

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**27 November 2017**

### **BIOPOLE APPOINTS MEMBERS OF STARTLAB ADVISORY BOARD AND ANNOUNCES FIRST CANDIDATES SELECTED FOR STARTLAB INCUBATOR**

- **Appointments made to StartLab Advisory Board**
- **First candidates - HaYa Therapeutics and GNUbiotics- selected for dedicated life sciences incubator**
- **Plug and play facilities to open in spring 2018**
- **Focus on high quality startups to enrich dynamic Swiss ecosystem**

**Lausanne, Switzerland, 27 November 2017** – Biopôle SA, a leading Swiss life sciences park, today announced the appointment of 11 members to the Advisory Board (SAB) of StartLab, the first incubator dedicated to life sciences located in the Canton of Vaud. The SAB's role includes the selection of the most promising candidates for the incubator, accompanying them throughout their development and efficiently anchoring the aspiring businesses within Biopôle's dynamic ecosystem.

Biopôle also announced the first two candidates selected to join StartLab:

- HaYa Therapeutics is focused on treating heart failure through the discovery and development of innovative first-in-class RNA-based therapeutics.
- GNUbiotics is developing functional and structural mimics of Human Milk Oligosaccharides (HMOs) for the consumer health market.

Both startups will move into the StartLab facilities when the incubator officially opens its doors in spring 2018.

StartLab's Advisory Board (SAB) is focused on selecting only the highest quality candidates, which combine both scientific excellence and business pertinence. The ambition is to nurture these high caliber startups in a first-class infrastructure, and provide them with a deep pool of expertise in order to produce the next generation of outstanding Swiss life science businesses. At any point in time the incubator can be home for a maximum of 10-12 companies and the next deadline for applications is March 2018.

**Konstantinos Efthymiopoulos, Chairman of Biopôle and SAB President**, commented: "It is an honor to welcome the members of StartLab's Advisory Board, all highly renowned professionals who provide complementary expertise and perspectives from academia, investment, business, technology transfer and entrepreneurship. StartLab enables researchers to take the bold step of moving out of the academic environment into a tailor-made life sciences incubator. I am confident that the Advisory Board will prove invaluable in accompanying the incubated projects throughout their growth and development, thus enabling StartLab to provide successive generations of startups to stimulate the life sciences ecosystem in the Canton of Vaud and across Switzerland."

**Nasri Nahas, Chief Executive Officer of Biopôle and StartLab Director**, stated: "We are delighted to have selected HaYa Therapeutics and GNUbiotics as the first successful candidates to StartLab and we look forward to welcoming these very promising entrepreneurs on site in the spring of 2018. We were spoilt for choice amongst the first wave of applications, which confirms the attractiveness of our

unique “plug and play” model for startups. We are providing the best of the best with an ideal environment to maximise their chances of success, thanks to a winning combination of state of the art facilities, with access to a network of experts, and the dynamic Biopôle ecosystem of multinationals, SMEs, and research groups.”

#### **StartLab Advisory Board Members**

Dr. Jasper BOS	Head of Merck Healthcare Fund
Dr. André CATANA	EPFL Technology Transfer Office, Head of Enable Program
Dr. Carlos CORDON	LEGO Professor of Strategy and Supply Chain Management; IMD
Dr. Konstantinos EFTHYMIPOULOS	Chairman Biopôle SA
Dr. Stefan KOHLER	Director PACTT
Prof. Nicolas MERMOD	Director of Biotechnology Institute; University of Lausanne
Mr. Nasri NAHAS	C.E.O. Biopôle SA
Dr. Vincent OSSIPOW	Partner; Omega Funds
Prof. Jeffrey PETTY	Director eMBA; University of Lausanne
Prof. Gisou VAN DER GOOT	Dean of School of Life Sciences; EPFL
Dr. Pierre-Jean WIPFF	Life Sciences Innovation Advisor; Innovaud

#### **About Haya Therapeutics**

HAYA Therapeutics is dedicated to treating heart failure through the discovery and development of innovative first-in-class RNA-based therapeutics, with a specific focus on long noncoding RNAs. Heart failure as a consequence of myocardial fibrosis is the world’s biggest killer. No therapies currently exist that either directly target the heart or the fibrotic process itself. The company has discovered a heart specific regulator of fibrosis – the long noncoding RNA, Wisper. By using our first-in-class proprietary approach to target Wisper, we are able to block myocardial fibrosis and treat heart failure in pre-clinical animal models.

The founders of the company are Samir Ounzain, Thierry Pedrazzini and Daniel Blessing. The genesis of the company’s approach came from their ground-breaking studies in the Experimental Cardiology Unit at the University Hospital (CHUV). The company is a Gold winner of the 2017 MassChallenge accelerator program, and was recently awarded a prize at the first stage of VentureKick.

#### **About GNUbiotics <https://www.gnubiotics.com>**

GNUbiotics is a biotech developing a platform to commercialize microbiome-modulating products for the functional and medical nutrition markets. The first product, targeting gut health for pet nutrition, is in safety studies and industrial scale-up process. Our objective at StartLab is to build our Medical Nutrition hub leveraging our new approach in modulating the microbiome with a natural mechanism of action, and to build collaboration partnerships.

GNUbiotics is supported by Cimark in Valais and VentureKick.

#### **About StartLab <https://startlab.ch/>**

StartLab is the first life-sciences dedicated incubator in the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland. It offers 700 m2 of fully equipped laboratories and 300 m2 of shared offices, as a new home for 10-12 startup companies of 35-40 persons in total. It has been designed to maximize the chances of success for aspiring business creators. A key feature is a “pay as you play” flexible pricing model, which requires less funds to get started, reduces risk for investors and lowers dilution for entrepreneurs.

Based at Biopôle, a leading Swiss life sciences park, StartLab’s founding sponsors include Retraites Populaires, Losinger Marazzi, Teo Jakob and Milian. Strategic partners are the Canton of Vaud, Innovaud, the University of Lausanne (UNIL) and the Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV).

**About Biopôle** [www.biopole.ch](http://www.biopole.ch)

Started in 2004 by the public authorities of the Canton of Vaud, Biopôle is a life sciences dedicated park bringing together industry and academia. Based in Lausanne, Switzerland, it offers a world-class combination of infrastructure, added value services, living space and community engagement where partners can thrive and bring science to life. The site houses more than 50 companies and institutions, including several head offices of multinational corporations, startups and clinical development teams, together with technology and service providers. It also hosts 25 world-famous research groups, in particular the Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), the University of Lausanne (UNIL) and the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research.

Biopôle's partners benefit from cutting-edge expertise in certain disciplines, such as purchasing, finance, legal services, commercial development, communication, marketing and training. Today over 1,200 professionals from over 30 nations enjoy a range of world-class facilities across ~80,000 m<sup>2</sup> of landscape.

**About Canton of Vaud** [www.vd.ch](http://www.vd.ch)

The Canton of Vaud is the fourth largest of the 26 states constituting the Swiss Confederation. It is home to more than 37,000 companies, and since 2000 approximately 100 multinational companies have established their European or EMEA headquarters in the Canton. Geneva airport provides easy access to multiple destinations for both work and leisure activities.

With more than 300 companies active in the life sciences, the Lausanne area employs 16,000 people in the sector, about one quarter of the total number of life sciences workers in Switzerland. 25 percent of the region's exports are from this dynamic sector and 50 percent of all Swiss startups in life sciences are created in the region, some as spin-offs from major academic institutions, like the EPFL or the University of Lausanne. In 2016 CHF 462 million (USD ~470 million) was raised by startups in the region, with a significant majority being in the life sciences.

**Media contacts**

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