# Meta opens £12 million Cambridge lab and acquires stake in EssilorLuxottica to boost AI smart glasses



Facebook owner Meta has taken a significant step in its ambitious push into AI-powered wearable technology by opening a £12 million audio research lab in Cambridge. The new facility, featuring specialised reverb rooms and ultra-quiet acoustic chambers, is designed to advance spatial audio and machine learning specifically for Meta’s next-generation AI glasses. This development underscores Meta’s growing investment in the UK tech sector, where the company already employs more than 5,500 people.

The Cambridge lab launch coincided with a high-profile meeting between Meta’s chief global affairs officer, Joel Kaplan, and UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves, symbolising a mutual commitment to innovation and investment within the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor. Kaplan emphasised that the facility represents Meta’s long-term dedication to the UK, highlighting the abundant engineering talent available locally. He expressed excitement about the lab’s potential to elevate the audio experience of Meta’s smart glasses, ensuring seamless, AI-powered sound quality regardless of external distractions. Chancellor Reeves welcomed the investment as a “huge vote of confidence” in the UK’s position as a hub for cutting-edge research, noting the government’s ongoing backing of the sector with a record £22 billion in research and development funding aimed at fostering innovation and sustainable job growth.

The lab’s establishment comes amid reports that Meta has taken a nearly 3% minority stake in EssilorLuxottica, the world’s largest eyewear manufacturer and parent company of renowned brands Ray-Ban and Oakley. This stake, valued at around €3 billion (£2.6 billion), represents a strategic move by Meta to deepen its foothold in the smart glasses market, a sector increasingly defined by the integration of artificial intelligence. Although neither Meta nor EssilorLuxottica officially commented, industry analysts see this partnership as a natural progression of their existing collaboration, which began in 2019 with the launch of the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses — the first AI glasses to achieve notable commercial success globally.

Following the Ray-Ban Meta launch, Meta and EssilorLuxottica recently introduced a new line of Oakley Meta glasses targeted at athletes. These AI-enhanced smart glasses feature Oakley’s PRIZM Lens technology for improved vision across varied light and weather conditions, alongside Meta’s AI assistant capabilities, including voice interaction and activity recording. The Oakley Meta HSTN glasses are water-resistant and designed to meet the performance demands of sport, further expanding Meta’s product portfolio beyond the lifestyle segment dominated by Ray-Ban.

EssilorLuxottica has indicated plans to expand manufacturing capacity for smart glasses and explore further collaborations with Meta, suggesting the alliance is positioned for long-term growth in the wearable tech sphere. Market reaction to the investment was positive, with EssilorLuxottica’s shares rising nearly 6% following the announcement, reflecting investor confidence in the synergy between Meta’s AI expertise and EssilorLuxottica’s market-leading eyewear brands.

This latest expansion signifies Meta’s broader ambition to lead in the rapidly evolving domain of intelligent, connected wearables. By harnessing the UK’s research talent through the Cambridge audio lab and leveraging strategic partnerships with industry giants like EssilorLuxottica, Meta is positioning itself at the forefront of a market that blends advanced software, hardware design, and consumer lifestyle innovation.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/meta-opens-cambridge-lab-as-part-of-ai-glasses-expansion-FVVSDBWEIZOEFKNYLW2WQWKFP4/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/meta-opens-cambridge-lab-as-part-of-ai-glasses-expansion-FVVSDBWEIZOEFKNYLW2WQWKFP4/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/meta-opens-cambridge-lab-as-part-of-ai-glasses-expansion-FVVSDBWEIZOEFKNYLW2WQWKFP4/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/meta-opens-cambridge-lab-as-part-of-ai-glasses-expansion-FVVSDBWEIZOEFKNYLW2WQWKFP4/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/meta-takes-around-3-stake-ray-ban-parent-essilorluxottica-source-says-2025-07-08/), [[7]](https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-35-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/20/meta-essilorluxottica-oakley-smart-glasses-hstn.html), [[6]](https://www.essilorluxottica.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/essilorluxottica-and-meta-to-launch-oakley-meta/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/meta-takes-around-3-stake-ray-ban-parent-essilorluxottica-source-says-2025-07-08/), [[4]](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/09/shares-of-ray-ban-maker-essilorluxottica-jump-on-reported-meta-stake.html), [[7]](https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-35-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/meta-opens-cambridge-lab-as-part-of-ai-glasses-expansion-FVVSDBWEIZOEFKNYLW2WQWKFP4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/meta-opens-cambridge-lab-as-part-of-ai-glasses-expansion-FVVSDBWEIZOEFKNYLW2WQWKFP4/> - Meta has inaugurated a £12 million audio research lab in Cambridge to advance spatial audio and machine learning for its AI glasses. The facility features reverb rooms and ultra-quiet acoustic chambers to enhance audio quality. Meta's investment underscores its commitment to the UK, where it employs over 5,500 people. The lab's opening coincides with reports of Meta acquiring a nearly 3% stake in EssilorLuxottica, the parent company of Ray-Ban and Oakley, valued at approximately €3 billion, reflecting Meta's strategic focus on wearable technology.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/meta-takes-around-3-stake-ray-ban-parent-essilorluxottica-source-says-2025-07-08/> - Meta Platforms has acquired nearly a 3% stake in EssilorLuxottica, the parent company of Ray-Ban, for approximately €3 billion. This strategic move aligns with Meta’s ongoing investments in artificial intelligence and wearable technology, aiming to attract new users through innovative AI-powered devices. The company may increase its stake to around 5% over time. Although EssilorLuxottica and Meta declined to comment on the investment, the collaboration between the two companies appears to be deepening. Meta recently teamed up with Oakley, a brand under EssilorLuxottica, to launch the "Oakley Meta HSTN," a pair of AI-enhanced smart glasses featuring a high-resolution camera, open-ear speakers, and water resistance. This follows the commercial success of Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses introduced in 2023. EssilorLuxottica has expressed intentions to expand production capacity for smart glasses and explore further partnerships with Meta across additional brands. This deal highlights a broader industry trend toward integrating AI into consumer wearable tech.
4. <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/09/shares-of-ray-ban-maker-essilorluxottica-jump-on-reported-meta-stake.html> - Shares of EssilorLuxottica, the maker of Ray-Ban, rose nearly 6% following reports that Meta has taken a minority stake in the company. Meta reportedly bought a stake worth around €3 billion ($3.51 billion) at the current market price and is considering further investments that could expand its share to 5%. This investment indicates Meta's growing inroads into wearable technology. Meta and EssilorLuxottica first struck up a partnership in 2019, producing two generations of Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses.
5. <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/20/meta-essilorluxottica-oakley-smart-glasses-hstn.html> - Meta and EssilorLuxottica unveiled a new line of Oakley smart glasses, the Oakley Meta HSTN, featuring Meta's artificial intelligence assistant. The glasses are targeted at athletes and have a starting price of $399. This marks the first expansion of Meta and EssilorLuxottica's smart glasses beyond the Ray-Ban brand. The Oakley Meta HSTN glasses include Oakley's PRIZM Lens technology, designed to help athletes see better across changing light and weather conditions. The glasses are also water-resistant and integrate Meta's AI digital assistant, allowing users to ask questions and record videos of their activities.
6. <https://www.essilorluxottica.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/essilorluxottica-and-meta-to-launch-oakley-meta/> - EssilorLuxottica and Meta Platforms announced Oakley Meta, a new category of Performance AI glasses that pair Meta’s industry-leading AI technology with Oakley’s pioneering design and PRIZM lenses to transform how consumers experience their biggest wins – on and off the field. Following the category-defining success of Ray-Ban Meta, the #1 selling AI glasses in the world which have sold millions of units since launch, Oakley Meta glasses will be the next product line to come from this long-term partnership.
7. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-35-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/> - Meta Platforms Inc. bought a minority stake in the world’s largest eye-wear maker EssilorLuxottica SA, a deal that increases the US tech giant’s financial commitment to the fast-growing smart glasses industry. Meta acquired just under 3 percent of Ray-Ban maker EssilorLuxottica, a stake worth around €3 billion ($3.5 billion) at the current market price. This investment aligns with Meta's ongoing efforts to integrate artificial intelligence into wearable technology, aiming to attract new users through innovative AI-powered devices.