

Press Release

Establishment of the Walloon Cell Therapy Platform

The platform aims to produce cell therapy medicines on a large scale

- Public-Private Partnership amounting to EUR 20 million
- Promethera Biosciences and Bone Therapeutics invest in the platform and expect to start production there as from 2015
- Creation of 100 new jobs and over 200 indirect jobs.

Gosselies, 12 June 2013 – This Wednesday the foundation stone of the Walloon Cell Therapy Platform in Gosselies (Belgium) has been laid. The platform will support and facilitate large-scale production of cell therapy medicines. It has been established thanks to a public-private partnership : the Walloon Region and Sambrinvest contribute to the industrial innovation of the region and two private cell therapy companies - Promethera Biosciences and Bone Therapeutics – invest to start production of their medicines in the new premises as from 2015. The platform, unique in this category, provides Wallonia with a new and particularly innovative high-tech cluster to respond to the development needs of the growing number of cell therapy companies in Belgium.

Cell therapy: a promising sector in Wallonia

Construction works for the new Walloon Cell Therapy Platform have started at the Aéroport in Gosselies. The total investment amounts to EUR 20 million and is financed by a Public-Private Partnership. Mr J.-C. Marcourt, Vice President and Minister of the Economy, SMEs, Foreign Trade and New Technologies of the Walloon Region states: *“The Walloon Region, via the Marshall Plan and the BioWin competitiveness cluster, has already made major investments to create and support innovation in companies active in cell therapy. Over EUR 40 million of funding has been devoted to this sector since 2005. A new step has been taken today with the establishment of a public-private partnership, aiming to build a platform dedicated to cell therapy.”*

The public angle includes the Walloon Region, Sofipôle and Sambrinvest. Two private cell therapy companies, Bone Therapeutics and Promethera Biosciences, invest and will set up their large-scale production activities when the new production premises will be operational (expected as from 2015).

About one hundred new direct jobs and over 200 indirect jobs (outsourcing) will be created over the next two years.

This platform also contributes to the national and international development of these two young innovative companies.

Other cell therapy companies are welcomed to establish their activities and join the platform.

A structure created to meet specific needs

The company SISE (Société d’Infrastructures, de Services et d’Energies) takes responsibility for the construction and management of the new platform and will supply all shared services to all companies on site: energy and water, logistics and infrastructure.

The first two companies to utilise the platform will be Bone Therapeutics, specialised in treating bone diseases, and Promethera Biosciences, specialised in treating liver diseases.

“Almost 2000 m² of state-of-the-art clean rooms for production and 1,300 m² for research and quality control will be built. These facilities will produce more than 5,000 drug batches a year at maximum capacity”, declares Anne Prignon, Chair of SISE.

“This project perfectly meets our needs and responds Bone Therapeutics’ strategy to develop and market our flagship product PREOB[®]”, states Enrico Bastianelli, CEO of Bone Therapeutics. “We are now at a stage where our production capacity must increase to an industrial scale and we look forward to moving all our operations to these cutting-edge, high-tech premises.”

“We are delighted to participate in this project, that has been made possible by the Walloon Region, which has supported us from the outset”, declares Eric Halioua, CEO of Promethera Biosciences. “This partnership allows us to pool resources and increase efficiency while respecting each company’s know-how and intellectual property.”

A hub to catalyse the establishment of cell therapy companies

Its adaptability and potential for development are some other unparalleled aspects of the project; the platform has indeed been designed allowing for expansion and for serving additional cell therapy companies.

“We would like to stress that this initiative will make it possible to develop yet more research capacity in cell therapy in Wallonia, which is already at the forefront in this field”, explains Jean-Marc Nollet, Vice President and Minister for Sustainable Development, Public Administration and Energy, Housing and Research in the Walloon Region. “It will allow new companies to emerge in this area since they will be able to use the services and infrastructure made available by this platform”, he concludes.

Press contacts, for further information:

Plateforme Wallonne de Thérapie Cellulaire (Walloon Cell Therapy Platform):

Christiane Verhaegen, Director, SISE
Tel: +32 (0) 2 529 58 25
E-mail: christiane.verhaegen@sise.be

Bone Therapeutics :

Enrico Bastianelli, CEO
Tel : +32(0)2 529 59 90
E-mail : info@bonetherapeutics.com

Promethera Biosciences:

Frédérique Ramon
Tel: +32(0)10 394 300
E-mail : frederique.ramon@promethera.com

Key Reference Points

About cell therapy:

Cell therapy, often referred to as “regenerative medicine”, uses cells as a ‘medicine’ to repair diseased organs. This is a cutting-edge sector in which Belgian and particularly Walloon companies, such as Bone Therapeutics and Promethera Biosciences, are performing very well. Indeed, unlike many small companies created in Europe, the medicines developed by the Belgian cell therapy companies have a lead and a first marketing authorisation can be expected in the coming 2-3 years.

About the Walloon Cell Therapy Platform:

The Walloon Cell Therapy Platform was founded around SISE, a real public-private partnership, which builds and manages the common infrastructure for all participants and owns sufficient ground surface to welcome other cell therapy companies that may wish to develop their activities on site.

Sofipôle and Sambrinvest constitute the public shareholders of SISE. Other shareholders are two private companies specialised in cell therapy support - Skeletal Cell Therapy Support (SCTS s.a.) and Hepatic Cell Therapy Support (HCTS s.a.) – for Bone Therapeutics and Promethera Biosciences respectively.

Sambrinvest is active in risk capital in the region of Charleroi - Thuin. Its purpose is funding, and support in creation, development and transfer of companies in its region. It has a specific subsidiary dedicated to spin-offs and other companies in emerging sectors; this subsidiary is mostly present in the biotechnological sector, which is on the cutting edge in the Gosselies’ area.

Sofipôle is a subsidiary of S.R.I.W. and of SOWALFIN, created in 2005 at the initiative of the Walloon Region (Belgium) as part of the Marshall Plan. Its main objective is to finance ‘investments in infrastructure and facilities for projects in competitiveness clusters.’ It is also in charge of managing Wallonia’s contributions to incubators and investment funds in these sectors.

About Bone Therapeutics:

Based in the Biopôle of Gosselies (Belgium), Bone Therapeutics is a leading biotechnological company specialised in innovative cell therapy products for the treatment of bone diseases. Bone Therapeutics develops innovative cell products to reconstruct and regenerate bone tissue. Utilising the Company’s unique knowledge of the bone/joint physiology and long-standing expertise in cell therapy and cell transplantation, Bone Therapeutics has created a fully integrated business with an advanced product pipeline comprising novel bone cell products, tailored in-house production methods and minimally invasive treatment techniques. Bone Therapeutics owns a broad portfolio of products including the product PREOB® currently in Phase III clinical trials in Europe and ALLOB®, an allogeneic bone cell therapy product. The company works in close collaboration with the rheumatology department of the Erasme Hospital (Free University of Brussels - ULB, Belgium) and the Sart-Tilman University Hospital of Liège (CHU, ULg, Belgium).

Further information can be found at www.bonetherapeutics.com

About Promethera Biosciences:

Promethera Biosciences is a pharmaceutical company developing innovative treatments for liver diseases. The company is a spin-off of the Catholic University of Louvain (Université Catholique de Louvain - UCL) and was founded in 2009. The product currently being developed, Promethera® HepaStem, uses a stem cell isolated from healthy adult liver, the “Heterologous Human Adult Liver Progenitor Cell (HHALPC)”. These cells can be used to treat a large number of liver diseases, rare genetic metabolic diseases (which can be qualified as orphan diseases and mainly affect children) as well as acquired diseases affecting adults such as fulminant hepatitis or liver fibrosis. This treatment has already been granted the status of “orphan drug” by the European Medicines Agency and the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) for two very debilitating paediatric indications. Promethera® HepaStem is currently being developed for the treatment of rare in-born metabolic diseases.

Further information can be found at www.promethera.com
