

Press release

Debiopharm Group supports venture kick

St. Gall/Zurich/Lausanne, June 20, 2012 – Debiopharm Group™ (Debiopharm) will support the national Pre-Seed Fund venture kick, contributing to the development of high potential business ideas at Switzerland's institutes of higher learning and universities. Debiopharm is the first private company to join the ranks of the 5 foundations – Gebert Rüt Stiftung, ERNST GÖHNER Stiftung, OPO-Stiftung, AVINA STIFTUNG and Fondation 1796 des Associés de la Maison de banquiers privés Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Cie - which have all pooled their efforts in supporting the companies of tomorrow.

Established in 1979, Debiopharm and its founders have always been committed to ongoing innovation, to the advancement of entrepreneurial spirit and to the development of the Swiss economic tissue in general, and the economic tissue of the Arc Lémanique area in particular. In this sense, Debiopharm's support of the venture kick initiative fits perfectly into its past commitments to other programs which support entrepreneurship such as Genilem, Eclosion, la FIT and the START competition.

Innovation, the key of international competitiveness

By Thierry Mauvernay, Managing Director of Debiopharm, it's a profitable investment for the future of Switzerland: «Switzerland is a great platform for innovation and this not only the case in the life-sciences sector, our field of activity. It remains of paramount importance to support today's young entrepreneurs who guarantee the jobs of tomorrow by launching new companies. Our institutions of higher-learning and universities are gorged with young talents; enabling them to launch their own projects seems to be an essential contribution to Switzerland's future. Debiopharm is delighted to partner with the foundations which have launched this initiative and is ready to contribute to the future of Switzerland innovation scene.»

A partnership for the future of the location Switzerland

Pascale Vonmont, president of venture kick's strategy committee and Deputy Director of Gebert Rüt Stiftung, underscores the importance of partnerships between private and public actors as well as foundations: «We are very pleased to welcome Debiopharm amongst the donors who are behind the venture kick initiative. In this day and age, it is essential to work together in order to have a real and sustainable impact on society at large. venture kick is one of the best examples of a successful joint effort between different types of actors. It remains however of crucial importance that even more partners join our ranks so as to continue to support this effort in the years to come.»

A link with the industry for strengthened start-ups

Beat Schillig and Jordi Montserrat, Co-Directors of venture kick, welcome this support coming from an industrial player, a link which is also supported by the experts who compose the venture kick juries. «Being confronted early-on with the realities faced by industrial players, helps new and upcoming entrepreneurs to build projects that are even more likely to succeed. We also want to recognize this great contribution coming from a private company in times of economic uncertainty. This readiness to commit to the development of companies, which will fuel the growth of our economic tissue in the future, is a perfect illustration of the entrepreneurial spirit which drives Switzerland!»

More than 8,5 millions of francs in pre-seed capital

The private initiative is financed by the Gebert Rüt Stiftung, the ERNST GOEHNER Stiftung, the OPO-Stiftung, the AVINA STIFTUNG, Foundation 1796 of Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Cie, and from now on, by Debiopharm. The project is managed by the IFJ Institut für Jungunternehmen which is based in St. Gall, Zurich and Lausanne. venture kick was born due to a unique collaboration between private foundations wanting to contribute in a significant manner to increase the entrepreneurial dynamism at Swiss higher education institutions and universities. The objective is to double the amount of spin-offs, by speeding up the process of launching a company and by making start-ups more attractive for professional investors. In order to meet its objectives, venture kick offers up to 130.000 francs in pre-seed capital. Four winners receive 10.000 francs each and qualify for the second round after three months. Then 20.000 francs will be distributed to the "better half" of the teams. After six months, in the third round, it's to win the last 100.000 francs. The seed capital is aligned à fonds perdu. The last payment of 100.000 francs will only be transacted when the new company is established effectively. Between sessions, the start-ups are intensively supervised in the so-called "kickers camps".

venture kick addresses the main issue which is avoiding innovation transfer. Too many researchers and students fail in their attempts to concretize a business idea based on their research: vague idea, incomplete commercial concept, or simply lacking know-how on how to write a convincing business plan. venture kick closes this gap in Switzerland's innovation process through its pre-seed capital. Since its inception in the autumn of 2007, venture kick has awarded more than 8.5 million francs in prize money, supported and coached 233 spin-off projects which can trace their origins back to Swiss universities. Our efforts have resulted in the creation of over 171 highly innovative companies in the Medtech, Biotech and IT, which have created more than 1.600 sustainable jobs. Furthermore, the supported startups have been able to attract equity, loans, support and prize money to the total tune of over 250 million francs. Are eligible to apply: project sponsors coming from Swiss institutions of higher learning and universities (students, doctoral candidates, professors), which haven't launched their company yet. venture kick has a rolling admission procedure.

More information: www.venturekick.ch, www.debiopharm.com

List of the entrepreneurs which have benefited from the 130.000 in pre-seed capital in the past:

- Jochen Mundinger, RouteRank, EPFL (internet), www.routerank.com
- Stefan Tuchs Schmid, Virtamed, ETHZ (medtech), www.virtamed.com
- Manuel Aschwanden, Optotune, ETHZ (optics), www.optotune.ch
- Stéphane Doutriaux, Poken, IMD Lausanne (electronics/internet), www.poken.com
- Bettina Ernst, Preclin Biosystems, ETHZ (biotech), www.preclinbiosystems.com
- Martin Bartholet, Celeroton, ETHZ (electronics), www.celeroton.ch
- Sadik Hafizovic, Zurich Instruments, ETHZ (electronics), www.zhinst.com
- Vincent Schickel, Prediggo, EPFL (internet), www.prediggo.com
- Patrizia Fischer, Pearltec, ETHZ (medtech), www.pearltec.ch
- Marc Gitzinger, BioVersys, ETHZ (biotech), www.bioversys.com
- Barbara Yersin, Minsh, EPFL (internet), www.minsh.com
- Giorgio Pietromaggiore, labseed, EPFL (medtech), www.labseed.com
- Wolfgang Moritz, InSphero, Université de Zurich (biotech), www.insphero.com
- Kristin Kapitza, Aiducation International, ETHZ (charity), www.aiducation.org
- Nicolas Burri, StreamForge, ETHZ (internet), www.streamforge.com
- Christophe Canales, Imina Technologies, EPFL (nanotech), www.imina.ch
- Rémi Charrier, StereoTools, EPFL (medtech), www.stereotools.com
- Christof Roduner, Mirasense, ETHZ (internet), www.mirasense.com
- Ralph Schiess, ProteoMediX, ETHZ (biotech), www.proteomedix.ch
- Christoph Gebald, Climeworks, ETHZ (cleantech), www.climeworks.com
- Michael Dupertuis, Geroco, HES-SO Valais (cleantech/internet), www.geroco.com
- Markus Aebi, Malcisbo, ETHZ (biotech), www.malcisbo.com
- Jean-Christophe Zufferey, senseFly, EPFL (electronics), www.sensefly.com
- Francesco Dell'Endice, QualySense, EMPA (electronics), www.qualysense.com
- Alfredo E. Bruno, Advanced Osteotomy Tools, ETHZ (medtech), www.aot-swiss.ch
- Thorsten Schwenke, Thelkin, ZHAW (electronics), www.thelkin.com
- Nicolas Durand, Abionic, EPFL (medtech), www.abionic.com
- Marc Spafford, Delicoustaste (internet), www.delicioustaste.com
- Susanne Wechsler, Bookbridge Foundation, UniSG (charity), www.bookbridge.org
- Martin Odersky, Scala Solutions, EPFL (internet), www.scalasolutions.com
- Dominik Bell, Aeon Scientific, ETHZ (medtech), www.aeon-scientific.com
- David Bonzon, Pandora Underwater Equipment, EPFL (electromec), www.pandora-uwe.com
- Amin Shokrollahi, Kandou Technologies, EPFL (ICT), www.kandou.com
- Nils A. Reinke, Winterthur Instruments, ZHAW (electromec), www.winterthurinstruments.com
- Timo Hafner, Gastros AG, Uni St. Gallen (alimentation/materials), www.gastros.ch
- Andreas Brühlhart, Bcomp, HEG Fribourg (materials), www.bcomp.ch

- Mathias Haussmann, Uepaa(!!) – Swiss Alpine Technology, ETHZ (ICT/mobile), www.uepaa.ch
- Serguei Okhonin, ActLight, EPFL (energy), www.act-light.com
- Andreas Graber, UrbanFarmers, ZHAW (cleantech), www.urbanfarmers.ch
- Ricardo Beira, DistalMotion, EPF Lausanne (medtech), www.distalmotion.com
- Emile de Rijk, SWISSto12, EPFL (electronics), www.swisst12.ch
- Olivier Küng, Pix4D, EPFL (ICT), www.pix4d.com

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