The >>venture>> foundation
Annual Report 2025

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

If *Homo >>venturensis>>* existed, Dragan Grabulovski would be a prime example.

He first entered >>venture>> in 2006 with his startup Covagen AG, sold it to Johnson & Johnson in 2014, and went on to serve as a >>venture>> mentor and juror, while supporting several biotech startups as a board member and advisor. He then co-founded another company, Araris Biotech AG, which he sold in March 2025 to Taiho for roughly half a billion dollars, and joined the >>venture>> advisory board. Congratulations, Dragan, and thank you for your past, current, and future support!

When Dragan competed in 2006, his startup was one of ninety-nine teams. Last year we received a record 396 applications (a record already beaten again with 451 in 2026!). Over the years, the community has grown steadily—and with it, the number of ambitious founders emerging from our platform. I am confident there will be many more success stories to come.

Another strong example among our alumni is DePoly, a >>venture>> winner in 2019. The Valais-based company recycles unsorted and contaminated PET waste into virgin-grade raw materials and has recently opened a 500-ton-per-year showcase plant (p. 42).

Growth is also reflected in this year's introduction of the Spotlight Award. Endowed with CHF 50,000, it shines a spotlight on a topic with particular relevance for Swiss entrepreneurship and society. In the future, each year will focus on a different topic. The 2026 inaugural edition highlights Apertus, Switzerland's new open-source large language model, designed to enable transparent, multilingual, and sovereign AI across industries.

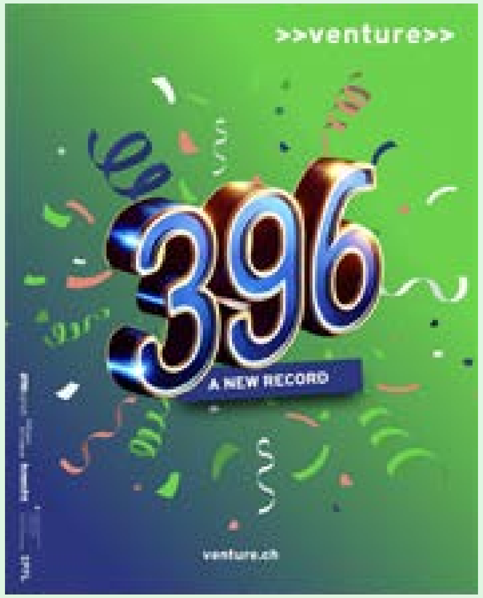
Finally, I encourage you to read our interview with Peter Maurer, former president of the ICRC and member of >>venture>>'s advisory board. Drawing on decades at the forefront of global diplomacy, he reflects on the erosion of international order and makes a clear case: Innovation alone is not enough—entrepreneurship must be grounded in responsibility to create lasting impact (p. 14).

I hope you enjoy reading Forward by >>venture>> 2025/2026

Warm regards,

Ueli Looser
Chairman of the >>venture>> foundation

>>VENTURE>> HIGHLIGHTS



RECORD YEAR!

In 2025, >>venture>> recorded its strongest year to date, receiving 396 applications—the highest number in the competition's history. This marks a 10% increase over the previous peak in 2022 and a 20% rise compared to last year. The figures reflect sustained entrepreneurial momentum across Switzerland.

THE >>VENTURE>> ADVISORY BOARD CONTINUES TO GROW

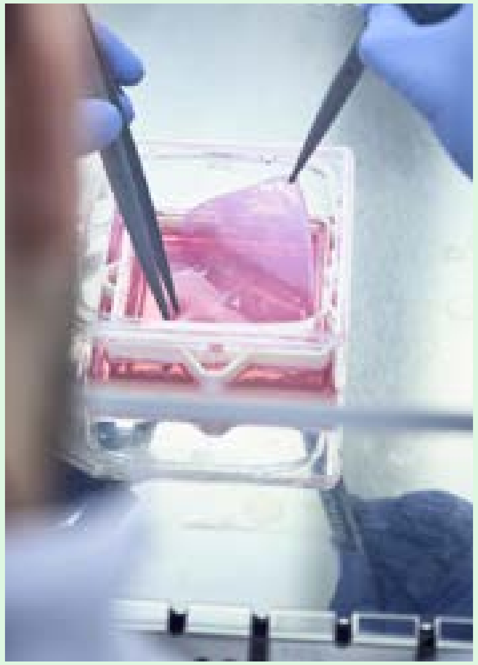
We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members in 2025: Araris, Burckhardt Compression, Geistlich, Google Cloud, Tecan, University of Basel, University of Zurich, Vontobel, and ZHAW.

BCOMP & BMW
WEAVING THE FUTURE OF CARS

Swiss cleantech startup Bcomp, a >>venture>> winner in 2012, has reached a major milestone with BMW. Together, the partners developed a new color and weave for exterior body parts made from Bcomp's ampliTex™, marking the first use of high-performance natural fibre composites in series-production car bodywork. The joint project won first prize at the prestigious JEC Composites Innovation Awards in Paris (2026).

CUTISS
A LAB-GROWN LIFELINE FOR CRANS-MONTANA

After the tragic events in Crans-Montana, some patients are being treated with a medical breakthrough from Schlieren. DenovoSkin, developed by Cutiss—>>venture>> winner 2015—is a personalized skin graft grown from a patient's own cells. The company emerged from the Tissue Biology Research Unit at Zurich Children's Hospital. Within four weeks, Cutiss can cultivate multiple 50 cm² grafts for selected clinical cases.



THE STATE OF VENTURE FUNDING
>>VENTURE>> ALUMNI RIDE THE RECOVERY

Following a weak 2024, the Swiss venture capital market regained momentum in 2025. Total investments increased by 23.9 percent to CHF 2.95 billion.* Early-stage financing reached a record CHF 1.12 billion (+73%); notably, biotech startup financing climbed to an all-time high of CHF 946 million. As part of this story, numerous >>venture>> alumni closed substantial funding rounds. Please note: this overview includes only financing rounds above CHF 3 million; an additional 15 rounds below this threshold are not listed here.

NAME	M CHF	ANNOUNCED
Distalmotion	120.0	18.11.2025
Cutiss	56.0	10.09.2025
Haya Therapeutics	54.0	08.05.2025
DeepJudge	32.0	04.11.2025
DePoly (see p. 42)	19.0	29.04.2025
Boost Inc	15.0	26.06.2025
Oxyle	14.3	30.01.2025
Bloom Biorenewables	13.0	02.04.2025
Virometix	11.9	13.11.2025
Voliro	11.0	16.06.2025
Comphya	7.5	09.07.2025
arcoris bio	6.3	06.11.2025
SamanTree Medical	5.1	09.04.2025
Voltiris	4.8	28.01.2025
BTRY	4.6	06.11.2025
Novomof	4.4	15.04.2025
Zoundream	3.7	03.10.2025
Tethys Robotics	3.2	30.10.2025
RTDT Laboratories	3.2	01.07.2025

**Source: Swiss Venture Capital Report 2026*

M&A

EXITS AND ACQUISITIONS CONFIRM THE UPSWING

Beyond rising investment volumes, 2025 saw multiple >>venture>> alumni complete successful exits and execute notable acquisitions. The diversity of sectors involved underscores the depth and resilience of Switzerland's startup ecosystem. A standout transaction was the acquisition of Araris Biotech—led by CEO and co-founder Dragan Grabulovski, who also serves on the >>venture>> advisory board—highlighting the strong ties between entrepreneurial success and the broader >>venture>> community.

COMPANY	ACQUIRED BY	M CHF	ANNOUNCED
Araris Biotech*	Taiho Pharmaceutical	352**	17.03.2025
The Twing Group*	Baculus Holding	Undisclosed	14.04.2025
Ascentys*	Planted*	Undisclosed	20.06.2025
Elysium Lab*	Blockstream	Undisclosed	22.07.2025
RetinAI (Ikerian)*	EssilorLuxottica	Undisclosed	16.10.2025
Kontera*	Bexio	Undisclosed	24.10.2025
InSphero*	Doppl	Undisclosed	12.12.2025

** >>venture>> Alumn   ** (up to 652, incl. milestones)*

MEDIA REACH

>>venture>> was widely featured in Swiss media, reaching well over a million viewers. Highlights include the following:

HSLU HUB
January 27, 2025
>>venture>>: "Switzerland's Leading Start-Up Competition"
Reach/Visits: N/A

FINTECH NEWS SWITZERLAND
February–June 2025
2 pieces on >venture>>
Reach/Visits: 50,000

PUNK4INFO
February–June 2025
2 pieces on >>venture>>
Reach/Visits: 10,000

STARTUPTICKER.CH
February–June 2025
2 pieces on >>venture>>
Reach/Visits: 12,000

BIOAPS.ORG
June 24, 2025
"Clee Medical, ProSeed & Berninox Shine at the 2025 >>venture>> Awards"
Reach/Visits: N/A

ETHZ.CH
June 24, 2025
"ETH Spin-Offs Sweep the Board at Venture Awards"
Reach/Visits: N/A

INNOVATION.ZURICH
June 24, 2025
"MYNERVA gewinnt Grossen Preis beim venture Award 2025"
Reach/Visits: N/A

LIFE SCIENCE ZURICH BUSINESS NETWORK
June 24, 2025
"MYNERVA Wins Grand Prize at the Venture Award 2025"
Reach/Visits: N/A

TRIBUNE DE GENÈVE
June 24, 2025
"Le nombre de créations de start-up a bondi à Genève en ce début 2025"
Reach/Visits: 56,000

TIO ONLINE
June 24, 2025
"DEC Energy porta il Ticino tra i vincitori die >>venture>> Awards 2025"
Reach/Visits: 14,000

24 HEURES
June 25, 2025
"Trois start-up vaudoises brillent"
Reach/Visits: 132,000

N+
June 25, 2025
"Deux start-up neuchâteloises primées"
Reach/Visits: 30,000

A JOUR
June 26, 2025
"La firme de brosses à dents Berninox affiche un large sourire après sa 2e place au Suisse Venture"
Reach/Visits: 10,000

JOURNAL DU JURA
June 26, 2025
"Large sourire pour Berninox"
Reach/Visits : 20,000

REPUBLIC OF INNOVATION.CH
June 26, 2025
"Mynerva et Clee Medical brillent lors des Venture Awards 2025"
Reach/Visits: N/A

TELEBIELINGUE
June 27, 2025
"Interview du 27 juin 2025"
Reach/Visits : 121,000

TPW.CH – TECHNOPARK WINTERTHUR
June 27, 2025
"TPW Start-Ups Impress at >>venture>> 2025"
Reach/Visits: N/A

CHEMEUROPE.CH
June 30, 2025
"ETH Spin-Offs Sweep the Board at Venture Awards"
Reach/Visits: 11,000

SONNTAGSZEITUNG
July 6, 2025
"Startups nutzen KI"
Reach/Visits: 390,000

LAUSANNE CITÉS
September 16, 2025
"LivXp, la start-up lausannoise qui rapproche les champions et les fans"
Reach/Visits: 182,000

STARTUPTICKER.CH
October 10, 2025
">>venture>> Restructures Award Competition"
Reach/Visits: 16,000

Peter Maurer reflects on the state of the world at Zurich's main station. His credo: For a solution to endure, all key stakeholders must have a seat at the table.

INTERVIEW

"Innovation is not a concept that is positive per se"

Peter Maurer speaks about a world in disarray, the limits of good and bad innovation—and the role of >>venture>>. Although the rules-based order is losing traction, the former president of the International Committee of the Red Cross and member of the >>venture>> advisory board remains hopeful. A conversation about causes and perspectives.

Mr. Maurer, in your 2023 >>venture>> keynote, you spoke of a "deeply divided and dysfunctional world"—long before today's crises escalated. What did you mean?

The development was foreseeable; it had been building for years, even decades. When I look back at my time at the ICRC *[2012–2022]*, it feels like a precursor to what later erupted more openly. We were operating in conflicts—in the Middle East, in Africa, in Ukraine—where fundamental principles of international humanitarian law were increasingly being questioned or simply ignored. At the same time, it became clear how strongly geopolitical competition was playing out in regional and local conflicts.

Where do we stand today?

Major powers no longer act within a shared framework of rules but increasingly in fragmented, interest-driven ways. At the same time, global economic growth has brought more actors onto the stage. Power is shifting from North and West to East and South, and interests are diverging further across the spectrum. Even among those who acknowledge that climate change is a major issue, there is no agreement on what concrete steps should be taken.

You speak not only of fragmentation but explicitly of dysfunction. What no longer works?

A system becomes dysfunctional when it recognizes problems but is barely capable of producing viable solutions. For decades, we have postponed difficult issues without building the necessary political consensus to address them. I worked within the UN system and witnessed how even relatively routine resolutions became increasingly difficult to agree upon.

Why does implementation fail so often?

The composition of the Security Council no longer adequately reflects today's real balance of power. Key actors are missing; others block one another. The result is a body that is capable of action only in exceptional cases. The Sustainable Development Goals, for instance, were adopted at an abstract level, yet there is still little agreement on how to implement them concretely. And this is not limited to the UN. In many international organizations—and increasingly even at the national level—consensus has become more difficult. And where it is achieved, it often breaks down during implementation.

Do you see this drifting apart in Switzerland as well?

Absolutely. For a long time, it was an unquestioned asset of our country to be politically "boring." The basic consensus was that at the end of a debate we would reach a decision, and the mechanism to do so was clear and broadly supported. Today, however, those who lose a vote often announce the next referendum on the very day of the decision.

Interests are diverging, political majorities are fragile, democratic legitimacy is strained. Do you see a new system replacing the rules-based order?

No. Transformations are slow. They do not follow electoral cycles but unfold over extended periods of time—and they are often disruptive. Old orders do not disappear overnight; they gradually lose effectiveness, while new ones are not yet firmly established. We are currently in such an interim phase.

Under these conditions, how can the world become a better place again?

There is no simple formula. If there were, we would already have implemented it. But I believe we need to adjust our expectations. The idea that interstate agreements alone can guarantee stability is too narrow. It overlooks the real needs of societies and the complexity of today's challenges.

What are the alternatives?

Where I have observed positive dynamics, very different actors were usually involved: individuals with technical expertise, economic and financial capabilities, and political responsibility. What mattered was that they sat at the same table and were willing to balance interests.

Can you give an example?

Multi-stakeholder approaches often worked during the COVID pandemic. When science, business, politics, and civil society work together on a concrete problem, interests begin to converge. That convergence generates momentum, resources, and the will to act. Institutions alone currently struggle to deliver this, but other forms of collaboration can. The real progress I have witnessed in my professional life came from carefully negotiated agreements in which key stakeholders committed to act together.

PETER MAURER (70)
is a Swiss diplomat. From 2012 to 2022, he served as president of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Previously, he represented Switzerland as state secretary and as ambassador to the United Nations in New York. Today, he is engaged in issues of peace, innovation, and global responsibility, including as a member of the advisory board of >>venture>>.

What role does innovation play in this context?
Innovation is not a concept that is positive per se. It can solve problems, but it can also create new ones or exacerbate existing ones. What matters is how innovation is introduced. Technological and economic advances have a positive impact only when their risks are taken seriously and actively mitigated.

What does that mean for innovators?
Innovation requires social embedding. It must be accompanied by dialogue, consensus-building, and the involvement of those who will live with its consequences. The notion that one can develop a brilliant solution in a laboratory and simply present it to the world is naïve. Innovation must be hard-earned.

Can you make that more concrete?
I have seen this in many contexts: for example, in healthcare systems in fragile states. An innovative hospital can have tremendous impact—but only if local actors are involved, behavioral changes are supported, and the solution is culturally and politically anchored. The real work does not begin with the idea, but with its implementation.

That sounds like a very high bar for negotiation and consensus. Are trade-offs even resolvable under such conditions?
Most trade-offs are, by definition, not fully resolvable—otherwise they would not be trade-offs. Consider the tension between economic growth and environmental sustainability; it cannot simply be eliminated, at least not in the foreseeable future. What is possible are situational arrangements—pragmatic agreements on the next steps, whether local, regional, or issue-specific. This is not a romantic view of the world, but a realistic one. Anyone seeking progress must abandon the illusion of definitive solutions.

What responsibility does this imply for Switzerland?
Every country must ask what contribution it can make to the major issues of its time. Switzerland has tremendous

> “*Anyone seeking progress must abandon the illusion of definitive solutions.*”

PETER MAURER
FORMER ICRC PRESIDENT
>>VENTURE>> ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

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In a complex world, we need more places like >>venture>>

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PETER MAURER
FORMER ICRC PRESIDENT
>>VENTURE>> ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

strengths: a high-performing education and research system, innovative capacity, financial resources, political stability. But these assets stand on shaky ground if we seek only to preserve them for ourselves. Security, prosperity, and environmental protection cannot be secured in national isolation. Switzerland must therefore consciously bring its capabilities into international solution-building—pragmatically, not ideologically.

What might that look like?

It means rethinking instruments. Traditional development aid alone is often insufficient. In many contexts, investments in infrastructure, businesses, or education are more effective than conventional aid packages. The key is to combine the right instruments intelligently—and to speak openly about conditions, risks, and returns.

Is that also why you are involved with >>venture>>?

In a sense, yes. >>venture>> is a microcosm of what I have described. It brings together young people with innovative ideas, connects science, entrepreneurship, and financing, and creates spaces for exchange and mentoring. I am particularly impressed that it is not only technological excellence that counts but also the ability to develop viable business models. The bridge between research and the market is crucial. In a complex world, we need more places where such connections are fostered systematically.

What role should entrepreneurship play? Is it primarily about profit or also about responsibility?

The two are not mutually exclusive. Without entrepreneurial thinking and economic viability, we will not solve societal challenges. At the same time, maximizing short-term financial profit is insufficient. If profit is defined in long-term and sustainable terms, then societal acceptance, environmental responsibility, and stable relationships with employees and customers are integral to it. Successful entrepreneurship emerges where economic success, innovation, and societal dialogue are considered together.

Finally, on a personal level, what gives you hope?

Perhaps, the many small positive steps one sees when looking closely. After everything I have witnessed—in war zones, prisons, refugee camps—I know how valuable such steps are. I am motivated by organizations and communities where committed individuals work on concrete solutions: academic institutions, young entrepreneurs, networks beyond formal structures.

The younger generation's reputation has taken some hits.

Nonsense. The next generation is better educated, more reflective, and more internationally connected than we ever were. >>venture>> demonstrates this year after year. If we take these positive energies seriously and multiply them, that may be the most realistic way to make a difficult world better, step by step.

INTERVIEW SIMON BRUNNER

The former ICRC president places great confidence in the next generation: "They are better educated, more reflective, and more internationally connected than we ever were."

WINNERS 2025

TOP 3
FINANCE & INSURANCE

Hagen Lihl (left), co-founder and CEO, and Nick Bänninger, co-founder and CCO

1. UPGRID AG is a Baar-based climate fintech startup that enables peer-to-peer solar energy trading within communities. Through its digital platform, UpGrid connects households, SMEs, and municipalities, allowing them to buy and sell locally produced solar power. The result is a decentralized energy system that lowers costs, promotes fair pricing, and keeps energy value within the community. Participants can lease their rooftops, co-finance solar projects, or install their own photovoltaic systems—without upfront investment or hassle. Producers earn up to three times more than traditional feed-in tariffs, while consumers benefit from rates up to 20% lower. UpGrid also manages contracts, billing, and compliance, making clean energy accessible to all. By strengthening regional energy autonomy, UpGrid helps accelerate the transition to a fairer, more sustainable energy future—one roof, one community at a time.

LOCATION Baar **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@upgrid.ch **WEB** upgrid.ch

2. TERENSIS GMBH turns complex, unstructured agricultural data into a decisive market advantage through its recently launched Agricultural Intelligence Platform. The real-time agri-intelligence platform generates 14m data points daily, covering every square kilometer on earth. It identifies supply risks early and detects bullish or bearish market signals before prices react. It can anticipate critical weather events and their impact on yields ahead of price spikes, allowing customers to make informed decisions in volatile agricultural markets.

LOCATION Winterthur **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich **MAIL** info@terensis.io **WEB** terensis.io

3. DEC ENERGY SA is a Ticino-based startup connecting companies directly to solar production. Its B2B platform enables firms to lease PV systems, generate their own renewable energy certificates, and reduce energy costs by up to 20%. Backed by existing investors, DEC has opened a CHF 1.2m seed round to expand operations across Switzerland and Italy.

LOCATION Viganello (Lugano) **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@dec-energy.ch **WEB** dec-energy.ch

FINALISTS

checksum AG	EFI (Efrontier Markets SA)
Humbrela	Poncho Insurance SA	Reilo.
Scenario X SA	Wisdomise

TOP 3
HEALTH & NUTRITION

Greta Preatorni, co-founder and CEO (left), and Luigi Carotenuto, CTO

1. MYNERVA is developing a wearable neuroprosthesis that restores touch and relieves pain in people with diabetic peripheral neuropathy (DPN)—a condition affecting over 230 million patients worldwide. Their sock-like device, Leia, delivers AI-driven electrical stimulation to improve gait, reduce fall risk, and enhance quality of life. Founded in 2025 as an ETH Zurich spin-off, the startup has raised CHF 6.5m. CEO Greta Preatoni, a neuroengineer and sixth child in an entrepreneurial family, leads the nine-person team. The company's vision: Turn Leia into the foundation of a broader, integrated digital ecosystem for diabetes care—combining sensors, data, and real-time insights to treat not just symptoms, but the whole person.

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich **MAIL** info@mynerva.com **WEB** mynerva.com

2. NERAI BIOSCIENCE is a Zurich-based biotech start-up developing next-generation genome editors for rare liver and eye diseases. Its proprietary platform, MORPHEME, combines AI, high-throughput screening, and directed evolution to engineer CRISPR-based tools with ultra-high precision. Founded in 2025, Nerai aims to deliver one-time, curative therapies for conditions previously beyond the reach of genetic medicine. Nerai also won the >>venture>> Audience Award (p. 39).

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** University of Zurich **MAIL** info@nerai.bio **WEB** nerai.bio

3. CLEE MEDICAL SA aims to transform brain surgery with real-time, ultra-high-resolution imaging and AI navigation. Unlike traditional methods relying on static MRI scans, their platform provides dynamic intraoperative visualization—boosting precision, safety, and scalability. Founded in Geneva in 2024, the startup has raised CHF 3m and gained support from top neurosurgeons.

LOCATION Geneva **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** matt.lapinski@cleemedical.com **WEB** cleemedical.com

FINALISTS

Blue Wave | InTeeth SA | MoleSense | Moonlight AI Sàrl | Rhovica Neuroimaging AG | SonoStent | Translation-X

TOP 3
ICT


From Left: Philip Sieber-Gasser, founder and CEO, Emilie Delattre, head of machine learning, Kholofelo Kugler, head of trade law, and Jose Ignacio Diaz Ordoñez, CTO

1. BESSO AG helps companies unlock hidden savings in global supply chains by using AI to navigate complex trade regulations. Many firms miss out on preferential tariffs owing to opaque rules and outdated processes—leading to billions in unnecessary costs. Besso automates compliance, maps trade agreements in real time, and identifies optimization potential across the value chain. With 2.5x more coverage of free-trade agreements than competitors, the platform replaces manual processes and scattered data with dynamic insights and seamless ERP integration. Founded in 2023 in Bern, Besso combines legal expertise with cutting-edge machine learning to support both SMEs and global corporations. Its track record to date [April 2025]: over CHF 240 million in recurring annual tariff savings.

LOCATION Bern **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@besso.com **WEB** besso.com

2. CCRAFT SA is the first independent industrial foundry for thin-film lithium niobate (TFLN) photonic chips—a breakthrough platform for ultra-fast, energy-efficient data, sensing, space and quantum systems. Spun out from CSEM in 2025, CCRAFT is already in production and scaling globally. As a key milestone in its mission as an open-access foundry, the company is now running multi-project wafer (MPW) manufacturing across two distinct technologies. This growth is bolstered by CHF 3.5m in project funding, including a CHF 2.5m Innosuisse grant and a CHF 1m ESA Phi-Lab project.

LOCATION Neuchâtel/Lausanne **AFFILIATION** CSEM **MAIL** info@ccraft.com **WEB** ccraft.com

3. LIGHTIUM AG is a Zurich-based photonic chip foundry enabling next-generation optical chips to make data infrastructure faster and more energy-efficient. Backed by USD 7m raised in 2024, the company is scaling its production platform to serve leading customers in Europe and the United States. Lightium partnered with MPI Corporation (Taiwan) and Axiomatic_AI (USA) to develop autonomous, AI-driven testing solutions for photonic chips.

LOCATION Schlieren **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@lightium.com **WEB** lightium.com

FINALISTS

Carewell SA	chainstaff AG
Ex Nunc Intelligence SA	Manukai AG	Noemon AG
Straintest GmbH	Valid SA

TOP 3

INDUSTRIALS & ENGINEERING


Moritz H. Futscher, co-founder and CEO (left), and Abdessalam Aribia, co-founder and CTO

1. BTRY AG is a 2023 spin-off from ETH Zurich and Empa that is redefining energy storage with the world's thinnest rechargeable solid-state battery. At just 0.1 mm thick, BTRY's patented technology uniquely combines the high energy density of traditional batteries with the rapid charging speeds of capacitors, allowing for a full charge or discharge in under one minute. Designed for high-performance applications like asset tracking and industrial sensing, these cells offer exceptional reliability with ultra-low self-discharge for multi-year storage and the ability to power wireless transmissions without additional components. Crucially, BTRY's technology operates safely across an extreme temperature range of −40°C to +150°C, far exceeding the limits of conventional lithium-based systems.

Following a USD 5.7m seed round in late 2025 led by Redstone VC, the company is now running pilots with electronics OEMs and is transitioning to pilot production in early 2026 using scalable processes derived from semiconductor manufacturing.

LOCATION Dübendorf **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich, Empa **MAIL** info@btry.ch **WEB** btry.ch

2. CHIRAL unlocks post-silicon computing with nanomaterials. Founded in 2023 as a spin-off from ETH Zurich and Empa, the Zurich-based startup has raised USD 16m to date. By manufacturing first-of-its-kind equipment for the wafer-scale integration of nanomaterials, Chiral enables next-generation semiconductor and quantum devices.

LOCATION Dübendorf **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich, Empa **MAIL** cnfo@chiralnano.com **WEB** chiralnano.com

3. EMBODIED AI *(formerly Helix Robotics)* enables safe human-robot collaboration through soft robotic arms like the Helix Manipulator. The EPFL spin-off combines visual, language, and motion control to bring flexible, precise automation to sectors like lab tech and food handling.

LOCATION Lausanne **AFFILIATION** EPFL **MAIL** info@embodiedai.ch **WEB** embodiedai.ch

FINALISTS

apheros AG	Circelec	fortyfour
Ionic Wind	Neology Hydrogen SA	Solabs
Nanotechnology GmbH	Swistor SA

TOP 3

RETAIL & CONSUMER SERVICES

Arthur Claessens, founder and CEO

1. SIDELIGHTS redefines bicycle safety on the road with a premium, easy-to-install lighting system. It provides dual front beams, side lights and turn signals at both ends of the handlebar, and rear lights, offering true 360° visibility and full-width perception of the bicycle. With its strong and innovative lighting signature, SideLights helps cyclists see and be seen just like a car. After years of R&D and patent applications, the company completed its industrialization phase and launched production series. With strong early customer traction and a focus on premium urban mobility, SideLights is positioning itself as a new standard in cyclist visibility, combining safety, design, and durability to make cycling safer worldwide.

LOCATION Lussy-sur-M. **AFFILIATION** HEIG-VD **MAIL** info@sidelights.com **WEB** sidelights.com

2. BERNINOX SA applies Swiss precision and sustainable design to everyday objects. Founded by two product developers with deep roots in the Swiss watch industry, the startup has created a toothbrush that balances hygiene, durability, and environmental impact. Featuring a 316L stainless-steel handle and a replaceable head made from recycled ocean plastic, the product reduces plastic use by 86% compared to conventional models. Berninox is based in the Jura region of the canton of Neuchâtel.

LOCATION Couvet (NE) **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@berninox.com **WEB** berninox.com

3. LIVXP SA is building the foundational infrastructure that enables sports organizations to convert fan engagement into scalable, predictable revenue. Its AI-powered commerce platform allows teams, athletes, and sponsors to launch exclusive experiences, memorabilia, and digital activations while retaining full ownership of fan data. At the heart of the platform is the recently launched LivXp Brain, an AI engine that automates the complexities of experience creation, dynamic pricing, and personalized offer management. By operating at the intersection of sports, technology, and commerce, LivXp is defining the next generation of revenue for the global sports industry.

LOCATION Lausanne **AFFILIATION** none **MAIL** info@livxp.com **WEB** livxp.com

FINALISTS

| Aiving SA | Experience Buddy (XB) |
| Joipaw Ltd | Otilka | Scholé AI | Sleap AG |
| The ShowCase Sàrl |

TOP 3

SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Ulrike Pfreundt, co-founder and CEO

1. RRREEFS AG designs modular reef systems made of 3D-printed clay to regenerate coral ecosystems and protect coast-lines threatened by climate change. Started in 2020 as an ETH Zurich spin-off, the company is founded and led by an interdisciplinary team with backgrounds in science, art, and economics. rrreefs combines research, design, and local partnerships to deliver measur-able ecological and social impact. Its modular reef units offer complex structures that attract coral larvae, support biodiversity, and act as natural breakwaters. Field pilots in the Maldives and Colombia have shown high coral settlement rates and strong survival outcomes. With a vision to rebuild up to 700 km of reef over the next decade, rrreefs offers reef regeneration as a service for tourism operators, coastal communities, and companies seeking credible biodiversity action. The clay modules—nicknamed "big Lego bricks" (ntv)—are light enough for manual installation and designed to become long-term habitats and storytelling platforms for ocean recovery.

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich **MAIL** info@rrreefs.com **WEB** rrreefs.com

2. DNAIR AG offers an end-to-end biodiversity monitoring system using innovative airborne eDNA. Unlike traditional methods that are slow and expensive, the ETH Zurich spin-off detects species via genetic traces in the air—offering a scalable, automated and non-invasive alternative.

LOCATION Dübendorf **AFFILIATION** ETH Zurich **MAIL** info@dnair.earth **WEB** dnair.earth

3. PROSEED INGREDIENTS SA develops advanced microwave-based drying solutions for wet biomasses from the food industry. The company designs scalable, modular processing units that stabilize high-moisture materials directly at production sites while preserving functional and nutritional quality. ProSeed enables the efficient stabilization and transformation of wet biological materials into stable, high-value food ingredients and raw materials, contributing to more resilient food systems. Backed by CHF 2m in funding, ProSeed has already partnered with Coop and beer producer Valaisanne and is piloting large-scale production in Martigny.

LOCATION Sion **AFFILIATION** HES-SO **MAIL** hello@proseed.co **WEB** proseed.co

FINALISTS

| Cotierra AG | FOOD2050 | Loopack Systems |
| MicroMiner | Qaptis Sàrl | rewild | WasteFlow SA |

The audience at the awards ceremony voting for its favorite startup

2025 >>VENTURE>> AUDIENCE AWARD

The audience at the >>venture>> award ceremony was invited to vote for their favorite team among the eighteen winners. The audience favorite received CHF 10,000.

Vincent Forster, co-founder and CEO

NERAI BIOSCIENCE is a Zurich-based biotech startup developing next-generation genome editors for rare liver and eye diseases. Its proprietary platform, MORPHEME, combines AI, high-throughput screening, and directed evolution to engineer CRISPR-based tools with ultra-high precision. Founded in 2025, Nerai aims to deliver one-time, curative therapies for conditions previously beyond the reach of genetic medicine.

LOCATION Zurich **AFFILIATION** University of Zurich **MAIL** info@nerai.bio **WEB** nerai.bio

>>VENTURE>> 2025 IN NUMBERS

396
RECORD NUMBER OF ACCEPTED SUBMISSIONS!

13
EVENTS

657
PARTICIPANTS AT OUR EVENTS

53
MENTORS

273
JURORS

+590,000
SWISS FRANCS IN CASH PRIZES

SUBMISSIONS PER INDUSTRY VERTICAL

- **30** Finance & Insurance
- **66** ICT
- **113** Health & Nutrition
- **77** Retail & Consumer Services
- **55** Industrials & Engineering
- **55** Social & Environmental Impact

SHARE OF UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION

13%	ETH Zurich
9%	EPFL
3%	UZH
13%	Other Swiss universities
6%	Other Swiss universities of applied sciences
3%	Foreign universities
53%	Not stemming directly from academic research

GENDER SPLIT

27 %

70 %

* 3% no response

Samantha Anderson came to Switzerland from Canada for her PhD and met her co-founders—Christopher Ireland from the UK and Bardiya Valizadeh from Iran—at EPFL.

>>VENTURE>> 2019 – GRAND PRIZE WINNER

The Magic of Simple Chemistry

DePoly has developed a process that turns plastic waste back into its original building blocks. The idea is simple, the potential vast, and the path to commercialization long. At the forefront of circular plastics—in Valais.

The term "simple chemistry" can be misleading. It is how Samantha Anderson describes the principle behind DePoly's innovation. The startup's CEO and her team use what they call "simple chemistry" to turn plastic waste into valuable raw materials. There is something almost magical about what happens at DePoly. On one side of the flow diagram, they pour in all kinds of plastic waste: shredded yogurt cups, worn-out performance shirts, packaging materials. Ninety minutes later—after passing through reactors, filters, and a maze of pipes—two substances emerge on the other side: a white powder and a transparent liquid, resembling powdered sugar and water. They are the two building blocks used to make polymers—100 percent pure, and 100 percent identical to monomers derived from crude oil.

From these, new products can be made: bottles, sportswear, packaging materials. This is the circular plastics world envisioned by Samantha Anderson and her two co-founders, Bardiya Valizadeh and Christopher Ireland—and now pursued by a team of more than twenty employees. The idea is patented and growing. A few years ago, Anderson was cutting plastic waste into pieces with scissors. Today, DePoly is building a pilot plant in Monthey, in the canton of Valais, capable of processing 500 tons of plastic waste per year back into its original components. Operations are set to begin in July. It is the penultimate step on the road to global commercialization. The final step, according to the business plan: to produce the blueprint, three years on, for a plant designed to tackle the world's plastic problem at scale.

If great ideas and inventions are defined by the traces they leave everywhere, then plastic ranks among humanity's most consequential achievements. Plastic is everywhere—and everywhere is plastic. That is precisely the problem. On a vast scale, it is visible in the Pacific Ocean, where a floating mass of waste—three times the size of France—drifts across the water. A soup of fishing nets and plastic fragments, large and small, rigid and soft, carried together by ocean currents.

DePoly's approach is to convert plastic waste back into its original building blocks. In an ideal world, plastic becomes a resource and never reaches the environment. In reality, the goal is to build enough plants of sufficient size to produce these raw materials at competitive prices. For now, recycled monomers remain more expensive than those derived from oil.

THE PROBLEM: CHEMISTRY; THE SOLUTION: CHEMISTRY

Samantha Anderson came to Switzerland from Canada for her PhD and met her co-founders—Christopher Ireland from the UK and Bardiya Valizadeh from Iran—at EPFL. Together, they worked on metal-organic frameworks (MOFs), studied scientific literature on plastics, and explored their environmental and human impact. The topic stayed with them.

"The fact that microplastics end up in our bodies shocked me," Anderson says. Plastic is chemistry—and so, they believed, must be the solution. In 2018, two chemists and a chemical engineer got to work. Anderson sits in DePoly's office in an old laboratory building owned by the canton of Valais—a fortunate setup, with space dedicated to startups. The building offers numerous labs, compressed air throughout, and a central steam supply—

continued on page 51

> *"The fact that microplastics end up in our bodies shocked me."*
>
> **SAMANTHA ANDERSON**
> **CO-FOUNDER AND CEO DEPOLY**

On one side of the process, DePoly feeds in sorted plastic waste: shredded yogurt cups, worn-out performance textiles, and various packaging materials.

The plastics then pass through reactors, filters, and a maze of pipes —a process that takes about ninety minutes.

At the end, two substances emerge: a white powder and a transparent liquid. They are the building blocks used to make polymers—100 percent pure, and identical to monomers derived from crude oil.

everything useful on the path to a plastics revolution. Next to each lab door is a shower in the hallway, at least one eyewash station in every room. Harsh chemicals were once—and in some cases still are—used here.

It took just three months to move from theoretical idea to a patentable solution. In that time, the team conducted more than two hundred experiments. On Friday evenings, they cut plastic waste into pieces with scissors; on Monday mornings, they opened the lab door with anticipation—only to face yet another failure. “I remember sitting there, not knowing how to move forward,” Anderson recalls. “Nothing worked. The worst part was that we couldn’t explain why.” In theory, everything made sense—simple chemistry, reversing a known process. They decided to strip everything down to what was essential, reducing it to what Anderson calls the “basic building blocks” of chemistry. That is when “the chemistry finally started to work.” Using light and household chemicals, they transformed plastic waste back into pure monomers. A big idea had worked—on a small scale, but it worked. They filed a patent and founded DePoly.

AN AWARD AS A TURNING POINT

One year after their first experiments, the EPFL spin-off won the grand prize at >>venture>> in 2019. For Anderson, Valizadeh, and Ireland, it was confirmation that their idea had real potential. “For us, it was a decisive moment—it showed we were on the right track,” Anderson says. The award also brought visibility and opened doors to Switzerland’s startup ecosystem and to investors. Two more major recognitions followed: the TOP 100 Swiss Startup Award (2024) and the SEF Award in Deep Tech / Life Sciences (2025). And yet, raising capital remains difficult. “It’s my main job as CEO,” Anderson says. This despite plastic recycling being one of the central issues in sustainability. “A factory means hardware, and hardware means cost.” Scaling an industrial innovation is inherently expensive. The company has completed several funding rounds and raised around CHF 30 million to date. Staying persistent, working toward long-term goals, and managing impatience is not always easy, Anderson admits. When she imagines her future, DePoly remains at the center of it. “Ideally, I would like to stay CEO of my own company for life.” But both her future and that of the company are only partly in her hands. “It also depends on what future investors plan to do with the company.” In other words, in the search for capital, Anderson is always, to some extent, putting her own position at risk.

Alongside financing, the current focus is on scaling and optimizing processes for industrial volumes. DePoly is working along three lines: First, scaling the proven process for PET polymers; second, adapting it to other types of plastics; third, minimizing waste within the process itself—for example, by filtering cotton fibers from wastewater for industrial reuse, or by recovering solvents. The wastewater at the end of the process also highlights another advantage: Contaminated plastic waste, consisting of mixed materials, can be processed.

TRULY CIRCULAR SWISS SPORTSWEAR

In the basement of the laboratory building, DePoly has installed its current pilot facility. It is compact—somewhere between a large laboratory and a small factory. In a white-tiled room stand stainless steel reactors and filtration systems, a network of pipes along the walls, numerous large tanks. The air smells faintly like a photo lab. At full capacity, the plant could process 50 tons of plastic waste per year. In an adjacent room, raw materials are stored in large bags. One is filled with purple textile scraps—used performance fabrics from the Swiss brand Odlo. Together with the manufacturer, DePoly is running a pilot project to demonstrate what a circular model in the textile industry might look like.It reflects the image Anderson described earlier: The process is like taking a blanket apart, pulling out every thread and breaking it down into its individual fibers. These become the raw material from which new threads are spun and new blankets woven. The result is slightly smaller—some loss is inherent in any chemical process—but it requires not a single drop of additional crude oil. Just “simple chemistry.” —— **TEXT** Nicola Brusa

“I would like to stay CEO of my own company for life.”

SAMANTHA ANDERSON
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO DEPOLY

MENTORS AND JURORS 2025

Young entrepreneurs are full of ideas and zest for action. But few could have formed thriving companies without the guidance of more than 250 mentors and jurors, who spent countless hours supporting >>venture>> participants—for free.

A

Emre Acikel
Global Digital Marketing Director at Bayer
Nick Adamus
Founder and CEO at Swiss Dragon Group Ltd.
Thais Affonso
Strategy, innovation, and sustainability Advisor at Olistica
Marcelo Alé
E-grocery pioneer, early stage investor, tech consultant, startup advisor
Daniel Andres
Founding partner at Spicehaus Partners
Martin Angehrn
Founder
Marc Anken
Co-founder and managing partner at addvantedge GmbH

B

Antoine Bachmann
Founder at AB Consulting, advisor to PE funds, mentor and lecturer at Innosuisse and at INSEAD
Bettina Bachmann
Board member, investor and consultant in the energy industry
Marco Barberi
Co-founder and managing Partner at Edmond Experiences SA
Eugenia Barcos
Innovation coach and venture builder at Société des Produits Nestle SA
Martin Bartholet
CEO and co-founder at Celeroton AG
Brigitte Baumann
Head of Educational Materials Development at Klett und Balmer Verlag
Brigitte Baumann Gervais
Founder and CEO at efino.ai
René Becker
Specialist Quality Assurance Diagnostic Products at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
Adrian D. Beer
CEO at topimpact.ch
Mark Berger
Founder of Scalable Solutions and strategy consultant
Gian-Luigi Berini
Senior investment manager at Geneva Smart Invest
Florian Berner
Head researchoffice at FHGR
Philippe Bernet
Founding partner at BackBone Ventures
Sonja Betschart
Co-founder and co-pilot at WeRobotics
Thomas Billeter
Partner at Impact51
Melanie Binggeli
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Kaspar Binz
CEO at Binz Biotech Consulting
Soren Bjonness
Partner at Catapult Capital
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Managing Director at DRIMARCH GmbH
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Raoul Bloch
Board member at Axies GmbH
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Chief Product Officer and partner at Reasonable Product
Romain Boichat
Partner at Corpus Health SA
Thomas Boillat
Senior Digital Health Product Lead at Roche
Christof Bolliger
Director of Products and partner at Bachofen AG
Axel Bolte
Founder and CEO Inozyme Pharma
Andreas Bong
Head of Corporate Research and Technology at Hilti AG
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Fabian Buller
Chief Business Officer at Neurimmune AG
Gilles Burnier
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D

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Director of Strategic Marketing at Coherent Inc.
Karin Dahlstroem
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Renato Del Grosso
Co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer at Cube Labs
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Rafael Meier
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Alex Moser
Board member and business development at Amsonic – Hamo Group
Markus Moser
Entrepreneur, business angel and life science expert

David Muggli
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Christian Mur
Campus director Lycée Français de Lausanne

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O

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P

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Alexandra Pastollnigg
Founder at Fair Voyage
David Patrick
Managing partner at Tree Trunk Partner
Olga Peters
Incubation and Startup Engagement Manager at ABB
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Head of Private Markets at Julius Baer
Matthias Plattner
Head of Channels and Digital Services at Bank Julius Baer & Co. Ltd.
Claudia Pletscher
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Business angel, mentor and coach, juror
Sylvia Polydor
Former Head of Legal at Myovant Sciences GmbH
Lesley Powell
Co-founder at Cloudberry
Michela Puddu
Senior Investment Manager at Emerald Technology Ventures Ltd

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CEO at Sozialwerk Pfarrer Sieber
Lukas Reinhardt
Head of Growth Advisory at UBS
Frank Reitgassl
Group Head of Brand Strategy and Development at Zurich Insurance
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Chief Financial Officer at GenXBiofuels
Nikko Karlo Robles
CEO at Ascentys
Dennis Rubner
Co-founder at Mighty GmbH
Marco Rüedi
CEO and CMO at Axalbion SA / Startup coach at Innosuisse

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Managing partner at CFM Partners AG
Joscha Schabram
Partner at McKinsey & Company
Luca Scheuring
CTO at Axon Vibe AG
Ralph Schiess
Chief Scientific Officer and co-founder at Proteomedix
Penny Schiffer
Co-founder at Raized.ai
Sabine Schilg
Passionate cloud entrepreneur and cyber and digital champion
Alexander Schlaepfer
Investment partner at Swisscom Ventures AG
Andreas Schlenker
Head of M&A, Partnering and Investing at Axpo AG
Armin Schmid
CEO at Bitcoin Suisse (Europe) AG
Tobias Schmid
Investment Director at BLR Partners
Christine Schmidhalter
Global Head of Human Resources at Neoperl Group AG
Rene Schmidli
President of the Investment Committee at Zurich Invest AG
Shila Schneider
Business Development Manager at Ewopharma AG
Franz Schubiger
Partner at Pestalozzi Attorneys at Law
Olivier Schucht
Co-owner and CFO at FFF Fresh & Frozen Food AG
Philippe Schucht
Professor of Neurosurgery
Georg Schumacher
Principal Partnering & Investing at Axpo AG
Thomas Schurr
Senior Digital Advisor at C-Advisory
Andy Schwarzenbach
Owner at BlackRiver, Founder at Hitzberger (exit to Migros)
Alex Seidel
Investor and board member at aXedras
Mar Serra
Accelerator Head at Nestlé SA
David Shapira
CTO at Swiss Innovation Forces
Mirjam Sick
Head of Engineering & Project Management at Energiedienst Holding AG
Katrin Siebenbürger Hacki
Director and founder at Medows
Silvia Signoretti
Co-founder and President Swiss InsurTech Hub
Gabriella Skala
CEO and Ffounder at AMP Health

Matthias Soddemann
VP Advanced Technologies at Dätwyler Holding
Martijn Sonnevelt
Executive Director at ETH Zurich, World Food System Center
Massimo Soriano
Head of Venture Services at Rothschild & Co Bank
Philipp Spaeti
CTO at IBM Switzerland
Christian Spörri
Global Head of Finance and Controlling at u-blox AG
Eva-Maria Springmann
CFO as a Service at Camarque Schweiz AG
Bernard Spycher
Managing Director at Becton Dickinson AG
Matthias Staehelin
Lead Partner Life Sciences at VISCHER AG
Claudius Stammbach
Project Lead at Migros M&A
Daniel Steeves
Business advisor and mentor
Véronique Stephan
Member of Executive Board at SBB
Christian Suter
Partner at SUTERSCIENCE GmbH
Tomas Svoboda
Business Management Contractor at Veritux

T

Leandro Testa
Chairman at Walo Bertschinger AG
Evelyn Thar
CEO and co-founder at Advance Metrics
Corine Thommen
Deputy CEO and Head of Programs at Swissnex
Ayodhya Tiwari
Founder and chairman at Flisom AG
Sandra Tobler
Co-founder and CEO at Futurae Technologies
Andy Tonazzi
CEO and owner at Konplan Systemhaus
Franziska Tück
Head of Sustainability at Climeworks

V

Paul-Henri Vallotton
Startup juror
Davide Verda
Managing partner and Chief Investment Officer at NewOak Ltd.
Maija Vihma
Senior advisor at C-Advisory GmbH
Sabrina Vilhena
Advisor at Juniper Frost Ltd.
Heiko Visarius
CEO and owner at VISARTIS Healthcare GmbH
Michele Vitali
Head of Corporate and VC Transaction at LEXR
Christoph von Toggenburg
Group Head of Human Rights and Social Impact at Holcim
Maarten Voorneveld
Director of Digital Sales at Microsoft

W

Arijana Walcott
Co-founder and CEO at DART Labs
Beat Walther
Managing partner at Vendbridge AG
Lukas Weber
Head of Business Development at Bank Vontobel
Julien Weissenberg
Founder at Deep Tech Experts
Karen Wendt
President of SwissFinTechLadies
Jeannette Wibmer
Partner at Birgelen Wehrli Attorneys
Judith Wiesinger
DeepTech innovator and entrepreneur at Stealth Mode
Kathrin Wolff Schmandt
Board member, angel investor, strategy expert at SEF.Growth, Managing Director at N9 House of Innovation
Ulrich Wuellner
Director of External Innovation at Johnson & Johnson

Y

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Marco Ziegler
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Claudia Zimmermann
CEO and founder at C-Advisory GmbH
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Tom Zrihen
Operations Executive and angel investor
Amédée Zryd
Consultant at Zryd Consult

THE >>VENTURE>> AWARDS CEREMONY 2025

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1 Final decision on the winner: the advisory board during its last plenary session.

2 >>venture>> chairman Ulrich Jakob Looser thanks the mentors and jurors for their tireless, voluntary commitment.

3 Greta Preatorni pitching in front of the advisory board members—successfully: Her company, Mynerva, later goes on to win the Grand Prize. Mynerva has developed a sensor-embedded sock that restores touch and relieves pain in people with diabetes-related nerve damage.

4 >>venture>> founder Thomas Knecht shares his perspective on a startup presentation.

5 Advisory board in session: Maya Ziswiler, CEO of the Roger Federer Foundation (at the microphone); Patrick Amstutz (left), CEO of Molecular Partners; and André Kudelski (front right), president of Innosuisse

6 Team DEC pitching its B2B solar platform to the advisory board

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7 The tension rises: a full house at the >>venture>> Award Ceremony 2025

8 What the grand gala night is all about: the >>venture>> awards.

9 From left: Michael Schaepman, President of the University of Zurich; Marco Ziegler, former senior partner at McKinsey & Company and >>venture>> foundation board member; Joel Mesot, president of ETH; and Silvio Bonaccio, head of strategic projects at ETH

10 The >>venture>> team, with Lea Firmin, CEO of the foundation, third from the left

11 A successful cohort: the entire >>venture>> 2025 community gathered on the rooftop terrace of ETH

12 The Grand Prize goes to Mynerva

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