

## Biotechnet Annual Report 2019

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### Personnel

Towards the end of 2018, Steffen Zeissberger (Wyss Institute, Zürich) had announced that he would leave biotechnet Switzerland, which became effective in 2019. Towards the end of 2019, Silke Schneider (University of Zürich) indicated that the dean from the University of Zürich would strongly reorganize and that therefore, the Personalized Health Alliance would cease to exist. We are thankful to both Steffen and Silke for the fruitful collaborations in the past years and regret their leaving biotechnet Switzerland. However, we understand that internal re-organizations and re-focusing in both institutions made this step unavoidable. The platform TCBM is thus effectively led by Eliane Müller and the future of Personalized Medicine (led until by S. Schneider) will need to be revisited.

During 2019, Markus Rimann replaced Michael Raghunath as head of the TEDD (Tissue Engineering for Drug Discovery) platform. Markus will also be representing ZHAW, together with J. Rohrer, as a board member. We thank Michael for his support and welcome Markus to biotechnet.

### 2019 annual financial statements

The 2019 annual accounts show that the year ended better than budgeted. The revenues of about CHF 150,000 were matched by expenditure of approximately CHF 180,000. Thanks to the release of hidden reserves of CHF 48,000, the annual loss is only CHF 30,000. The return flow to the platforms and members for approved projects and events amounts to CHF 110,000 and is CHF 10,000 lower than in the budget. Communications and advertising expenses totalled CHF 10,000. The expenditures of the Summer School with the University of Palermo at FHNW in Muttenz was in line with the budget of CHF 20,000.

## What has changed?

As mentioned in the last yearly report, the board and platform leaders of biotechnet Switzerland have been focusing on strategic changes and re-focusing for a long term strategy in the fast developing field of biotechnology. With this in mind, in 2019 the board has decided to make some changes in the advisory council. We are pleased to welcome Bruno Weber and Michael Altorfer as members of the advisory board. We take this opportunity to thank R. Bühlmann and L. Pasamontes for their past support.

In addition, some key institutions have nominated candidates to provide fresh ideas and identify needs. These persons are P. Shahgaldian and T. Villiger (FHNW), Steffi Lehmann and Jack Rohrer (ZHAW) and Jean-Manuel Segura and Andreas Peer (HESSO). With their input supporting the board members and platform leaders, strategic changes will be further delineated, planned and implemented in the first half of 2020, after discussion at a face-to-face meeting in Bern planned for the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. This is within the planned timelines discussed in 2018, when the board decided to continue key activities for at least 4 years, whilst delineating the future.

The number of platforms has been reduced as, the platform *Biologics* was discontinued due to lack of activity and the platform *Personalized Medicines*, led by S. Schneider will presumably also cease its activities in 2020.

The interaction with industry remains one of the most important aspects of biotechnet. As mentioned before, in addition to the memorandum of understanding signed 2018 with the SBA, Michael Altorfer has agreed to serve as an advisor to biotechnet in 2020 and he will join the face-to-face meeting planned in February 2020.

## Summer school

The XIV Summer School on Advanced Biotechnology, where biologists traditionally gather to exchange ideas, took place in Muttenz, hosted by the FHNW in its new Campus from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup>. September 2019. As in previous years Biotechnet supported this summer school with presentations and participation and a budget of approximately CHF 20,000. Students and presenters from several members (ZHAW, HES-SO, FHNW, MCI) took part of the meeting. In total more than 50 students from Italy, Switzerland and Austria participated the summer school at Palermo.

In addition to excellent scientific talks, specific highlights of the summer school were the visit of the Italian ambassador to Switzerland (Silvio Mignano) at the opening session and the “career session” with several members of industry interacting with the students. The career session was very well received by the students as it was dedicated to discuss current needs of industry that may open career opportunities for bachelor, master and PhDs. For this session, we counted with speakers from several companies (Roche, Biogen, Glenmark, Inofea, Biognosys) as well as the Swiss Biotech Association (SBA) and italbiotech. The summer school was rounded up by a visit to the Technology Center (PTC), recently established at the FHNW Campus Muttenz. The XV Summer School is planned for September 2020 in Palermo and will also be supported by biotechnet.

Biotechnet also partly supported the summer school “Environment and Health” hosted by Philippe Corvini & Laura Suter-Dick (Platform Bioresource Technologies). This international summer school was co-organized with Nanjing University (China) and International Institute for Environmental Studies, Trent University (Canada).

### **Swiss Biotech Day 2019**

The SBA-event Swiss biotech day in held on May 7<sup>th</sup>. 2019 in Basel was an extremely successful event where biotechnology players meet. During this event, biotechnet Switzerland had the opportunity to be present with a poster. In addition, in the Innosuisse-sponsored session “success stories”, L. Suter-Dick (FHNW) and Olivier Frey (InSphero AG) were selected by the hosting Innosuisse to present a successfully accomplished project. This is an excellent example of biotechnet Switzerland making a difference, as the long-lasting collaboration between FHNW and InSphero, including the successful completion of several Innosuisse projects and student projects, originated from a seed-money project from biotechnet (through the TEDD platform).

### **Future financing**

After discussions during the last year between several members of biotechnet and with Innosuisse, a proposal for the new NTN-call (lunched end of 2019) will be prepared and submitted early 2020. It is clear that this cannot in any way be a continuation of biotechnet and therefore, the proposal will cover the areas of cellular systems for drug discovery and for in vitro diagnostic. This is

still in preparation under the leadership of ZHWA with a strong involvement of the platforms TEDD and In Vitro Diagnostics (M. Pfeiffer and D. Ulrich). Additional funding opportunities will be sought to cover other activities of biotechnet Switzerland. The School directors conference in 2019 was not willing to support biotechnet Switzerland financially at this time.

### **Supported events**

In 2019, biotechnet was again a strong supporter of scientific events. These provided an excellent opportunity for scientific exchange and networking between members and industry. Some examples are listed below.

#### *TERMIS*

TERMIS EU (incorporated two TEDD Symposia)  
Rhodos, Greece <https://termis.org/eu2019/>

#### *Personalized Oncology*

Personalized Oncology 2019, Uni Basel  
<https://personalized-oncology-2019.unibas.ch/en/home/>

*Process intensification and continuous bioprocessing,*  
ZHAW in Wädenswil, [www.biotech2019.ch](http://www.biotech2019.ch)

*Cellular agriculture and single-use technologies,*  
ZHAW in Wädenswil, [www.biotech2019.ch](http://www.biotech2019.ch)

#### *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 the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 with focus on «Cell sources and stem cell generation for drug development».

## Publications

In addition to the highlighted conferences, biotechnet has been made visible through six publications in Chimia.

- CHIMIA 2019, NO 1/2 Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Swiss Symposium in Point-of-Care Diagnostics
- CHIMIA 2019, No 1/2 Oreste Ghisalba – ein Nachruf
- CHIMIA 2019, No 4 A New Technology Breaks Through: 1000-Litre Microbial Fuel Cell Generates Pure Water and Electricity
- CHIMIA 2019, No 6 Translation of Academic Health Innovations Goes National – Foundation of the Platform for Swiss Translational and Clinical Bio-Manufacturing (TCBM)
- CHIMIA 2019, No 9 BioTech 2019 – ZHAW Waedenswil, Part 1 – From Innovation to Technology Breakthrough
- CHIMIA 2019, No 9 BioTech 2019 – ZHAW Waesdenswil, Part 2 – The Future of Food: Cellular Agriculture