrepreneur, and product leader in cybersecurity. He earned his PhD in computer science at EPFL (in Martin Vetterli's lab) and began his career at IBM Research, first in New York and later in Tokyo, working across advanced software engineering and model-based systems approaches (including work connected to SysML). Back in Switzerland, he co-founded Strong Codes (software protection against reverse engineering), acquired by Snapchat in 2016, and later founded Strong Network in 2020, pioneering secure, cloud-based developer workspaces inspired by lessons learned from legacy VDI—built for both stronger security and better developer experience. Strong Network was acquired by Citrix at the end of 2024, where Laurent now leads Secure Development Spaces, focusing on Zero Trust access, protection of code and IP, and the evolving impact of AI on cybersecurity and product design.

Date and time: *Friday, March 13th, 2026,* ***11.00 am***
Location : *Pérolles 21, room D130, Bd de Pérolles 90, Fribourg*
Contact person: *Prof. Philippe Cudré-Mauroux*

The colloquium is free and open to the public.