

## **HepaRegeniX GmbH Raises €9 million in a Series A Financing to Develop Kinase Inhibitors for the Treatment of Acute and Chronic Liver Diseases**

**Tubingen (Germany), January 05, 2017** – HepaRegeniX GmbH, a new Biotech company developing innovative treatments for liver diseases, announced today the completion of a €9 million Series A financing. The round was led by Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Fund GmbH (BIVF) and Novo Seeds, and complemented by the High-Tech Gruenderfonds and coparion.

HepaRegeniX develops a new and unique therapeutic concept for the treatment of liver diseases, discovered by Prof. Lars Zender and his research group at the University Hospital Tubingen, Germany. In the healthy liver, hepatocytes have a near endless capacity to regenerate. However, in liver diseases, this regenerative capacity is locked and excessive hepatocyte death cannot be compensated, ultimately leading to loss of liver function and often death.

The laboratory of Prof. Lars Zender identified Mitogen-Activated Protein (MAP) Kinase Kinase 4 (MKK4) as a key regulator of liver regeneration. The laboratory found that suppression of MKK4 gene expression by small RNA molecules unlocks the regenerative capacity of hepatocytes even in severely diseased livers. These findings paved the way for the unique and promising therapeutic concept to develop small molecule MKK4 inhibitors to treat acute and chronic liver diseases. In particular, following thorough characterization of the underlying molecular mechanism of action of drug candidates, there is potential for the development in non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH).

HepaRegeniX has acquired worldwide and exclusive rights of the related IP portfolio and, in collaboration with the Zender group and the medicinal chemistry group of the Eberhard-Karls University of Tubingen (Profs. Stefan Laufer and Antti Poso), has already identified the first small molecule inhibitors of MKK4.

“In a nutshell, HepaRegeniX is developing an ‘EPO’ for the liver“, said Dr. Detlev Mennerich, Investment Director at BIVF. “The pioneering discovery of Prof. Lars Zender, that the inhibition of MKK4 leads to an overall increased capacity of liver cell regeneration, has attracted a very inter-disciplinary team of experienced drug discovery seniors into HepaRegeniX.”

Dr. Wolfgang Albrecht, CEO of HepaRegeniX added, “I am excited to work with the very experienced founder team and with the strong syndicate of international investors. HepaRegeniX is in an excellent position to bring this new treatment concept forward to liver disease patients.”

This Series A round provides funding for the ongoing medicinal chemistry discovery programs and preclinical development of drug candidates through IND filing. The first clinical study for the treatment of acute liver failure is planned for 2019.

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**About HepaRegeniX GmbH**

HepaRegeniX, founded in 2015, specializes in the discovery and development of small molecule kinase inhibitors. The management team, led by Dr. Wolfgang Albrecht, and scientific advisors have over 20 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry with a proven track record in drug development and cover all disciplines along the value creation chain from early stage discovery through clinical proof-of-concept studies. The unique therapeutic concept for the treatment of liver diseases was discovered by Prof. Lars Zender and his research group at the University Hospital Tübingen, Germany. Investors in HepaRegeniX include the Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Fund (BIVF), Novo A/S, coparion, High-Tech Gruenderfonds and Ascenion GmbH. Ascenion supported the acquisition of the exclusive IP rights.

**About Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Fund**

The Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Fund (BIVF) was formed in March 2010 to invest in biotechnology and start-up companies to help drive innovation in medical science. The investment focus includes - but is not limited to immunomodulation, esp. immunology, tissue regeneration, new therapeutic modalities, e.g. gene therapy, cell-based therapeutics, ADC, and microbiome. This reflects BIVF's interest in platform technologies and the extension of the current therapeutic area focus of Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) and demonstrates BIVF's commitment to investigate new treatment modalities and technologies, beyond BI's existing landscape, for the potential future benefit of patients. BIVF takes an active role with its portfolio companies – delivering significant added value through its own extensive drug discovery, scientific and managerial expertise. The BIVF has €100 million under management and supervises currently a portfolio of 18 active companies. [www.boehringer-ingelheim-venture.com](http://www.boehringer-ingelheim-venture.com)

**About Novo A/S and Novo Seeds**

Novo Seeds is the early stage investment arm of Novo A/S. Novo Seeds invests in European life science companies with transformative potential and takes an active role as investor, with a proven track record to create and build new companies. Novo A/S is a private limited liability company wholly owned by the Novo Nordisk Foundation. The company is the holding company in the Novo Group and responsible for managing the assets of the Foundation. Besides being the major shareholder in the Novo Group companies, including Novo Nordisk A/S and Novozymes A/S, Novo A/S provides seed and venture capital to development-stage companies, takes significant ownership positions in well-established companies within the life sciences and manages a broad portfolio of financial assets. For further information visit [www.novo.dk](http://www.novo.dk)

### **About High-Tech Gruenderfonds**

High-Tech Gruenderfonds invests in young, high potential high-tech start-ups. The seed financing provided is designed to enable start-ups to take an idea through prototyping and to market launch. Typically, High-Tech Gruenderfonds invests EUR 600,000 in the seed stage, with the potential for up to a total of EUR 2 million per portfolio company in follow-on financing. Investors in this public/private partnership include the Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy, the KfW Banking Group, as well as strategic corporate investors including ALTANA, BASF, Bayer, B. Braun, Robert Bosch, CEWE, Daimler, Deutsche Post DHL, Deutsche Telekom, Evonik, Innogy, Lanxess, media + more venture Beteiligungs GmbH & Co. KG, METRO, Qiagen, SAP, Tengemann and Carl Zeiss. High-Tech Gruenderfonds has about EUR 576 million under management in two funds (EUR 272 million HTGF I, EUR 304 million HTGF II). [www.high-tech-gruenderfonds.de](http://www.high-tech-gruenderfonds.de)

### **About coparion**

coparion provides venture capital to accelerate momentum and growth. With a current active fund of EUR 225 million coparion has the means to do so. coparion supports entrepreneurial vision with know-how, but without intervening in daily business operations. Thanks to in-depth experience in venture capital and in building companies, the coparion team discerns potentials and opens up new perspectives. coparion has the substance, tenacity and creativity required to mutually manage difficult situations successfully. coparion only invests with co-investors. The fund invests up to EUR 10 million per company, usually in several financing rounds of EUR 0.5-3 million each. Investment focus is on German companies in the start-up and early growth phase. coparion is based in Cologne and Berlin. [www.coparion.de](http://www.coparion.de)