

## **The new Walloon company Cellaion makes its first closing**

**Mont-Saint-Guibert, Belgium, 17/01/2022.** Cellaion, a Walloon biotechnology company created by a consortium of Belgian-Luxembourg investors, announces its first closing following the acquisition of the assets of Promethera and its HepaStem® technology platform.

The consortium led by Fund Plus (Leuven, Belgium) is also composed of SMS Investments SA (Luxembourg), Sopartec (UCLouvain Technology Transfer Office, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium), various private investors as well as Sofipôle, Invest.BW and Sambrinvest. The Walloon government supported the transaction. With this transaction, the technological platform and the assets of the former Promethera company return entirely to the Belgian-Luxembourg fold.

Cellaion aims at the treatment of systemic inflammatory diseases that affect many organs, focusing first on Acute on Chronic Liver Failure (ACLF).

### **HepaStem® cell therapy to regenerate the liver**

The fundraising secures the funding of the phase IIB clinical trial of HepaStem® in acute liver failure leading to secondary failure of other organs (ACLF), a pathology currently without therapeutic solution, except liver transplantation; this invasive surgery remains largely inaccessible for patients given the rapid mortality and the scarcity of available organs. The liver is the central organ of the human body. Liver failure leads to the loss of vital functions (heart, lungs, kidneys, brain) and to the death of the patient. The study aims to prove the effectiveness of HepaStem® in restoring liver function and improving chances of survival.

HepaStem® a cell therapy medicinal product, aims to provide a more accessible and less invasive alternative to liver transplantation. HepaStem® signaling stem cells are administered to the patient intravenously and are transported through the bloodstream to the liver (or other tissues where they are the site of inflammation), where they perform their anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory function, restoring the health of the organ. Specifically, once injected into the patient, they secrete and exchange cellular compounds (cytokines and other cell derivatives) that neutralize inflammation and prevent tissue deterioration.

### **A pipeline targeting a broad spectrum of inflammatory diseases**

In parallel, Cellaion continues to develop this platform to target other organs and other inflammatory diseases. *The secretoma of HepaStem® and its intercellular communication capabilities open up perspectives in many diseases related to systemic and tissue inflammation.*

*The proof of concept in the ACLF opens up many perspectives in other liver diseases such as NASH ( Non Alcoholic Steato Hepatitis) (currently in phase IIa) but also in other therapeutic area such as rheumatology or dermatology.*

"We look forward to relaunching clinical developments that are already well advanced, while starting on a sound financial footing with shareholders convinced of the therapeutic potential." said Pr. Etienne Sokal, PhD, CEO and Member of the Board of Directors of Cellaïon.

Cellaïon is a new example of public-private collaboration that further strengthens the Walloon biotechnology portfolio; the company, at the forefront of clinical development, will benefit from the Walloon ecosystem and know-how to ensure all stages of its development.

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**About Sofipôle (SRIW Group)**

Building on Wallonia's traditional assets, SRIW Life Sciences invests in "local heroes": scientists and entrepreneurs who want to promote innovation to build a sustainable and equitable global economy with roots in Wallonia.

SRIW Life Sciences promotes diversity and cross-fertilization in their broadest sense. We invest in life sciences companies at various stages of development, in a wide range of technologies and therapeutic areas.

We are an early and patient investor; we invest in the most promising start-ups and can act with a long-term vision – longer than the average venture capitalist.

SRIW's role as a venture capital provider in the life sciences sector allows pioneers to explore areas where they might be reluctant to venture out on their own. By supporting innovative start-ups, we aim to strengthen the economic health of our territory.

**About Invest BW SA**

Invest.BW is a Belgian regional investor of the evergreen type that manages more than €100 million. Its strategy is to invest in all stages of business development with the aim of supporting entrepreneurs in their long-term ambitions. The three main pillars of its investment strategy are digital entrepreneurship, medical applications and transition.

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

**About Sambrinvest SA**

With 35 years of experience, nearly 300 portfolio companies and more than €200 million under management, Sambrinvest is a major venture capital player in Wallonia and more broadly in Belgium. As an investment fund, Sambrinvest invests from early stage to Series A, more specifically in the Life Sciences, Digital and Engineering fields, and actively supports companies at every stage of their development.

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

**About Fund Plus SA**

Fund+ is a Belgian investment fund based in Leuven, Belgium, and was established in 2015 by the private foundation Désiré Collen and the non-profit organization Life science Research Partners.

Fund+ invests in innovative life sciences companies mainly active in the therapeutic field, as well as in companies developing diagnostics and medical devices.

To date, Fund+ has raised €200 million in financing commitments. Investors are high net worth individuals, family offices and government agencies, all of whom share the same long-term vision and societal values

of the founders. The planned investment size per company will be between €5 and €15 million spread over different milestones.