

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Belgium: EIB boosts innovative biotech company Univercells with €30 million of European financing to support COVID-19-related projects**

- **€30 million loan agreement for a new COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing facility in Wallonia (Belgium) and for the co-development of a pipeline of COVID-19 vaccines.**
- **Part of the EIB's COVID-19 response, the partnership aims to support Univercells's contribution to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic while creating significant long-term value and impact globally.**
- **The venture loan is backed by the InnovFin Infectious Diseases Finance Facility under Horizon 2020, the European Union's research and innovation programme.**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and Univercells S.A (Univercells) have signed a €30 million loan agreement to enable the production of large volumes of prophylactic COVID-19 vaccines in a new facility and to co-develop a pipeline of COVID-19 vaccines. This facility will address the unprecedented global demand for vaccines brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership backs Univercells's Belgian hub, strengthening pandemic resilience in Europe and supporting global manufacturing autonomy through Univercells' efforts to launching new production sites around the world based on the company's innovative biomanufacturing technology.

In collaboration with the European Commission, the EIB Group is on its way to mobilising billions for the COVID-19 response, which it kicked off as soon as the crisis hit to tackle the global health emergency and the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The InnovFin Infectious Diseases Finance Facility (IDFF) was scaled up at the beginning of the outbreak to directly support highly innovative projects that work towards halting the spread of the virus. The programme helps biotech and medtech companies across Europe find solutions for vaccines, cures and diagnostics.

The new venture debt to Univercells backed by the IDFF adds to a previous €20 million operation under the programme signed in October 2019, making it the first repeat loan to be granted under the facility. This investment will support not only European pandemic readiness, but due to Univercells' innovative business model of hub-and-spoke, will also support vaccine availability and production autonomy in low and middle-income countries. Established in 2013, Univercells was founded with a mission: to make biologics accessible to all. By breaking down the barriers of bioproduction and installing affordable units delivering high-quality biologics at an affordable price around the world, Univercells aims to fill existing gaps in global vaccine production.

With the support of the EIB, the company will finance a second facility at its site in Jumet, Belgium, dedicated to COVID-19 vaccines and other contract development and manufacturing operations (CMDO.) The financing will also support potential COVID-19 vaccine co-development programmes with third parties. Univercells recently announced collaborations in Senegal to support vaccine manufacturing autonomy, which is aligned with programmes like the Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines in Africa.

At the signing event held in Brussels, **EIB Vice-President Kris Peeters** said: *"The best we can do to contribute to the fight against COVID-19 is to help companies that are developing and manufacturing new vaccines, treatments or diagnostic solutions. We are doing everything we can to step up our support in the current crisis and help them succeed, because the only way to face the global health emergency is to make safe and effective vaccines available to all. As such, we are pleased to support Univercells, a unique player in this field with its novel biomanufacturing technology and with which we share similar values and objectives of producing high-quality vaccines and biologics available and affordable in all countries, including the less developed ones."*

**CFO of Univercells Vincent Vanderborcht commented:** *"We are extremely pleased to receive such support and endorsement from the EIB for the second time. This financing demonstrates the willingness*

of the European Union to address current public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It also deepens Univercells' Belgian roots through the creation of additional employment in our new manufacturing facilities in Jumet." **Hugues Bultot, CEO of Univercells**, added: "We are delighted to continue our long-standing partnership with the EIB, which is of great strategic importance not only for Univercells, but also for Europe."

**Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth**, said: "Since the beginning of the pandemic we have made tremendous efforts to support Europe's innovators, prioritising the research on and the development of safe and effective solutions to tackle the crisis and its aftermath. Our financial instruments and cooperation with the EIB have also helped develop and deploy many cutting-edge technologies addressing Covid-19. I am very pleased that today we are extending this support to the innovative Belgian biotech for their new Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing facility and development of a pipeline of vaccines. This is one step closer to restoring normal life and to ensuring we are better prepared for future pandemics."

## Background information

### About Univercells

Univercells is a global life sciences company that makes biologics available to all. Leveraging our core strengths in scaling, production and bioprocessing, we build businesses and find new ways to support access to medicines and promote sustainability. Through entrepreneurship and technology-driven affordability, we address the needs of the entire health value chain.

Univercells is headquartered in Jumet (Belgium) and benefits from the trust of national and international investors (Global Health Investment Fund led Series-B in 2018, while combined efforts from Adjuvant Capital and SFPI resulted in a successful Series-C in 2020). Other prominent Global Health organizations and funds, historically the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and more recently the Soros Economic Development Fund, have also partnered with Univercells in continuous support of its impact and mission driven projects.

[www.univercells.com](http://www.univercells.com)

### About the EIB

The European Investment Bank is the European Union's bank. It is the long-term lending institution of the European Union and is the only bank owned by and representing the interests of the EU Member States. It makes finance available for sound investment in order to contribute towards EU policy goals.

[www.eib.org](http://www.eib.org)

In Belgium, with some €1.5 billion in 2020 for projects in various sectors ranging from healthcare, education, energy, water and industry to financing for small and medium businesses, the EIB Group made available support equal to 0.30% of Belgian GDP. ([Belgium and the EIB](#))

The [European Investment Bank works closely with other EU institutions](#) to implement EU policy. The investment in Univercells was made possible by [InnovFin – EU Finance for Innovators](#), a joint initiative with the European Commission.

### About the InnovFin Infectious Diseases Finance Facility (IDFF)

The [InnovFin Infectious Diseases Finance Facility](#) is dedicated to supporting the fight against infectious diseases. This joint European Commission and EIB Group initiative is part of Horizon 2020, the 2014-2020 EU research and innovation programme. Delivered directly by the EIB, the facility enables the Bank to provide between €7.5 million and €75 million of funding to innovative players in the development of vaccines, drugs, medical and diagnostic devices and research infrastructure for combating infectious diseases, and mainly goes to projects that have completed the preclinical stage and that require clinical approval for further development. The facility has been increased by €400 million to boost its capacity for tackling the outbreak of the coronavirus, with the total EU contribution to the facility via Horizon 2020 estimated at almost €700 million.

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