Finalists for the 2026 Strüngmann Award Announced: Award Recognizes Entrepreneurial Excellence and Significant Innovation Potential in Life Sciences

For the third consecutive year, the Strüngmann Award will be presented to outstanding life sciences entrepreneurs from the DACH region

The 2026 finalists are: Dr. Stefano Portolano (Azafaros), Prof. Dr. med. Wieland Sommer (Jacobian), and Dr. Jonathan Talbot (Mosanna Therapeutics, Melodia Therapeutics)

The winner of the award, which comes with a prize of EUR 100,000, will be announced at the ceremony on September 15, 2026

Munich, Germany, June 25, 2026

The Strüngmann Award 2026 enters its decisive phase today with the announcement of this year's finalists. In honor of the visionary investors and namesakes Drs. Andreas and Thomas Strüngmann, the award, now in its third year, recognizes outstanding entrepreneurs who establish revolutionary technologies in life sciences. The distinguished finalists develop scientific innovations turning them into successful products that significantly improve patients' lives.

The award focuses on successful executives in the dynamic life sciences industry across the DACH region. They will serve as role models, inspiring the next generation of founders to continue to advance innovative ideas.

"This year's impressive finalists demonstrate the breadth of forward-thinking developments in our industry, from technologies that are already transforming clinical practice today to promising new therapeutic approaches. They embody the scientific excellence, creativity, and pioneering entrepreneurial spirit that define the DACH life sciences sector. The progress achieved by their companies shows what is possible when innovative approaches are driven forward with courage and strong execution," said Drs. Andreas and Thomas Strüngmann.

The following entrepreneurs have been nominated as finalists for 2026:

Dr. Stefano Portolano – Azafaros

Dr. Stefano Portolano is CEO of the biotech company Azafaros and a successful life sciences executive with more than 20 years of international experience spanning academia and the pharmaceutical industry. He is a recognized expert in developing and commercializing therapies for rare and ultra-rare diseases. His medical speciality is diabetology and metabolic diseases.

Azafaros, headquartered in Basel (Switzerland) and Leiden (Netherlands), is a biotechnology company focused on rare, inherited metabolic disorders. Azafaros' lead program is nizubaglustat, a novel compound with a unique dual mechanism of action. It is being developed as a therapy for inherited lysosomal storage disorders, a group of previously untreatable rare neurometabolic diseases that primarily affect children and are associated with progressive neurodegeneration. Since joining Azafaros early on, Stefano has leveraged his experience in building international life sciences organizations focused on rare diseases. He has played a key role in advancing nizubaglustat from a scientifically grounded academic research program through preclinical testing and into late-stage clinical

development. Following positive Phase II results for nizubaglustat, he and his team launched a Phase III development program in 2025 comprising two pivotal studies.

With a successful EUR 132 million Series B financing round in 2025, the Company secured one of the most significant private biotech financings in Europe, laying a strong foundation to further develop its lead candidate and expand its pipeline.

Prof. Dr. med. Wieland Sommer – Jacobian

Radiologist Prof. Dr. Wieland Sommer combines an impressive entrepreneurial track record with a strong academic background. He is the founder and Chief Strategy Officer of Jacobian (formerly Smart Reporting). The Munich-based HealthTech company has fundamentally transformed radiological reporting: moving away from fragmented standalone solutions towards an integrated, automated platform that combines data-driven, guideline-based reporting; speech recognition; standardized clinical reports and established radiological workflows. Jacobian thus addresses some of the most pressing challenges in radiology: rising examination volumes, growing cost pressure, and currently the often insufficient integration of artificial intelligence and digital solutions into clinical workflows.

Jacobian already processes more than 80 million radiological reports annually, making it one of the world's largest providers in this field. The Company is the market leader in Australia and ranks second in the U.S. and Canada. A key step in the Company's international expansion came in 2025 with the acquisition, led by Wieland, of the industry-leading Fluency for Imaging platform from Solventum (formerly 3M) by Smart Reporting, which significantly expanded the Company's presence in the North American market and its technological foundations.

Wieland's entrepreneurial career has been defined by establishing and scaling companies that digitize high-leverage processes in the healthcare sector. As the founder of Smart Reporting and, prior to that, Planerio, he has built two leading HealthTech companies. Under Wieland's leadership, Smart Reporting secured major partnerships with companies such as Siemens Healthineers and GE Healthcare. In 2021, he successfully sold Planerio, a company specializing in workforce management in the healthcare sector, to Vitruvian Partners.

Dr. Jonathan Talbot – Mosanna Therapeutics / Melodia Therapeutics

Dr. Jonathan Talbot is an experienced biotech CEO with deep expertise in corporate strategy, clinical development, and business development. He has strategically built several life sciences startups and guided them from inception into clinical development.

At Mosanna Therapeutics, Jonathan, as co-founder and CEO, drove the development of MOS-118, a novel intranasal therapy for obstructive sleep apnea – a frequently underestimated condition that, if left untreated, significantly increases the risk of serious complications. The founding team recognized the potential of a small-molecule drug program developed by Sanofi, secured in-licensing rights, and built a dedicated company to take it into the clinic. Under Jonathan's leadership, Mosanna raised more than $80 million over several financing rounds and advanced MOS-118 to Phase I clinical trials.

Today, Jonathan leads Melodia Therapeutics, a Basel-based biotechnology company developing innovative oral therapies for severe neutrophil-driven inflammatory diseases. The preclinical lead candidate, MLD-151, is a next-generation DPP1 inhibitor with a potentially improved efficacy and safety profile compared to earlier compounds.

Award ceremony on September 15, 2026

In the next stage of the selection process, the finalists will present their ideas to a jury of experts comprising outstanding entrepreneurs and experienced biotechnology investors. This pitch will determine which candidate impresses the experts most. The winner will be announced on September 15, 2026, during the award ceremony and will receive a cash prize of EUR 100,000.

To learn more about the award, visit the website www.struengmannaward.de/en.

About the Strüngmann Award

The award was initiated in 2024 to honor outstanding entrepreneurs in the life sciences industry across the DACH region who turn scientific ideas into successful products through a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurial excellence. The goal is to acknowledge their achievements with this prestigious and financially attractive award and to set an example for future generations.

The prize pays tribute to Drs. Andreas and Thomas Strüngmann, who are among the most recognized entrepreneurs, visionaries, and investors in the life sciences sector. With the founding and development of Hexal, the brothers achieved extraordinary success and subsequently continued this legacy as entrepreneurially minded investors. Through the ATHOS Family Office they have been committed for more than 20 years to advancing medical innovation and building transformative, forward-thinking companies.

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