

## **BioWin, CETIC and essenscia wallonie launch BioMan initiative to accelerate digitization of bioprocesses in Wallonia**

The consortium, bringing together the BioWin competitiveness cluster, CETIC, the Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technologies, and essenscia wallonie, the regional federation of the chemical and life sciences sector, has received the go-ahead from the Digital Agency (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. Built on an initiative of the BioWin cluster, who will also pilot the program, this project is supported by the Digital Agency (Agence Du Numérique), via the regional program 'Industry of the Future', to improve the competitiveness of manufacturing companies through the use of advanced digital technologies.

The region's biopharmaceutical industry is its main driver of economic growth, accounting for 34% of Wallonia's total exports. Wallonia has leveraged its historical know-how in the conventional 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 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 (\$146k), the BioMan project aims to promote the intensification and implementation of digitization within companies involved in biomanufacturing. The BioWin - CETIC - essenscia wallonie consortium aims to consolidate the support 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. Realization of a **digital maturity diagnosis** for those 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 in the growth and competitiveness of the ecosystem. Digitization is an essential innovation angle if Wallonia wishes to consolidate its place among the European leaders in biomanufacturing. We are proud to be associated with CETIC and essencia wallonie in this strategic support project," said 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 to start, an essential step in the digitization of their bioprocesses," added Paul Vanabelle, expert research engineer at CETIC.

"Progressively, Walloon biopharmaceutical companies are confronted with both the challenges and opportunities in the development of these digital technologies; within the framework of the industrialization and production of innovative therapies," said Marc Tilmant, energy, climate and digital transformation advisor at essencia 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 increasing the digitalization of companies.

"By participating in this Industry of the Future project, we aspire to grow and strengthen the awareness-raising mechanism for biomanufacturing issues initiated several years ago within BioWin," concluded 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 their digital diagnosis, carried out by CETIC."

[More information on the Industry of the Future programme](#)

### **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](http://www.biowin.org)

### **About CETIC**

CETIC is an Applied Research Center (ARC) providing 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 more swiftly integrate promising emerging technologies into their new products, processes or services, allowing them to innovate faster, reduce risks, remain competitive in their current market and develop new ones.

[www.cetic.be](http://www.cetic.be)

### **About essenscia wallonie**

essenscia 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.essenscia.be](http://www.essenscia.be)

### **About the Digital Agency (Agence du Numérique)**

The Digital Agency is recognized as the catalyst in the digital transformation of the Walloon region. 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.

[www.digitalwallonia.be](http://www.digitalwallonia.be)

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