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Swiss biotechnology: Investments at record level and outstanding success stories

The Swiss biotech industry continues to be buoyant and once again managed to increase its sales, exports and research investments in 2018. As a result, it is laying the foundations for further growth and forward-looking development. Capital investment in listed biotech companies saw an especially striking increase: Polyphor boasted one of Europe's most successful flotations in recent years.

The Swiss biotech industry can once again look back on a record year. Industry sales increased by 6 percent compared to 2017, reaching CHF 4 billion. The number of people employed within the 249 biotech companies and 63 suppliers rose by around 4 percent to over 14,300. Capital investment in listed biotech companies has been booming.

Investment in research as the foundation of success

The industry has been laying the foundations for this impressive, sustained growth spanning a number of years with investment in research and development, which has been increasing for years and which rose by a further 32 percent from 2017 to 2018. Swiss biotech companies also invested the lion's share of resources generated by profits and financing transactions in research and development in 2018. The results include a valuable patent portfolio (53 percent of Swiss biotech patents are "world-class patents") and a pipeline filled with promising drug candidates in the preclinical and clinical research phase. The Swiss biotech industry is predominantly made up of small to medium-sized enterprises, and is bolstered by capital investment, major interest from global companies in collaborations, and success in national and international project support programs (Innosuisse, Horizon 2020, international trusts and foundations).

Fit for the future

With the focus this year on "Shaping change", the Swiss Biotech Report 2019 – which is published today – tells the story of this success and uses comprehensive figures to substantiate its claims. The report thus provides proof that the Swiss biotech industry is optimally placed to meet global challenges. An outstanding example of the industry's promising future is the flotation of Polyphor in spring 2018. Having raised around CHF 155 million, this was the largest biotech IPO in Switzerland in over 10 years, and one of the three largest in Europe in the last three years.

Awards for outstanding achievements

The secret to the Swiss biotech industry's success lies not in individual leading-edge companies, but in its diversity. Each year, the Swiss Biotech Association presents companies with the "Swiss Biotech Success Stories Awards" in recognition of outstanding achievements. Biogen, Okairios, Roche Glycart, Selexis and Vifor Fresenius Medical Care Renal Pharma received the award at this year's Swiss Biotech Day after being nominated in 2018.

The companies nominated for the coming 2019/2020 period were also announced. For the first time, the nominees include an individual: **Prof. Dr. Werner Arber**, who was awarded the 1978 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. With his groundbreaking research in the field of molecular genetics, he was instrumental in the development of biotechnology in many ways over several decades. Furthermore, three foundations have been nominated that have been supporting biotech startups with great success for more than 10 years, thereby making a significant contribution to the growth of the industry: **Venture Foundation**, **Venturelab** and **Venture Kick**. Three outstanding and commercially successful biotech companies additionally made it onto the independent jury's list: **Actelion**, **Debiopharm** and **Helsinn**. Actelion, a Janssen pharmaceutical company of Johnson & Johnson, is an industry leader in pulmonary hypertension. Debiopharm, known for oncological therapies and antibiotics, has developed a business model whereby promising product candidates are optimized, tested in clinical development and finally licensed to pharmaceutical partners. Helsinn has a broad portfolio of marketed cancer care products and a deep development pipeline. It has built significant R&D and manufacturing capacities and is an important employer in Ticino.

The Swiss Biotech Association will be working closely with these laureates over the coming 12 months to highlight the diversity and innovative strength of the Swiss biotech industry based on these successes.

Winners of the Swiss Biotech Success Stories Awards 2018/19 (in alphabetical order)

Biogen is a biotech pioneer and is being recognized for the many Swiss elements in its success story. Founded in Switzerland, Biogen is now one of the world's leading biotech companies with over 7,000 employees.

Glycart (now Roche Glycart) is a pioneer in antibody engineering for cancer immunotherapy. The first drug to be based on this technology was approved in 2013 for the treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

Okairos (now GlaxoSmithKline) has developed innovative vaccines based on T cells for the treatment of major infectious diseases like malaria, hepatitis C, HIV and Ebola. GSK acquired the company in 2013 for EUR 250 million.

Selexis has been at the forefront of the development of protein expression for more than a decade and is setting new standards in bioproduction. Selexis's cutting-edge technology is used by over 100 partners worldwide.

Vifor Fresenius Medical Care Renal Pharma is a transformational joint venture between Vifor Pharma and Fresenius: a partnership that established a leading global company offering therapies for the treatment of kidney diseases.

Further information

The Swiss Biotech Report 2019 sheds light on the most important trends, innovation factors and sources of innovation, and summarizes topics and facts on the development of the Swiss biotech industry. The [report is available in digital format](#). You can find out more about [Swiss Biotech Success Stories](#) on the Swiss Biotech website.

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