



BIOPARK

CHARLEROI BRUSSELS SOUTH

news

The Biopark Charleroi Brussels South Newsletter

n°22 — summer 2014

Business moves in

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ULB

UMONS
Université de Mons



Mood

European funding made an entrepreneurial environment possible at the Biopark. This dynamic has been further developed by a complementary group of organizations that includes universities (ULB and UMONS), incubators (i-Tech Incubator, WBC, WSL), and local structures (IGRETEC and Sambrinvest),... The result is that today, over 30 cutting edge tech companies call the Biopark home.

For the Theodorus investment fund, the Biopark is a major breeding ground for new projects, and we always have an eye open for endogenous projects, coming directly from universities' laboratories and, or from research centres and businesses. We cannot fail to be delighted at the way the Biopark has, in recent months, attracted high potential projects and businesses from other universities, regions, and countries, consolidating both the existing ecosystem and our investment potential.

Today, Biopark, Theodorus, and its partners have invested €24m in four companies operating from the Biopark, employing 75 people.

*Olivier Belenger
Managing Director
Theodorus*



An attractive strategy with a broad reach



The Biopark has changed since it was first founded 15 years ago. What was once a mainly academic campus is now home to both academic and private sector laboratories, businesses, and technology transfer and training bodies. The ecosystem is flourishing and its reach expanding, and now foreign companies are considering a move to the Biopark. Marie Bouillez, Director of i-Tech Incubator, home to some of these SME, takes stock of these changes.



IS SUCCESS ON THE CARDS IN THE WAKE OF I-TECH INCUBATOR II, OPENED LAST YEAR?

Marie Bouillez: Yes. The building is currently home to 23 businesses, five of which have arrived in the last five months, and we have already reached 75% occupancy: we didn't think that the building would fill up so quickly! The profile of the occupants is quite varied: we have university spin-offs, start-ups, as well as more mature companies.

AND THEY AREN'T ALL BELGIAN COMPANIES?

M.B.: No, not at all. Recently, Orgenesis chose to open a branch on our premises (*see box*). Orgenesis is listed on the OTC market in the USA, and chose here, Gosselies, for the range of expertise found on-site, especially in terms of research and development and the production of cell therapy products (MaSTherCell). The company views this cooperation as the gateway to Europe, proving that the Biopark's strategy of bringing all the stakeholders in a particular field together as part of an integrated ecosystem is an effective one, for Belgian and international companies alike.

DOES THE BIOPARK MODEL EXPORT WELL?

M.B.: We work closely with AWEX and Biolog Europe to attract foreign companies to the Biopark. Businesses are impressed when we tell them what we have here and describe the environment that has developed, especially in our flagship fields (imaging, immunology, and cell therapy). We are currently talking to five

foreign companies that are looking to set up in Europe, and are considering operating from the Biopark. The feedback is positive, so we just need to capitalize on it.

DOES THIS SHOW HOW THE BIOPARK HAS EVOLVED?

M.B.: In the beginning, the Biopark was made up mainly of academic research laboratories, as well as their spin-offs who set up nearby so that they could continue working together. Today, we are seeing external companies coming to the Biopark to find the expertise that they are lacking in-house: this is exactly what is happening with Orgenesis, as well as ImmunXperts (predictive immunogenicity screening, backed by the VUB) or iTeos Therapeutics (cancer treatment, a UCL spin-off). The Biopark definitely looks different 15 years on.

THE SUCCESS ISN'T LIMITED TO LIFE SCIENCES.

M.B.: Immunology, cell therapy, and imaging are, and will remain, the foundations of the Biopark, especially with the university laboratories on the site and the ecosystem that has sprung up. However, there is also demand from the environmental and engineering sectors, which we launched just over one year ago, and where we are hoping to replicate the success of life sciences. The Biopark and i-Tech Incubator definitely have development potential, and we also plan to open a third building as the campus grows.

Natasha Jordens

"ORGENESIS AND MASTHERCELL WILL GROW TOGETHER"

Israeli society, Orgenesis is trying to develop a treatment for type 1 diabetes using the patient's hepatic cells: the transdifferentiation of these cells enables them to acquire the ability to produce insulin. Orgenesis chose to entrust the industrial process to MaSTherCell, with a view to a European clinical trial. A few Orgenesis employees have been working in i-Tech Incubator, but 10-100 jobs could be created for their sub-contractors. "The fact that Orgenesis chose the Biopark because that's where the expertise it needs is found is proof that MaSTherCell and Wallonie have a role to play in the cell therapy field", states Patrick Stragier, MaSTherCell CBO, "It is a strategic partner, and we will grow together as time goes by".

N.J.

HIPPEROS: INNOVATIVE IT FOR EMBEDDED SYSTEMS



A safer world where aircraft, cars, and trains are no longer involved in accidents, a world where technology is smarter and more reliable: this is the (ambitious) objective of HIPPEROS, the new ULB spin-off that has moved in to the i-Tech Incubator.

The fledgling company creates Real Time Operating Systems (*RTOS*) that are used to boost the performance and reliability of devices with on-board electronics: they produce more robust systems, optimise resources, and accommodate constraints such as consumption, size, and weight. HIPPEROS works with critical applications in fields such as the aerospace and car industry, robotics, and medical devices, and is paving the way for new applications, such as auto-pilot.

The first Belgian specialist in *multi-core RTOS*, HIPPEROS is supported by the ESA Business Incubation Center. HIPPEROS is already present throughout Europe, and hopes to expand its business to the USA and Asia in the next few years.

D.D.S.

Univercells: travelling the world to bring the best back home



Univercells is a bioproduction company that provides consultancy services and assistance in building production facilities for vaccines and biosimilars in emerging countries. The company is looking to prove itself abroad before bringing the concept to Belgium at a later date.

Just over one year ago, Univercells moved in to its home at the i-Tech Incubator on the Biopark campus. For Hugues Bultot and José Castillo, founders of the company specialising in bioproduction, it was the perfect location. “We also have headquarters in Brussels that means we are still attractive to project managers and the consulting world in general”, Hugues Bultot explains, “In terms of life sciences, the Biopark helps us to create and consolidate synergies with a series of pertinent stakeholders, as well as benefitting from the site’s existing facilities.

We have, for example, already established an auspicious relationship with MaSTherCell, Igretec, and ImmuneHealth”.

Univercells’ objective? To provide emerging economies (in South America, Asia, or Africa) with a comprehensive solution to selling generic vaccines and monoclonal antibodies, via an end-to-end strategy unique in the sector. “The aim is to provide these countries with the best vector for production by creating a consortium (expertise for clinical trials, quality control, and engineering) that enables us to understand our clients’ needs and offer a fast, effective response as part of an unparalleled investment and production cost package”, José Castillo explains.

“At this time, we are in contact with a South-American country that would like, by 2018, to have its own complete monoclonal antibody industry, which is a highly ambitious, all-encompassing project”, he continues, “In parallel, Univercells is also negotiating with an Asian company for the exclusive production rights for a specific molecule, sold for \$150,000/g, and that is used by the microgram. These are very different projects but our methodology always remains the

same, and results in the production of a comprehensive solution”.

Univercells also works with the World Health Organisation (WHO). The WHO acts as an intermediary with local pharmaceutical companies who are seeking expertise and solutions in vaccines and antibodies. “Through the WHO, we have been able to meet producers in countries as varied as Jordan, Kazakhstan, Argentina, and China, all of whom are looking for innovative solutions that produce affordable treatments”, Hugues Bultot explains.

“Once our solutions have proven successful abroad, our plan is to come back to Europe - and Belgium in particular - to show that it is possible to remain competitive closer to home”, José Castillo reveals. In time, Univercells plans to create production facilities in Wallonia, and to take on permanent qualified staff.

Damiano Di Stazio





Immunogenicity: ImmunXperts is here

Founded in 2014, ImmunXperts has moved to the Biopark, a stone's throw from ImmuneHealth and the Institute for Medical Immunology. The Biopark's immunology portfolio just got that much fatter.

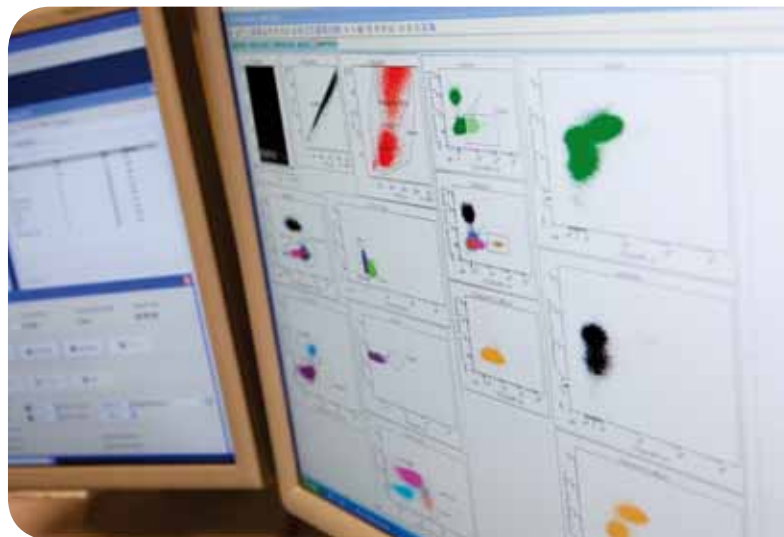
Biotherapy is a dynamic, promising sector that, beyond the question of its effectiveness, also poses safety challenges: we need to know if these therapeutic agents can cause an undesirable immune response in patients. This undesirable immune response, or immunogenicity, may well have clinical ramifications, such as rendering medication ineffective or, in the most severe cases, causing chronic disease or even death.

Founded in 2014, ImmunXperts helps its partners and clients to evaluate the immunogenicity risk of their drugs. More specifically, ImmunXperts assesses the immunogenicity of different classes of therapeutic compounds (antibodies, chemical molecules, proteins, etc.), as well as biosimilars (biotechnology treatments with expired patents) and nanotechnology compounds.

ImmunXperts has a role to play throughout the drug development phase, from research to preclinical. Furthermore, the company intends to provide a comprehensive range of services that will include regulatory support and training for its clients.

NETWORK

Young though the company may be, it can claim a solid track record and an effective scientific, technical, and business network, built upon seasoned European immunogenicity experts. Its location on the Biopark also provides natural synergies with ImmuneHealth. "We will share cutting edge facilities and laboratories, as well as expertise", explains Philippe Stas, the CEO of ImmunXperts, "The Biopark environment and the possible partnerships were also part of what drew us to the Biopark. The Institute for Medical Immunology is obviously a logical port of call for us".



With the arrival of ImmunXperts, the Biopark gains another company in one of the campus' primary sectors that now includes over 150 researchers (IMI, IBMM, ImmuneHealth) and seven companies working to produce techniques (Novasep, Univercells, MaSTherCell), tools (DelphiGenetics) and products (ITeos, Euroscreen) for the immune system.

www.immunxperts.com

OncoDNA: DNA sequencing for oncology



OncoDNA is the first company in Europe to provide innovative analyses based on DNA sequencing to improve treatment of cancer. In May 2013, the company welcomed the first customer for its OncoDEEP product. Five months later, and it's present in 15 countries!

With almost 22 million new cases every year expected by 2030, compared to 14 million in 2012, a WHO report predicts that cancer will continue to spread. In parallel, around 7% of cancers in Belgium are rare varieties that do not fully respond to traditional treatments prescribed by oncologists, and require bespoke treatments.

Personalised medicine sets out to take the molecular and biological peculiarities of the patient and their tumour into account, factors that will influence how the cancer develops, the treatment doctors suggest, as well as its effectiveness. Representing a real change of

scale, it can improve diagnosis, prognosis, and treatments, but necessitates the technical ability to analyse tumour cells and their genome on a time-scale that matches the patients' treatment schedule. It is against this backdrop, in an effort to help oncologists better identify new targeted treatments, that OncoDNA has developed OncoDEEP.

A true decision-making tool, OncoDEEP supports doctors in the selection of treatment and better tracks changes in patient tumours. Thanks to targeted or full sequencing of the tumour's genome, as well as testing for the presence and activity of certain key proteins, this product can provide doctors with specific medical information in a very short time-frame. This innovative product is accompanied by OncoSHARE, a type of "Google Analytics" for monitoring treatment that enables oncologists to order OncoDEEP analyses, view the analysis report, ask the OncoDNA scientific team a question, share results with colleagues, or track changes to clinical and therapeutic information related to their cases. OncoSHARE will have an interface connected to social network sites so that the patient can easily log on and share the information, should they choose to do so...

BREAST CANCER

An industrial chemist and founder of DNAvision – also on the Biopark – Jean-Pol Detiffe founded OncoDNA in November 2012. He explains: "OncoDNA's work focuses on metastasized cancers that do not respond to traditional treatment protocols, and that need to be treated quickly with a targeted treatment. We work with over 30 experts from our direct partners on the Biopark: IPG and its subsidiary Bio.be, ImmuneHealth, and TagExpert in Mons, and we also work closely with the Erasmus and Bordet (ULB) hospitals, the Grand Hôpital de Charleroi, and CHU Tivoli".

OncoDNA has also recently made official its partnership with the *Institut Bordet* as part of Breast International Group's AURORA research project. The BIG chose OncoDEEP following the extremely positive results of a pilot programme, where OncoDEEP was used on tens of patients over a period of months. In coming weeks, some 4000 OncoDEEP tests will be run in 1300 patients.





Dominique Demonté, Director of the Biopark

“My role is to create a true ecosystem”



YOU WERE RECENTLY THE SUBJECT OF A FEATURE IN THE BUSINESS AND FINANCE MAGAZINE, TRENDS-TENDANCES. DOES THIS SHOW THAT SCIENCE AND BUSINESS GO HAND IN HAND?

Dominique Demonté: I truly believe that the Biopark shows how academic research can

lead to economic development. Of course, research can produce business opportunities through patents or even spin-offs, but that is not all: it can also make a region attractive to businesses looking to share skills and facilities, and so on. Take ImmunXperts, for example: they moved to the Biopark to be able to dialogue and reflect with our immunology experts and to share facilities with ImmuneHealth. Then there is also Ovizio and Bone Therapeutics that enjoy access to the CMMI's cutting edge facilities and the scientific experts that manage them. It would be a mistake to try and turn every researcher in to an entrepreneur, however, researchers and entrepreneurs alike must work together, each within the scope of their own expertise. My role as Director of the Biopark is to promote these partnerships and to create a real ecosystem where each component has a part to play.

IN ADDITION TO ACADEMIC RESEARCH, THE BIOPARK IS ALSO HOME TO A COLLECTIVE RESEARCH CENTRE IN IMMUNEHEALTH THAT YOU HAVE RECENTLY BEEN MANAGING.

WHAT ROLE DOES IT PLAY IN THIS ENTREPRENEURIAL DYNAMIC?

DD: A considerable one, given that ImmuneHealth promotes technology transfer from our laboratories to the business world, ensuring quality standards are met, which is essential for the industrial sector. Depending on the project, stakeholders may work alone, in twos, or in threes all on the same campus.

THE BIOPARK IS FOUNDED ON AND HAS GROWN THROUGH EUROPEAN AND WALLOON FUNDING.

DD: Yes, the successive ERDF and ESF programmes enabled us to reach critical mass and to acquire fantastic equipment – the CMMI, for example, represents a single investment of €20m on the Biopark – which attracts businesses: it is no coincidence that the Biopark's two most recent SME work in immunology and cell therapy, two of the Biopark's key sectors. With the latest programme, we plan to consolidate our strengths, promote the structuring of Walloon biomedical partnerships, and provide the Wallonia with a competitive international profile. Our strategy works and the Biopark is cited as a good example of how to use European funding in an OECD

report and a number of others... We often welcome international delegations and EU representatives, etc.

BY 2017, CHARLEROI WILL BE HOME TO A PROTONTHERAPY CENTRE. WILL THERE BE SYNERGIES WITH THE BIOPARK?

DD: 15 years ago, it would have seemed unlikely that this type of cutting edge centre could come to Charleroi, but now it is perfectly logical with the Biopark in place, as well as the new Marie Curie Hospital, the Institute for Radioelements (IRE) and some 1000 biomedical researchers who are used to working on interuniversity projects. It makes all the more sense in light of research commissioned by the Strategic Regional Development Committee, carried out by Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, which identifies the biomedical and healthcare sectors as priorities for the development of the Charleroi Sud Hainaut region. The protontherapy centre will open up synergies between the Biopark's different stakeholders, especially with the CMMI that boasts the best imaging facilities to assess the effects of treatment on small animals. In cooperation with other universities involved in the project (UMONS, UNAMUR, and ULg), this will bridge a link between clinical and preclinical research.

Nathalie Gobbe



Hugues Bultot: *serial entrepreneur*

Well versed in launching technology companies, especially after Kitozyme, Artelis, and Univercells, Hugues Bultot is now at the helm of a company specializing in cell therapy: MaSTherCell. Among other things...



A ULB spin-off created by the BioWin competition cluster and with investment from the ULB's Theodorus investment fund, Sambrinvest, and Sofipôle, MaSTherCell now boasts a new strongman in Hugues Bultot, the Managing Director of the cell therapy specialist services company. "Together with my friend José

Castillo, the co-founder of Artelis (a biotech company in the disposable bioreactor sector, acquired by ATMI in 2010), we have also decided to invest in MaSTherCell", explains Hugues Bultot, an entrepreneur at heart.

After studying law at UCL, management at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (ULB), and spells at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Sloan School of Management) and the International Institute for Management Development (Lausanne), Hugues Bultot has worked on a number of projects to become the management expert in innovation and science that he is today. His knowledge of various sectors (broad experience in cell therapy, medical devices, vaccines, production facilities, etc.) and roles (finance, fundraising, M&A, management, HR, etc.) led him to MaSTherCell.

"MaSTherCell has everything in place to succeed: its cell culture expertise has been

proven, the team trained with managers who fit in well, and the Biopark is the ideal environment (with its large network of active cell culture players who are easily called upon) with cutting edge facilities, etc. In short, everything works really well", Hugues Bultot affirms.

"Last but not least, we are fortunate to be in Wallonia: we are a cutting edge company in a cutting edge sector in the region and in Belgium as a whole. It really is a pleasure for manager-entrepreneurs to play a major role in this international scene. That's what is so exciting."

Damiano Di Stazio

H. BULTOT AND J. CASTILLO: AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER

Hugues Bultot brought José Castillo with him to MaSTherCell, where he is the Chairman of the Board. "We work incredibly well together, both in terms of expertise, but also on a personal level", José Castillo explains, "Together, we often manage to bounce back and not get caught in a downward spiral".

The two men met in 1999. "I was on the Solvay Entrepreneurs course and the panel awarded me first prize. However, one of these experts rubbished my project. It was Hugues, who advised me to earn my stripes in a large company!" he recalls.

And this is exactly what he did, by becoming a development manager at GSK before returning to Hugues Bultot with more versatile skills in 2004. One year later, they founded Artelis together: their first joint project. But not the last...





Brigitte Genard: “I like to be in control”

Brigitte Genard will take the helm at ImmuneHealth in September. Let's get to know this strong, open woman.



“I like a challenge”, reveals Brigitte Genard, a new arrival at ImmuneHealth where she will take over management in September, “This role is an opportunity for me: I will spend a few months working in partnership with my predecessor, Dominique Demonté, as well as getting up to speed with the fields of finance, business, and general management, all while diving in to current projects mid-stream”.

Brigitte Genard knows the biotechnology sector well, having worked in it for more than 20 years. Following undergraduate studies in chemistry – “with an anaesthetist dad, I developed an early interest in science and healthcare” – she specialised in industrial pharmaceuticals at the *Université de Montpellier*. Returning to Belgium in 1992, she joined UCB where she was tasked with creating a quality department in one of the group's subsidiaries.

THE TANGIBLE

The business environment suited her – “I like to work on clear objectives in an environment where progress is made” – and she was attracted by the biotech sector – “transforming nature, moulding it in to a product that people can use, has always fascinated me” – so she joined GSK, where she worked in the Quality Management Department. “It was a very interesting job, in a growing company where new technologies were being used. I negotiated with Belgian and international authorities to obtain approval for new vaccines”, she recalls. However, she missed the tangible aspect of her work, concrete products, and so she branched off into the Production Department. “That's where something clicked: I realised that what I liked was to be in control of my surroundings: to unite an organisation, human and financial resources, and infrastructure to reach company objectives while making sure that everything was as it should be for all those involved”, Brigitte Genard explains.

A few years later, and she nevertheless felt constricted in her role: she wanted to control more than just her immediate surroundings, “I wanted to understand the financial reasoning behind a budgetary decision, for example, so that I could explain it to my team because, in a multinational that employs 8000 people, it is difficult to grasp the strategies developed by those at the top. I decided to leave GSK and complete an MBA at

Vlerick Business School so that I could better appreciate management mechanisms”, she confides.

CHALLENGES

Armed with her MBA, Brigitte worked in a few temporary positions, networked, and knocked on a few doors in the Belgian biotech sector and, a few months later, ImmuneHealth took her on. “Challenges energize me. During my MBA, for example, I decided to get out of my comfort zone by developing a release strategy and marketing plan for a new product, something that I had never done before. Managing ImmuneHealth is a great opportunity to lead a group towards a shared objective and to see just what I can do. Furthermore, I get to face this challenge as a team, in Charleroi where I was born”, she confides, having moved to a village near Namur, “because nature reinvigorates me”.

A passionate skier and a traveller at heart – “I like to discover a country through its food and drink, its music and local festivals, meeting the people who live there and seeing how they live, and if there's good scenery to boot, it's amazing” – this woman with an insatiable zest for life loves to sing most of all, “I have been in a choir for a few years now, but I have also sung in a rock group, and I've played the piano for years”, she smiles.

Nathalie Gobbe



Synthetic biology: interest from researchers

Is synthetic biology the third revolution of the genome era? Following advances in the synthesis and sequencing of DNA, researchers are now trying to create genes and genomes. In the USA, the first projects are starting to emerge, and gaining significant media interest. At the Biopark,

Research of the future?

A blend of biology and engineering, synthetic biology represents the peak of current genetic and genomic techniques: “We now have a huge quantity of information about genes, their roles, and sequencing”, Bruno André, manager of the Molecular Cell Physiology laboratory, who is following synthetic biology closely explains. “In synthetic biology, we use this information to build or create useful genetic circuits”. In simple terms, researchers design the desired genetic sequences, order the DNA in question, and add it to yeast or bacteria to create a signal pathway or molecule that could be useful in pharmaceuticals or chemicals, for example.

A CLEAN SLATE

This technique has recently enabled an American team to completely rewrite and express a bacterium’s chromosome. “This paves the way for the controlled design of artificial microorganisms from scratch, according to the designer’s needs. It’s fascinating!” Bruno André enthuses. In addition to the clear industrial interest, synthetic biology is also pushing against the limits of life sciences: another American team managed to have bacteria express a new amino acid, and they hope to be able to produce new proteins with brand new properties. “Practical applications for these manipulations are still relative, but I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds”, Bruno André admits, “It’s important that we follow this movement in Europe, too. The techniques already exist, so we are almost ready to begin”.

NETWORKING

This is the context in which Biopark researchers are encouraging their students to take part in the IGEM competition that focuses on synthetic biology. But experienced researchers are also getting involved: “Initiated by Syngulon, a start-up in this sector present on the Biopark,

a network has sprung up composed of various teams working on microorganisms at Walloon universities (ULB, UCL, ULg, UNamur)”, Bruno André explains. “We are putting our heads together to come up with ways to include this new approach in our current work, as well as how we can train and raise awareness among researchers”. Training, networks, dialogue... The writing is on the wall, and it is only a matter of time before synthetic biology invades our laboratories!

Natacha Jordens



SYNGULON

Founded in 2013 and operating from the Biopark, Syngulon develops genetic techniques to boost the effectiveness of microorganisms used in the industrial production of bio-based products. The company is currently focusing on a portfolio of techniques to control the microorganisms involved in open or semi-open bioproduction.

and students

researchers are preparing to tackle this new approach, as are their students. Here we take a closer look at a flourishing field.

IGEM: developing expertise



The aim of the IGEN (*International Genetically Engineered Machine*) contest is to raise awareness of synthetic biology techniques among researchers. The annual competition challenges students from around the world to design a microorganism with hitherto unseen abilities. Undergraduate students at the ULB's Faculty of Sciences have been taking part in the competition since 2009 under the supervision of Gilles Vanwallegghem, a post-doctoral researcher at the laboratory of Molecular Parasitology (IBMM), and Laurence Van Meldereren, manager of the Bacterial Genetics and Physiology research team (IBMM). "Students try to solve a genuine

research problem, and are responsible for every aspect of the solution", Laurence Van Meldereren explains, "The concept, funding, development, writing and defending a poster in English, not to mention contact with teams from other universities: it's a challenge, but the educational aspect is huge". "And it isn't limited to the technical side", Gilles Vanwallegghem continues, "The teams are made up of biologists as well as chemists, economists, mathematicians, and even philosophers. These varied skills mean that teams can look at bioethics, technology transfer, etc. It's a rounded approach".

TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL

The competition runs in November, with students working on their project during the summer when they have free time. But giving up their holidays seems to be a fair price to pay for the experience gained during the contest. "Of course, you learn a few routine manipulations", explains Baptiste Dumont, a former contestant and current doctoral student under Laurence Van Meldereren, "but that's not the point. Managing a project over several months, writing a poster, defending it... These are skills that are useful to us later, in the next stage of our studies and when working as a researcher".

When he took part in the competition in 2010, Baptiste and his team developed a bacteria that produced hydrogen from waste using *E. coli*. The previous year, it was a natural, biodegradable glue. In recent years, the budding researchers and their mentors have tended towards the creation of genetic tools for the production of new, as yet unknown molecules. "Synthetic biology seems to be the culmination of existing techniques", Gilles Vanwallegghem reveals, "So it is essential to learn about it and foster interest in the field". Interest that experienced researchers pass down, year after year, to their future colleagues.

Natacha Jordens



Projects involving university teams working in microorganism genetics, and open to the concept of synthetic genetics, have been launched in recent months, including several with teams from the IBMM (B. André, L. Droogmans, L. Van Meldereren).

Yasmina Serroukh, “I like being persuasive”



A doctoral student at the IMI in a team managed by Arnaud Marchant and Stanislas Goriely, Yasmina Serroukh won the Belgian final of the “My thesis in 180 seconds” competition. We met the young doctor and researcher.



Medicine was the obvious choice for the teenaged Yasmina Serroukh. “I wanted to combine scientific and social work. I would certainly have enjoyed studying engineering or chemistry, but the profession would have lacked human contact”, she specifies.

And yet, aged 29, she works in a laboratory at the Institute for Medical Immunology (IMI). “After studying medicine, I began to specialise in internal medicine, working in a clinic for three years, but I also wanted to round off my education with a doctoral thesis. Research is a great way to hone your reasoning skills, and to learn about the scientific data used in the clinical sector. As a doctor, you are at the end of the process, and at the IMI I am learning what goes on behind the scenes, everything that goes in to discovering a treatment. After my thesis at the Biopark, I will go back to the clinical sector, probably in haematology because I like the contact with patients, helping them to fight disease, and haematology is a rapidly expanding discipline with a range of new treatments”.

Liking a challenge, Yasmina just won the Belgian final of *My thesis in 180 seconds* competition. She will fly in September for the international final in Montreal. The challenge? To present in less than 3 minutes, her thesis – on CD4 cytotoxic lymphocytes – to a non-scientific audience, using a single PowerPoint slide. “It was a great exercise in popularization that suited me well: I like public speaking, explaining things and persuading people. Furthermore, I have been part of the medical sphere and now I represent ULB assistants nationally”, she smiles, “I asked my supervisor, Arnaud Marchant, what he

thought, and because he was enthusiastic and I had nothing to lose except a trip to Montreal for the international final, I signed up! And here I am in international final. In any case, it was an interesting, fun, and educational experience. I like competition, well, except in sports where I never win!” the researcher smiles, just back from the ELA jogging around the Charleroi Aeropole.

Nathalie Gobbe



In brief

BIOBANKING: NEW EXPERTISE AT BIOPARK TRAINING

In its first year, the *Biobanks for research and development* course was a resounding success, attracting over 40 trainees from the academic and business worlds.

The aim of the course? To take stock of the legal, ethical, and operational aspects of the collection, storage, and use of human biological matter for R&D purposes. A number of experts in the field spoke during the day: Isabelle Salmon (ULB), Flavienne Sandras (ULB), Myriam Rummelink (ULB), Marc Martens (Bird & Bird), and Nour de San (GSK).

In light of the course's success, Biopark Training plans to repeat the experience in coming years.

D.D.S.

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Quarterly publication

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