

BioWin, CETIC and essenscia wallonie launch the BioMan initiative to accelerate the digitalization of bioprocesses in Wallonia

The consortium bringing together the BioWin competitiveness cluster, the Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technologies (CETIC) and the regional federation of the chemical and life sciences sector, essenscia wallonie, has received the go-ahead from the Agence du Numérique to launch the BioMan project as part of the "Industry of the Future" program, with the aim of supporting Walloon biomanufacturing companies in their digital transformation

Belgium, June 15, 2022 - The BioWin - CETIC - essenscia wallonie consortium announces today the launch of BioMan, a new project dedicated to the digitalization of bioprocesses. This project, built on an initiative of the BioWin cluster which will also pilot the program, is supported by the Digital Agency (Agence Du Numérique) via the regional program "Industry of the Future" for the improvement of the competitiveness of manufacturing companies through the use of advanced digital technologies.

The biopharmaceutical industry is the main driver of economic growth, accounting for 34% of Wallonia's total exports. The Region has leveraged its historical know-how in the classical pharmaceutical sector and high-potential university research programs to become a recognized player in the research and development of innovative biotherapies and one of the European leaders in biomanufacturing.

These biotherapeutic approaches need new production methods (biomanufacturing) that are more complex and costly than the traditional pharmaceutical approaches to "small molecules", based on chemical synthesis. Biomanufacturing concerns cell therapy and tissue engineering products, recombinant proteins, monoclonal antibodies, DNA/RNA nucleic acids, viral vectors (gene therapy and vaccine agents), exosomes, bacteriophages, etc.

In order to maintain and strengthen its place in a highly competitive international market, the Walloon biomanufacturing sector must imperatively integrate innovative solutions (virtual reality, augmented reality, predictive maintenance, etc.) into its production methods.

A unique initiative to support SMEs and large groups in the digitalization of biomanufacturing

With a budget of 140,000 euros, the BioMan project aims to promote the intensification and implementation of digitalization within companies involved in biomanufacturing. The BioWin - CETIC - essenscia wallonie consortium aims to consolidate the support approaches already offered by the three organizations by bringing together the specific skills and expertise of each within a single initiative.

The project, which will last two years, will be carried out in several phases :

1. Digital awareness of companies active in biomanufacturing;;

2. The realization of a **digital maturity diagnosis** for the companies expressing their interest ;
3. Assistance in the **development of roadmaps** for concrete digitalization projects with help in identifying financial tools to make these projects a reality ;
4. Collecting data on the **future needs in technical skills** of companies active in biomanufacturing.

"For several years, the BioWin cluster has identified the evolution of biomanufacturing as a major challenge for the growth and competitiveness of the ecosystem. Digitalization is an essential innovation angle if Wallonia wants to consolidate its place among the European leaders in biomanufacturing. We are proud to be associated with CETIC and essenscia wallonie for this strategic support project", says **Sylvie Ponchaut, BioWin's Managing Director**.

"One of our missions, within the framework of BioMan, is to mobilize biopharma companies and support them in a practical way if they take the decision to launch, even on a small scale at the beginning, in an essential step of digitalization of their bioprocesses", adds **Paul Vanabelle, Expert Research Engineer of CETIC**.

"Progressively, Walloon biopharmaceutical companies are confronted with the challenges and opportunities of the development of these digital technologies, and this within the framework of the industrialization and production of innovative therapies," says **Marc Tilmant, Energy, Climate and Digital Transformation Advisor at essenscia wallonie**.

The BioMan project is part of the S3 regional innovation policy, which includes in particular the strategic innovation areas to support "*innovation for enhanced health*" as well as "*innovations for agile and safe design and production methods*", as well as the Wallonia recovery plan, whose *axis 3* consists of intensifying the digitalization of companies.

"By participating in this "Industry of the Future" project, we aspire to continue and especially strengthen the awareness-raising mechanism for biomanufacturing issues initiated several years ago within BioWin," concludes **Thierry Ferain, Director of Innovation and Growth at BioWin and coordinator of the BioMan project**. "We are already in contact with several Walloon companies interested in starting the first stage of digital diagnosis of their company carried out by CETIC."

For more information on the « Industry of the Future » programme :

<https://www.digitalwallonia.be/fr/programmes/industrie-du-futur>

About BioWin

BioWin is the health cluster in Wallonia, Belgium, the regional reference for all stakeholders in health, biotech and medtech research and innovation projects. It includes 250 members from the private, public and academic sectors.

Its mission is to accelerate innovation to meet tomorrow's public health challenges and develop the knowledge, employment and competitiveness of all players in the health sector ecosystem by bringing together all the innovation players in Wallonia's life sciences field, with the goal of stimulating regional economic redeployment. The cluster is also involved in implementing the sector's industrial policy (industrial innovation and research, training, support for business growth); to develop and anchor skills, knowledge and jobs.

www.biowin.org

About CETIC

CETIC is an Applied Research Center that provides companies with the most innovative results of research in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Digital Technologies. CETIC helps companies that develop software and IT tools to integrate faster promising emerging technologies in their new products, processes or services, allowing them to innovate faster, reduce risks, remain competitive in their market and develop new ones.

www.cetic.be

About essencia wallonie

essencia wallonie is the regional division of the federation of the chemical and life sciences industry, which offers more than 200 member companies in Wallonia, expertise, advice and services tailored to regional issues and skills. It is also the spokesperson for the sector in the media and defends the interests of the chemical and life sciences industry at all political levels.

www.essencia.be

About the Digital Agency (Agence du Numérique)

The Digital Agency is recognized as the catalyst of the digital transformation of the Walloon territory. It is in charge of implementing Wallonia's digital strategy "Digital Wallonia" and acts as the Government's privileged advisor. The Agency has about 40 employees.

<https://www.digitalwallonia.be/fr>

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