

Swiss Biotech Success Stories award winner 2025

Dr. Dr. h.c. Henri B. Meier – entrepreneurial leader, venture capitalist, and founder of the Swiss Future Fund



Henri B. Meier's first contact with biotechnology occurred at the age of 54. The inspiration came through the acquisition of Genentech by F. Hoffmann-La Roche in 1990. Genentech were pioneers in recombinant DNA (rDNA) technology. This technology allowed a human gene to be inserted into the genetic material of bacteria. By inserting the human insulin gene, such "recombinant bacteria" could then produce insulin. This became the first recombinant drug approved by the FDA using rDNA technology.

After studies in St. Gallen and at Columbia University, New York, Henri B. Meier began his professional life working for developing countries at the World Bank in Washington, where he became Division Chief. At the age of 38 he felt like Sisyphus and he returned to the private sector in Switzerland, working for an engineering company in the field of power generation and transmission. This was followed by a move to investment banking and, at the age of 50, he became finance director at Roche, later being appointed to their Board of Directors.

Henri B. Meier's start at F. Hoffmann-La Roche–Sapac coincided with the loss of the most valuable (US) patent for Valium, the first

blockbuster drug, which catapulted Roche in 1973 to become one of the top pharma companies globally. This patent loss resulted in a very difficult financial situation, but Roche's ability to generate substantial profits from financial transactions allowed it to successfully weather this challenging period and resulted in the market name "Roche Bank". The financial profits enabled major acquisitions, the most important of which was Genentech, followed by Boehringer Mannheim. Henri B. Meier also introduced International Accounting Standards and listed the shares and participation certificates, "Genussscheine", on the Zurich Stock Exchange (today SIX Swiss Exchange).

Officially retired in 2000, Henri B. Meier subsequently founded HBM BioVentures (today HBM Healthcare Investment Ltd.), HBM Partners AG, BioMedInvest AG, BioMedPartners AG and over 20 other startups, foundations and professorships.

Education is very dear to his heart. He promotes education at all levels from elementary school to university. As co-founder of the Swiss Future Fund, he advocates for more risk capital to benefit future generations.

*If he had to put all his life efforts in one name,
it would be "Wertschöpfung", i.e. value creation.*

