

Biotech companies in Belgium:
**The time to push
forward is now!**

REINFORCING THE ENABLING CONDITIONS

REINFORCING LOCAL EMBEDMENT

DELIVERING THE RESOURCES



BELGIUM, A “BIOTECH VALLEY” LIKE NO OTHER

New investments, innovations coming in quick succession, validated clinical studies, world leadership in (bio)pharmaceutical exports, etc. mean that our biotechnology companies are constantly in the limelight. The consistently growing sector is being joined by numerous start-ups in Wallonia, Brussels and in Flanders. Clear signs of a huge growth potential.

With over 300 businesses, the Belgian “biotech valley” is creating a strongly innovation-driven dynamic. Eighty percent of these biotechnology companies operate in the health sector, 15% are in the biotechnology industry, and 5% involved in agri-biotechnology. The sector is increasingly successful in attracting venture capital. On the financial markets, the Belgian biotech sector represents over 30% of the European market capitalisation in the sector. Eleven Belgian biotech companies are traded on Euronext Brussels.

Belgium occupies this unique position thanks to its excellent performance across the entire biotech value chain: from fundamental research and development, across (pre-) clinical trials all the way up to sophisticated products. An eco-system which is further strengthened courtesy of the close cooperation between universities, university hospitals, large international corporations, SMEs, spin-offs and start-ups.

To help take these ambitions to the next stage, various government organisations are on hand to deliver support: bio.be/essenscia and pharma.be at federal level, and competitiveness centres such as GreenWin (sustainable chemical industry in Wallonia), BioWin (biotech and medtech in Wallonia), Catalisti (sustainable chemical industry in Flanders) and flanders.bio (biotech in Flanders).

SCALE UP! TIME TO GROW

The time to push forward is now. This is the moment to switch into a higher gear to produce and sell our innovative products on an industrial scale. Our biotech companies are ready to tackle the challenge, ready to enable society at large to reap the fruits of better health care, more bio-based products and more jobs.

BIOTECH COMPANIES: SOLUTIONS FOR A BETTER WORLD

The innovative products and processes developed by our biotech companies contribute to achieving the United Nations’ sustainable development goals:

- with world class biopharmaceuticals performing research and development to deliver the innovative medicines of the 21st century. This includes the major steps forward made in “Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products” (ATMP), which cover cell therapy, immunotherapy in the fight against cancer, gene therapy and regenerative therapy.
- with industrial biotech companies producing high added value lubricants or surface active agents and protein extracts.
- with agri-biotech businesses developing hybridisation, genetic transformation, the use of microorganisms, etc. to optimise agricultural production.

LET’S SCALE UP NOW!

Let us pool our strengths with the federal and regional entities to give our biotech industry every chance of success as we take this quantum leap.

In this memorandum, bio.be/essenscia sets out a series of ways and means to jointly deliver on this ambition to put Belgian biotech firmly on the world map.



Frédéric Druck
Secretary General

Tineke Van hooland
Chair



Reinforcing the enabling conditions

Tax incentives have helped to support the sector's appeal by attracting and retaining researchers and in doing so have also attracted foreign businesses. The ambition should be to broaden these benefits to create new high added value jobs.

CHALLENGES

Attracting new talents

New and innovative sectors such as biotech demand new talented professionals. New manufacturing processes require engineers and technicians that specialise in product development, quality control, in silico research (computer simulations), bio-IT specialists and data scientists... whereas working with national and international organisations demands the relevant expertise. Attracting the right top talents remains difficult. A targeted tax policy and administrative simplification can help solve these issues.

Developing alternatives for animal testing

In addition to support for in silico research, the sector is also keen to continue to innovate with the support of the public authorities in R&D for biological in vitro (test tube) tests to restrict the use of laboratory animals as widely as possible.

Facilitating decision-making

Biotech companies are happy to offer their expertise to facilitate European, national and regional decision-making relating to their sector, and are happy to work with all stakeholders to jointly form detailed and scientifically underpinned positions.

SOLUTIONS

Raising the partial exemption from advance withholding tax to 80% for Bachelor level researchers who work in R&D, whilst maintaining the current 80% exemption for Master level researchers;



Introducing a partial exemption from advance withholding tax for new emerging professions such as data scientists or regulatory scientists, in order to uphold the European and global competitiveness of our biotech companies;



Stepping up the efficiency of funding available to businesses through better regional and federal coordination of financial resources;



Devising interdisciplinary and inter-regional calls for projects;



Ensuring a level playing field in the area of animal testing for the sector; promoting R&D to come up with reliable alternatives;



Facilitating R&D, trials and innovations in plant hybridisation techniques;



Adopting a scientific approach when taking Belgian and European decisions in technical cases.



WALLONIA



WALLONIA-BRUSSELS FEDERATION



BRUSSELS



FLANDERS



BELGIUM



EUROPE



Reinforcing local embedment

The National Pact for Strategic Investments draws attention to the need to mobilise the available capital. The proposal for a single point of contact for large projects is a welcome initiative.

CHALLENGES

Support for promising small-scale projects

We also need to make greater efforts to seek out and attract investors for promising smaller scale projects. Their support is crucial to mobilise the financial resources required to underpin the growth of our SMEs and the industrial accomplishment of biotechnology projects.

Efficient logistics hub

Belgium is situated at the logistical crossroads for the carriage of ingredients and medicines around Europe. For long distance or urgent deliveries, the airports of Zaventem and Liège are suitably equipped. The potential of Brussels South Charleroi airport is yet to be used to its full potential even though the sector is consistently growing.

Coordinated Belgian strategy for the bioeconomy

Most countries and regions have devised a strategy to drive forward their bioeconomy, closely linked with their circular economy strategy. The new bioeconomy strategy published by the European Commission in October 2018 offers opportunities we need to seize on.

Promoting our "biotech valley"

The support of our governments for economic missions abroad and communications in the media on the importance of biotechnology and the success of our very own biotech valley remain crucial.

SOLUTIONS

Instructing the regional investment actors to disseminate information about the European funds and to put together an address book of potential investors for the benefit of our businesses;



Putting in place a tax shelter or another mechanism enabling small-time investors to invest in local innovative biotech SMEs;



Continuing to promote Belgium as a biotech growth hub and developing a climate that is conducive to investments;



Establishing an innovation and development policy specifically geared to serve the bioeconomy, including all biotech disciplines (life sciences, industrial biotechnology, agri-biotechnology), in line with the European Commission's new strategy;



Devising a "technology investment zone" concept as a lever for technology investments in support of specific production processes;



Investing in Brussels South Charleroi airport for the specialist storage and transport of cells, tissues, vaccines, medicines and such like.



Delivering the resources

CHALLENGES IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Training and education tailored to our biotech companies

Even though we generally have sufficient numbers of pharmacists and chemists, we urgently need extra staff to cement our growth: engineers to develop and optimise new processes, IT professionals that specialise in biochemistry and specialist operators in production.

A continuous dialogue between the worlds of academia and industry, supported by the authorities, would enable us to better and more swiftly adapt the educational offering to the needs in the areas of biosciences, biotechnology, green chemistry and life sciences.

In Belgium, barely 1 student in 5 embarks on STEM studies (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics), which is nowhere near enough. We need to build bridges between the worlds of education and business to shepherd students towards quality jobs.

SOLUTIONS

Setting up STEM degree courses, with a particular focus on dual learning, in all biotech fields;



Continued support for joint learning schemes organised by essenscia and the authorities, such as Cefochim in Wallonia or the new biopharma training centre in Flanders;



Adapting existing study programmes to match the need for specialist profiles in the biotech sector (e.g. data scientists).



Delivering the resources

CHALLENGES IN RAW MATERIALS

By definition, the raw materials used in biotech production processes are natural and organic materials. Unfettered access to these raw materials is crucial to our businesses.

In this regard, the adoption of the Act of 30 October 2018 amending the Act of 19 December 2009 on the obtainment and the use of human bodily tissues for human medical applications or scientific research is crucial for the bioscience companies that operate in the field of cell therapy. The implementing orders of this legislation are paramount.

We also need to facilitate access to the natural Belgian genetic resources through the coordinated transposition of the Nagoya Protocol to the various institutional levels of our country.

SOLUTIONS

Jointly drafting the implementing orders for the Act on the obtainment and the use of human bodily tissues for human medical applications or scientific research with all the stakeholders;



Devising a coordinated approach for the transposition of the Nagoya Protocol at federal and regional level to ensure that companies have access to the federal and regional collections on identical terms;



Eliminating the production, import and export restrictions for sustainable bio-based materials;



Facilitating the use, import and export of by-products, and recognising the end of waste or by-product status for products that do not come under the scope of the REACH legislation ("Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals") in the EU;



Devising a coherent approach between energy policy and product policy; ensuring consensus between stakeholders on the distribution and the use of bio-based products, by-products and waste products.



The members of bio.be/essencia

3M Belgium > 1831 Diegem
AbbVie Belgium > 1300 Wavre
Amgen > 1831 Diegem
Asit Biotech > 1200 Brussels
Aveve Biochem/Group Aveve >
2170 Merksem (Antwerpen)
Bayer Agriculture > 2040 Antwerpen
Bayer CropScience > 1831 Diegem
Belgian Volition > 5032 Les Isnes
Beta-Cell > 3590 Diepenbeek
Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant > 9042 Gent
Bio-Rad Laboratories > 9140 Temse
Biotech Coaching > 4000 Liège
Bird & Bird > 1050 Brussels
Bone Therapeutics > 6041 Gosselies
Cargill R&D Centre Europe > 1800 Vilvoorde
Celyad > 1435 Mont-Saint-Guibert
Clever Consult > 1861 Wolvertem
Corden Pharma Brussels > 1120 Brussels
Coris Bioconcept > 5032 Gembloux
CropDesign > 9850 Nevele
Devgen > 9052 Zwijnaarde
DIAsource ImmunoAssays >
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Eckert & Ziegler BEBIG > 7180 Seneffe
Ecover Co-Ordination Center > 2390 Westmalle
Emtex > 9170 Sint-Gillis-Waas

Eurofins Amatsigroup > 9052 Zwijnaarde
Fujirebio > 9052 Zwijnaarde
Galactic > 1070 Brussels
Genencor International > 8000 Brugge
Genzyme Flanders > 2440 Geel
GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals >
1300 Wavre
GlaxoSmithKline Vaccines > 1330 Rixensart
Henogen > 6041 Gosselies
Immunodiagnosics Systems (IDS) >
4000 Liège
Imperbel > 1360 Perwez
Inbiose > 9052 Zwijnaarde
**Intrexon Actobiotics – part of Intrexon
Corporation** > 9052 Zwijnaarde
iTeos Therapeutics > 6041 Gosselies
Janssen Pharmaceutica > 2340 Beerse
Janssen-Cilag > 2340 Beerse
JSR Micro > 3001 Heverlee
Kaneka Eurogentec > 4102 Ougrée
Kitozyme > 4040 Herstal
Lonza Verviers > 4800 Verviers
Masthercell > 6041 Gosselies
Mithra Pharmaceuticals > 4000 Liège
MSD Belgium > 1200 Brussels
Nautadutilh > 1000 Brussels
Novadip > 1435 Mont-Saint-Guibert

Novartis Pharma > 1800 Vilvoorde
Ogeda > 6041 Gosselies
Oleon > 9940 Ertvelde
Oncodna > 6041 Gosselies
Pall Artelis > 3320 Hoegaarden
PDC *line Pharma > 4031 Angleur
Perseus > 9830 Sint-Martens-Latem
Pharmacobel > 1070 Brussels
Plasma Industries Belgium > 1120 Brussels
Promethera Biosciences >
1435 Mont-Saint-Guibert
Quality Assistance > 6536 Donstiennes
Realco > 348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Roche > 1070 Brussels
Roche Diagnostics Belgium > 1800 Vilvoorde
Sanofi Belgium > 1831 Diegem
Schepens > 3560 Lummen
SESVanderHave > 3300 Tienen
SGS Lab Simon > 1301 Bierges
Syngenta Crop Protection > 9052 Zwijnaarde
Takeda > 7860 Lessines
Tosoh Europe > 3980 Tessenderlo
UCB > 1070 Brussels
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bio.be/essencia is the Belgian federation of companies operating in the areas of life sciences and biotechnology. It represents and upholds the interests of its member-companies at Belgian (federal and regional) and European level.

The mission of bio.be/essencia is to work towards a statutory and regulatory framework that is conducive to innovation in the various biotechnology disciplines.

In its communication role, bio.be/essencia also works to promote the sector's public image, by highlighting the excellence of its members who deliver innovative products and solutions that improve people's quality of life.

Operating under the aegis of umbrella organisation essencia, the Belgian federation of the chemical and life science industry, bio.be/essencia offers access to specialist advice and expertise through its network of partners in Belgium and abroad. As such, the association is your contact for EuropaBio, the European Association of Bioindustries, and is also a member of the ICBA, the International Council of Biotechnology Associations.