

GeneNovate Investors' Day – Advisory Board

Francis Ayuketang Ayuk

Prof. Dr. Francis Ayuk is a haemato-oncologist with a special interest and more than 20 years experience in cell therapy. His research focuses on the development of novel cell therapy concepts for malignant and non-malignant diseases. He also has a strong interest in the prevention and treatment of graft-versus-host disease, including the use of cell therapy and other regenerative strategies. He is currently Deputy Director and designated Director (from 01 April 2025) of the Department of Stem Cell Transplantation at the University Medical Center Hamburg. He is spokesman of the Cell Therapy Group of the German Lymphoma Alliance (GLA), spokesman of Working Group 7 of the German National Strategy for Gene and Cell Therapies and board member of the German Working Group on Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation and Cell Therapies.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/francis-ayuk-697517313/>

Trine Bartholdy

Chief Business Officer, BiolInnovation Institute (BII), Copenhagen

Trine has + 20 years' experience in the life science sector, working in her favorite place in the intersection between Life Science and Business. In her role as CBO at BII, she is part of the Executive Leadership Team. She leads the Venture Creation Department responsible for Scouting, Sourcing, Due Diligence and providing Acceleration expertise to start ups and scientific projects. Furthermore, her Team runs the company creation program, Bio Studio, as well as newly established Center of Excellence within Women's Health, Bio Solutions with more to come.

Prior to joining BII, Trine worked as an Investment Director at Sunstone Life Science Ventures, investing in health tech and pharmaceuticals. Furthermore, she spent 6 years with Novo Nordisk working with the strategic planning of the R&D portfolio within metabolic diseases/obesity followed by initiating Novo Nordisk's Digital Health journey. She holds a M.Sc. in Finance and Accounting (Copenhagen Business School) and a Certificate in Pharmaceutical Drug Development from European Center of Pharmaceutical Medicine (ECPM, Basel).

BiolInnovation Institute is a non-profit life science institute bridging the gap between academia and business, working with accelerator and incubator models. Established in 2018 by the Novo Nordisk Foundation, it has to date fostered +112 life science start-ups within pharmaceuticals, health tech and bio industrials.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/trine-bartholdy-09ba611/>

Hildegard Büning

Hildegard Büning is Professor of Infection Biology of the Gene Transfer and Deputy Director of the Institute of Experimental Hematology at Hannover Medical School (Germany). She served as President of the European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy (www.ESGCT.eu), is the Scientific Secretary of the German Society for Gene Therapy (www.dg-gt.de) and a Member of the Board of the American Society of Gene & Cell

Therapy (<https://asgct.org/>). She studied Biology and obtained her PhD (Dr. rer. nat.) at the LMU Munich. Since then, she is active in the field of adeno-associated virus (AAV) vectors with a particular focus on improving the efficacy and safety of these biological nanoparticles.

Johannes Frühauf

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/johannesfruehauf/>

Hakan Goker

Hakan Goker, PhD, is Managing Director of M Ventures and heads the Biotechnology Investments covering Healthcare and Life Sciences. Hakan joined M Ventures in 2013 and has been investing in the sector for 18 years. He has overseen several of M Ventures' portfolio company partnerships (e.g., Artios, F-Star Therapeutics, etc.) with Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany (and/or its affiliates) and successful exits (e.g., Calypso, Forendo, Progyny, Synaffix, etc.). Hakan serves as Board Director or Observer on several M Ventures portfolio companies (e.g., Asceneuron, Artios, iOnctura, Nouscom, Ribometrix, Storm, etc.). Previously, Hakan was a partner at Aescap Venture investing in European opportunities. Hakan started his investment career at Atlas Venture focusing on global investment opportunities in healthcare and medical technologies across US, Europe and Asia. He was instrumental in the creation and financing, business and R&D strategies of multiple companies in their formation years including Orphazyme, Bicycle, Nimbus Discovery, and f-Star while at Aescap and Atlas. Hakan continues his active investing role and represents M Ventures on multiple portfolio companies. He comes from an academic background receiving his Ph.D. in oncology from the Institute of Cancer Research/ University of London, UK and continuing his scientific career with postdoctoral work at the Breakthrough Breast Cancer Centre/Royal Marsden Hospital. He gained his B.Sc. Hons, from University College London. Hakan is based in Amsterdam at the M Ventures head office.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/hakan-goker-a61a674/>

Varun Gupta

Varun is Partner at Wellington Partners, where he has taken a leading role to define Wellington's early-stage investment strategy and deal sourcing with a focus on the biopharma sector. He currently serves as a board member for Confo, ImCheck, SciRhom and Dunad and as a board observer for TRiCares, Minervax, and Seamless. Before joining Wellington, Varun worked as an Intern at Ysios Captial (Spain) and supported the investment team of Forbion (The Netherlands).

Varun was awarded a PhD with Summa cum Laude in Neuroscience from the Freie Universität Berlin (Germany) and holds an MBA from IESE Business School (Spain).

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/varun-gupta-13b562109/>

Elisa Kieback

Dr. Elisa Kieback is co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of the biotech startup T-knife Therapeutics. After studying biology in Dresden, Glasgow and Heidelberg she completed a PhD in immunology at the Humboldt University in Berlin. After several projects in translational research on cellular immunotherapy at the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine, she set up a clinical trial using gene-modified T-cells at the Charité. In 2019 she founded T-knife as a spinout from MDC and Charité.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/elisakieback/>

Karl Naegler

Karl Naegler is a Partner in the Sofinnova Capital Strategy. He joined us in September 2024, bringing a strong track record of 20 years of investment experience. Before joining Sofinnova, he was a Managing Partner at Wellington Partners Life Sciences and before that, a Partner at Gimv. In those roles, he was instrumental in the success of several high-profile startups, from company formation to exit. These include Seamless Therapeutics, launched with a top syndicate of investors; Breath Therapeutics, a co-investment with Sofinnova Partners, acquired by Zambon; Covagen, acquired by Johnson & Johnson, and Prosonix, acquired by Circassia Pharmaceuticals. His career also includes key roles at Ventech and Atlas Venture. Karl earned his PhD in Molecular Neurobiology from the Max-Delbrück-Center for Molecular Medicine in Berlin followed by a position as Scientific Fellow at CNRS for Neurochemistry in Strasbourg.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/karl-n%C3%A4gler-b113151/>

Andreas Schmidt

Andreas Schmidt is a Managing Director of Springboard Health Angels, an early stage venture investment firm centered in Berlin and operating globally. As a serial entrepreneur, Andreas has built companies in the deeptech and precision medicine sector across Europe, Asia, and the US. After selling his last company Proteona to Singleron Biotechnologies, he is heading their global clinical and pharma business development, applying single cell technologies to precision medicine. Andreas is board member as well as mentor and shareholder of multiple international start up companies often with a focus on multi-omics, data and AI-driven technologies for cell and gene therapies as well as diagnostics and precision medicine. Andreas is an immunologist by training from Berkeley and one of the early entrepreneurs of the SMART Singapore MIT Alliance of Research and Technology.

<https://www.springboardangels.com/team/dr.-andreas-schmidt>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/andreas-schmidt-phd-80259a/>

Angela Vlachou

Angelika Vlachou joined High-Tech Gründerfonds (HTGF) in July 2021 bringing more than 15 years of experience in the life science industry spanning venture investing, strategy management and research. She is jointly responsible for HTGF's investment activities in life sciences. Over the course of her career, Angelika has managed many transactions ranging from seed stage venture capital and growth financing to licensing agreements, trade sale transactions and IPOs. She supported portfolio companies across different stages of development. Earlier in her career, Angelika worked for a contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMO) in the areas of strategy and business development. Her expertise is also based on her virology-molecular biology research experience. One of her strengths is to combine scientific innovation with commercial potential. She is a valued sparring partner for founders, investors, and stakeholders. With a doctorate in biology, she started her professional career in investment banking.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/angelikavlachou/>