

Biotechnet Annual Report 2017

Personnel

From the beginning of 2017, Laura Suter-Dick (FHNW) took over the presidency of biotechnet from her predecessor, Prof. Daniel Gygax (FHNW). Biotechnet is very thankful to Prof. Gygax for all his efforts and the successes he achieved as the former president. We are very pleased that he will be acting as an advisor to the Board and about the link to NTN.

In January, Dieter Ulrich from CSEM Landquart replaced Dr Daniel Caminada as platform co-manager for In Vitro Diagnostics (IVD). Towards the end of the year, the Board accepted the application of Eliane Müller, representing the University of Bern and the Insel Spital, as a full member of biotechnet. We are looking forward to this enrichment and welcome Eliane warmly to the biotechnet board as of January 2018!

Due to an illness-related absence, Cathy Kroll and Daniel Gygax took over the activities of Domenico (Nic) Alexakis in the management of NTN Swiss Biotech. An external trust company has taken charge of the accounting.

2017 annual financial statements

The 2017 annual accounts show that the year ended better than budgeted. The revenues of about CHF 480,000 are matched by expenditure of approximately CHF 530,000. The return flow to the platforms and members for approved CTI projects amounts to CHF 180,000 and is in line with the budget. Operations and contributions to the NTN Swiss Biotech account for CHF 240,000. Communications and advertising expenses totalled CHF 30,000. Biotechnet contributed about CHF 30,000 towards internal and external events.

What has changed?

Since 1 October 2016, NTN Swiss Biotech has had a new governance structure consisting of three board members and two assessors. biotechnet members should be aware that the flow of money from the CTI will definitely dry up. The

board has to define a strategy for 2019 as a matter of urgency in order to secure a successful and sustainable future for biotechnet.

Education Program

Several local companies such as BioGen, CelGene, CLS-Behring, Lonza, Vifor and UCB are generating several hundred new life science jobs in the biotechnology sector. In order to cover their needs, an optimally tailored training and education program is required. biotechnet has offered its support to the directors of the Universities of Applied Sciences, who are working closely together and have signed a Memo of Understanding. To this end, a new platform – “Training for Pharma/Biotech”, led by Prof. Daniel Gygax – has been created. Several schools are already offering courses to industry and know-how is already available so that biotechnet may act as a broker for the coordination of specific training. Discussions to identify specific gaps and details regarding requirements (numbers of participants, language(s), evaluation of success and certification) are ongoing.

R&D platforms bridging market

To better reflect its research focus, the former Regenerative Medicine platform has been renamed to Translational and Clinical Bio-Manufacturing. In addition, the new Training for Pharma/Biotech platform has been created. Currently, biotechnet comprises the following platforms:

- Antibiotics
- Biocatalysis and Biosynthesis
- Bioinformatics
- Biologics
- Bioresource Technologies
- In Vitro Diagnostics
- Single-Use-Technology
- TEDD Tissue Engineering for Drug Development
- Training for Pharma/Biotech
- Translational and Clinical Bio-Manufacturing

Workshop focusing on NTN strategies

With Bruno Weber as facilitator, biotechnet members discussed how to achieve financial independence by 2018-2019. Progress has been made in the definition of the future directions, but in 2018 the ideas need to become concrete and move to the implementation phase. We need a clear understanding of the benefits the network provides to its members and a clear definition of biotechnet's goals for the next five years. The financial situation of biotechnet is favourable, making a one- to two-year transition period possible.

During the Workshop, Professor Eliane Mueller (UniBE and CellnTec) was invited to give a guest lecture. She spoke about 'A Nationwide Platform for Cell Therapy and Regenerative Medicine' and presented the Platform for Stem Cell Research in Regenerative Medicine (www.stemcellscern.ch). She also presented the Sitem-Insel project, an independent non-profit organization which promotes start-ups and innovation (www.sitem-insel.ch). Eliane Mueller has been a full member of biotechnet and member of the board since 1 January 2018.

Summer School 2017 at HES-SO Valais-Wallis

The Summer School 2017, where biologists traditionally gather to exchange ideas, took place at the HES-SO in Sion from 3 through 6 September with a budget of about CHF 20,000 from biotechnet. The event was well organized: we enabled 17 Master's students from Palermo and about 25 students from Switzerland to travel to Sion, and biotechnet was able to fill its budget with CHF 5,000 to spare thanks to the generous sponsors from Western Switzerland.

NTN Swiss Biotech Research Day 2017 on 13 September 2017

The event was integrated into Basel Life Science Week, which was held from 11 – 15 September 2017. This year's topic was biocatalysis. The whole event cost biotechnet CHF 15,000 (sponsoring) and had a limited impact, with a small number of visitors. For 2018, additional advertisement of the event in the schools and in industry will be necessary to ensure appropriate impact. The tentative topic for next year's Research Day will be antibiotic resistance.

TEDD Annual Meeting

The traditional annual meeting of TEDD Competence Centre Tissue Engineering for Drug Development and Substance Testing took place at ZHAW Wädenswil on 8 and 9 November 2017. At the beginning, a 3D bioprinting workshop was held, with presentations by Swiss company regenHU Ltd., which offers a broad portfolio of biomaterials for both soft and hard tissue engineering and drug discovery, and the Swedish bioprinting company CELLINK – both close partners of the TEDD team. The well attended events featured lectures by representatives of IUSM/IUPUI ETH Zurich, L'OREAL, Irish Trinity Centre for Bioengineering and Biogelx Ltd. UK, as well as TEDD researchers like Michael Raghunath (Director of the TEDD Competence Centre) and Markus Rimann (Group Leader at 3D Tissues and Biofabrication).

POINT-OF-CARE DIAGNOSTICS

On 26 October 2017, the HES-SO Valais in Sierre hosted the SWISS SYMPOSIUM on point-of-care diagnostics attended by renowned scientists from all over Switzerland. George M. Whitesides, the special guest from Harvard University, received a lot of attention. The Symposium brought together stakeholders from medicine, industry, the public and research institutions to discuss opportunities and challenges along the road to innovative and new POC diagnostic products. The event was organized by Marc Pfeifer from HES-SO, Chairman of the Symposium, and Ulrich Dieter, Co-Chairman from CSEM Landquart.

European Congress on Biotechnology 2018

The EC2018 will be held in Geneva on 1 – 4 July 2018, supported by biotechnet. There will be two highlight events on 2 and 3 July dedicated to the “Swiss-made Biotech”. The preliminary programme includes speakers from NTN-biotech, industry (start-ups, SMEs and large companies), Applied Sciences Universities and Innosuisse. The focus will be on funding and implementation of biotechnology in Switzerland.

<http://www.ecb2018.com/>