



Press Release, 15 September 2016

Leading European pilot facilities for industrial biotechnology join forces to improve Europe's innovation capacity.

SmartPilots, an INTERREG Europe project co-funded by the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF), brings together six leading European Shared Pilot Facilities (SPF) specialized in the Key Enabling Technology 'Industrial Biotechnology' and bioeconomy, with the aim to discuss and share best funding and operating practices and improve policies in support of such facilities. Enhanced support for Shared Pilot Facilities should substantially improve Europe's sustainable innovation capacity and is a crucial element in dealing with societal challenges such as developing a sustainable, innovative and knowledge-based economy in Europe, creating jobs and meeting climate targets.

Europe needs to innovate and reindustrialize if it wants to deal with societal challenges such as developing a sustainable, innovative and knowledge-based economy in Europe, creating jobs and meeting climate targets. Industrial Biotechnology was selected by Europe as one of the crucial technologies (KETs) to help realize this. A lot of successful research has been done in this field over the last decades, but it does not always reach the market. The long lead time associated with commercialization of novel industrial biotechnology processes causes many companies to fail.

This is where Shared Pilot Facilities come in. Shared Pilot Facilities are open access research and demonstration facilities investing in a broad spectrum of state-of-the-art equipment and required expertise with the aim to help innovative companies scale-up their successful research from a laboratory to an industrial scale.

Steven Pearson, Head of Business Development at the Centre for Process Innovation, says: "Collaboration, in an early stage of innovation, with open access shared pilot facilities substantially lowers the financial risk for the innovating company and speeds up the commercialization of their new product or process."

For shared pilot facilities, to be and stay effective and relevant, critical mass is required both in hardware and people.

Brecht Vanlerberghe, R&D Manager of Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant and coordinator of the SmartPilots project states: "As SPFs get no risk premium for the continuous and large investment needed to remain state-of-the-art, a full commercial business model is not viable. Therefore public investment in SPF is indispensable and there is a need to develop a specific business model for such facilities."

SmartPilots brings together the six leading European Shared Pilot Facilities (SPF) for the Key Enabling Technology Industrial Biotechnology. The consortium will discuss and share best funding and operating practices with the ultimate goal to improve policies in support of SPF. Study visits will be organized at each facility as well as three interregional seminars: one on direct and one on indirect support

mechanisms and one seminar on possibilities for international collaboration. The discussions during these seminars will be based on thorough regional analyses of these three funding mechanisms. The interregional seminar on direct support will be held on October 12th, 2016 at Fraunhofer CBP in Leuna, Germany. Stakeholders (e.g. regional, national and European policy makers, users, innovation organisations and clusters) are invited to participate in the discussion and regional action plans will be drawn up. In a second phase these action plans will be implemented. More information can be found at <http://www.interregeurope.eu/smartpilots/>.

Project partners are Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant (Ghent, BE), Bio Process Facility (Delft, NL), Centre for Process Innovation (Wilton, UK), VTT (Espoo, FI), Innovhub (Milano, IT), Department of Economy, Science and Innovation of Flanders (Brussels, BE) and Provincie Zuid-Holland (NL). Two case studies joined the consortium as well: Agro-industrie Recherches et Développements (ARD, Pomacle, France) and Fraunhofer-Zentrum für Chemisch-Biotechnologische Prozesse (CBP, Leuna, Germany).

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3. INTERREG Europe Programmes

SmartPilots is co-funded by the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD) through the INTERREG Europe Program. Interreg Europe helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, we aim to ensure that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place. www.interregeurope.eu

4. SmartPilots Project Office:

The SmartPilots project is coordinated by Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant (Ghent, Belgium). For more information, comment or interview requests about SmartPilots, please contact:

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Your regional partner (see 1.) or case study (see 2.)

WEBLINK: <http://www.interregeurope.eu/smartpilots/>