# Meta opens £12 million Cambridge lab to advance AI-powered smart glasses with EssilorLuxottica



Technology giant Meta has inaugurated a £12 million audio research laboratory in Cambridge, marking a significant step in its development of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered smart glasses. This initiative complements Meta's strategic investment in EssilorLuxottica, the world-leading eyewear manufacturer, which produces iconic brands such as Ray-Ban and Oakley. Meta recently acquired nearly a 3% stake in EssilorLuxottica for approximately €3 billion (£2.6 billion), strengthening its collaboration with the company on AI-enhanced eyewear and possibly paving the way for an increase in ownership to around 5%.

The Cambridge lab aims to advance cutting-edge sound technologies integrated into Meta's AI glasses, which the company developed in partnership with Ray-Ban. Using machine learning, the team is working to enable glasses that can detect user focus and enhance desired sounds while filtering out background noise, delivering a more natural and immersive auditory experience. The current smart glasses, retailing between £299 and £379, offer functionalities including video calling, livestreaming, and virtual outfit curation, exemplifying the blend of fashion and technology. Meta emphasises that the new facility bolsters the UK’s status as a global centre for tech innovation, reinforcing its long-term commitment to the region and supporting national ambitions in AI and immersive computing.

At the opening, Meta’s Chief Global Affairs Officer Joel Kaplan highlighted the importance of leveraging the UK's "top engineering talent" to develop AI-powered audio that enables users to focus on desired sounds regardless of surrounding distractions. Chancellor Rachel Reeves welcomed the investment as a strong endorsement of the UK's innovation ecosystem, particularly the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor, which the government projects could add £78 billion to the UK economy. Reeves underscored the UK government’s commitment to supporting high-tech industries through a record £22 billion fund for research and development, aimed at fostering jobs and investment.

Meta’s stake acquisition in EssilorLuxottica underlines its strategic intent to dominate the burgeoning smart glasses market. The partnership, ongoing since 2019, has previously yielded successful products such as the Ray-Ban Meta glasses and the Oakley Meta HSTN model, which includes features like high-resolution cameras, open-ear speakers, water resistance, and AI assistants. This move aligns with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg’s broader vision of building the metaverse and expanding the company’s footprint in AI and wearable technology sectors. By deepening ties with EssilorLuxottica, Meta not only strengthens its position in tech-driven eyewear but also gains a foothold in mainstream consumer markets through a respected global eyewear manufacturer.

EssilorLuxottica CEO Francesco Milleri previously expressed enthusiasm about the partnership and Meta's growing investment, which is seen by analysts as a vote of confidence in the commercial viability of smart eyewear. The company itself is expanding production capacity and exploring further collaborative opportunities with Meta across its various brands. This latest £2.6 billion investment by Meta comes as part of a wider AI strategy to embed intelligent features into everyday consumer devices, enhancing user experiences while securing Meta’s long-term role in the fast-evolving smart wearables market.

As of the end of 2023, Meta employed over 6,300 people in the UK, with the Cambridge lab symbolising a key element of the company’s increasing focus on regional talent and innovation hubs. The combined investment in research infrastructure and corporate partnerships epitomises the emerging convergence of AI, fashion, and consumer electronics, placing the UK at the forefront of these technological advancements.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29938), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/meta-takes-around-3-stake-ray-ban-parent-essilorluxottica-source-says-2025-07-08/), [[3]](https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-3-5-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/), [[6]](https://www.pymnts.com/news/wearables/2025/meta-reportedly-buys-3-stake-in-smart-glasses-partner-essilorluxottica/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29938), [[4]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/technology/why-would-meta-want-to-invest-in-essilorluxottica)
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* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/meta-takes-around-3-stake-ray-ban-parent-essilorluxottica-source-says-2025-07-08/), [[3]](https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-3-5-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/), [[4]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/technology/why-would-meta-want-to-invest-in-essilorluxottica), [[5]](https://www.firstonline.info/en/meta-enters-EssilorLuxottica-with-3-billion-investment-for-AI-based-glasses-of-the-future/amp/), [[6]](https://www.pymnts.com/news/wearables/2025/meta-reportedly-buys-3-stake-in-smart-glasses-partner-essilorluxottica/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.firstonline.info/en/meta-enters-EssilorLuxottica-with-3-billion-investment-for-AI-based-glasses-of-the-future/amp/), [[3]](https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-3-5-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/), [[4]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/technology/why-would-meta-want-to-invest-in-essilorluxottica)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29938)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/29938> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <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 eyewear giant EssilorLuxottica for approximately €3 billion ($3.52 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. 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.
3. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/meta-invests-3-5-billion-in-worlds-largest-eye-wear-maker-in-ai-glasses-push/> - Meta Platforms Inc. has acquired a minority stake in EssilorLuxottica, the world’s largest eyewear maker, marking a significant step in Meta's commitment to the fast-growing smart glasses industry. The investment, valued at around €3 billion ($3.5 billion) at the current market price, deepens the relationship between Meta and EssilorLuxottica, which have collaborated on AI-powered smart glasses, including the Ray-Ban Meta glasses launched in 2023. Meta's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, has invested heavily to develop the metaverse, and this acquisition aligns with that strategy. The deal also provides EssilorLuxottica with deeper engagement in the tech world, which could be beneficial if Meta's futuristic bets pay off.
4. <https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/technology/why-would-meta-want-to-invest-in-essilorluxottica> - Meta and EssilorLuxottica have been partners since 2019, working together on smart glasses. Notable products include the Ray-Ban Meta glasses launched in 2023 and the Oakley Meta HSTN released earlier this year. These smart glasses come with features like a 12MP camera, video recording, audio playback, and Meta's AI assistant. The Oakley model also adds durability and water resistance. The new investment, worth approximately €3 billion (USD 3.52 billion), was made through stock market purchases in Paris. This acquisition reflects Meta's growing interest in AI-powered wearable technology and its commitment to the smart glasses market.
5. <https://www.firstonline.info/en/meta-enters-EssilorLuxottica-with-3-billion-investment-for-AI-based-glasses-of-the-future/amp/> - Meta's investment in EssilorLuxottica, valued at around €3 billion ($3.5 billion), marks an important step in its quest to deliver AI capabilities through tangible consumer products. The acquisition comes at a time when Meta is increasingly focusing on AI as a core growth pillar, as evident in its recent partnerships and product launches. The deal deepens the relationship between Meta and EssilorLuxottica, which have already collaborated on the development of AI-powered smart glasses. Meta currently markets Ray-Ban smart glasses and recently introduced a new line of Oakley-branded products enhanced with AI technology. EssilorLuxottica CEO Francesco Milleri had previously indicated that Meta was interested in taking a stake in the company, and this investment cements that interest. The transaction underscores growing confidence in the mainstream adoption potential of smart eyewear. Meta may expand its stake to roughly 5% in the future, though no final decision has been made. The investment cements Meta’s position as a strategic partner while keeping its ownership as a minority investor. American Depository Receipts of EssilorLuxottica rose 7% before the closing bell following the report. The deal comes as Meta bets big on smart wearables embedded with artificial intelligence, amid its broader efforts to transition into a leading AI company.
6. <https://www.pymnts.com/news/wearables/2025/meta-reportedly-buys-3-stake-in-smart-glasses-partner-essilorluxottica/> - Meta reportedly bought a roughly 3% stake in eyewear maker EssilorLuxottica, which is the maker of Ray-Ban and Oakley glasses and one of Meta’s partners in the smart glasses business. The stake is worth about €3 billion (about $3.5 billion), Bloomberg reported Tuesday (July 8), citing unnamed sources. Neither Meta nor EssilorLuxottica immediately replied to PYMNTS’ request for comment. The two companies have been partners in the development of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered smart glasses for several years, according to the report. Meta sells Ray-Ban glasses that were first launched in 2021 and Oakley glasses that were added in June, the report said. Smart glasses are part of Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg’s plan for growth in AI, as the glasses allow the company to distribute its app and services through its own devices rather than those built by others, per the report.