

Press release

hephaistos.bio obtains CHF 150,000 from Venture Kick to bring tailor-made enzymes to resilient and sustainable chemical manufacturing

St.Gallen/Zurich/Lausanne, June 1, 2026 — The biotech startup hephaistos.bio has obtained CHF 150,000 from Venture Kick to help manufacturers replace complex and energy-intensive chemical processes with more resilient and sustainable production methods. Combining computational biology, chemistry, and machine learning, the startup develops custom protein catalysts tailored to industrial reactions that are currently difficult to perform efficiently.

Traditional chemical manufacturing relies on energy- and resource-intensive processes that create significant environmental impact and dependencies on vulnerable supply chains. Using enzymes instead can simplify production, reduce manufacturing costs by up to 30%, and cut CO₂ emissions by up to 50%. However, suitable enzymes do not yet exist for many industrial reactions, particularly in pharmaceutical manufacturing.

hephaistos.bio addresses this challenge by designing custom enzymes using computational tools, machine learning, and structural biology. Its end-to-end enzyme design pipeline creates custom biocatalysts for chemical reactions that are difficult or impossible to perform efficiently with existing solutions. The approach simplifies pharmaceutical and fine chemical manufacturing while making it more resilient, sustainable, and cost-effective.

The startup is already demonstrating its potential through an industrial pilot project with the Swiss-based contract research organization SpiroChem. Building on this early commercial traction, hephaistos.bio aims to help pharmaceutical and fine chemical manufacturers reshore production to Europe by enabling more cost-competitive and sustainable manufacturing processes using custom enzymes.

The CHF 150,000 from Venture Kick will support follow-up industrial enzyme design campaigns, finance the expansion of laboratory automation, and enable the company's first hires.

The team, formed by CEO Lukas Radtke, CTO Lucas Merlicek, Head of Operations Jannik Neumann, Head of Lab Moritz Ullhofen, and Head of Business Development Ilya Schneider, combines expertise in chemistry, biotechnology, machine learning, and industrial applications to develop custom enzyme solutions for more sustainable manufacturing processes.

"Venture Kick is a catalyst for industrial innovation," highlights CEO Lukas Radtke. "The support and funding pushed us to transition from being a research project towards a business, providing the momentum required to deploy our custom enzymes where traditional chemistry has failed for years."



Ilya Schneider (Head of BD), Jannik Neumann (Head of Operations), Lucas Merlicek (CTO), Lukas Radtke (CEO), and Moritz Ullhofen (Head of Lab)

[hephaistos.bio's profile on Venture Kick](#)

About Venture Kick

The Venture Kick philanthropic initiative provides more than 1 million in seed funding to Swiss startups and offers a well-structured entrepreneurial path toward building a winning business. Startups pitch to Venture Kick juries in three stages to obtain CHF 150,000, gain direct feedback, and access a network of 250 international investors. Winners of Venture Kick are eligible for an InnoBooster grant of CHF 150,000 and an additional CHF 850,000 investment from the Kickfund.

Since its launch in 2007, Venture Kick has supported 1,286 Swiss startup projects with CHF 103 million from private donors. Thanks to financial support, coaching, and networking with investors, this initiative has led to the emergence of 1,000+ thriving startup companies and the creation of 16,100+ jobs. Venture Kick alumni companies have attracted investments of CHF 10.2 billion and represent 66 companies ranked in the Top100 Swiss Startups in 2025 (<https://www.top100startups.swiss>).

Venture Kick is an initiative by the Kick Foundation, supported by a private consortium and operated by Venturelab. The supporting foundations and private philanthropic partners include Gebert Rüt Stiftung, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Fondation ALCEA, Hauser-Stiftung, André Hoffmann, Hansjörg Wyss, Martin Haefner, Fondation ProTechno, ESA BIC Switzerland, Swisscom, Lichtsteiner Foundation, and Deep Tech Nation Switzerland Foundation.

Find more information on venturekick.ch, with [all startup projects supported by Venture Kick](#), and follow the success stories of our startups on [LinkedIn](#).

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