

Biotech in France: An Update

By Annie Dejoie
November 2010

www.languageconnections.com

The French biotech industry is ranked third in Europe after the UK and Germany, and has become a major player in the European biotechnology sector over the last two decades. France has a diversified industrial base. There are about 400 biotechnology businesses in the country, employing around 6000 people. French biotech companies, such as Bio-Alliance, Nicox and ExonHit are at the front-line of research in the field.

In the healthcare sector, most of the major international companies are already operating in the country. Eight innovation sponsors with a biotech focus have facilitated growth in the French biotech sector since 2005 by promoting communication between manufacturers and public-sector laboratories (1). These sponsors already have about 60 non-French businesses among their members. Of these sponsors, Lyonbiopole (in the Rhone-Alpes region), Medicen (Ile-de-France) and Alsace BioValley (Alsace) are among the most prominent. France also has a broad range of support programs that are available in the biotech field. Biotechnology companies are supported by various innovation measures like the Research Tax Credit (Credit d'Impot Recherche or CIR) and the innovative new companies' scheme (Jeunes Entreprises Innovantes or JEI). They also receive support from OSEO, the French Innovation Agency; and requests for projects from the French National Research Agency (Agence Nationale de la Recherche) (2).

International biotech companies are investing in France more and more. In 2009, the Swiss company, Novartis, chose France as its fourth major oncology research and development center worldwide, while Genzyme also chose France (Lyon) for its latest bio-production center. All of these factors have contributed towards moving the sector forward.

France ranks third in Europe in the amount of clinical research investments, and accounts for a significant effort relative to the country's population and pharmaceutical market. However, French experts, investigators, and even more so, French patients, are underrepresented (3). Although studies in France are initiated relatively quickly, due in part to a clear regulatory framework, and perform equally well compared to most European countries involved in clinical research, the costs per patient are higher than that recorded in the other countries.

Wherever you do business, we speak the language.

Clinical research suffers from a lack of financial and human resources, while it faces additional delays in implementing studies due to longer administrative processes. Specific solutions must be found in order for France to maintain its competitive position. The patient recruitment should be improved by spreading more information about clinical trials through different mediums such as the media or the internet. The French health care system does not facilitate the recruitment of investigators if they are not the declared family doctor of the patient, thus specific changes in the administration process should be brought. Finally, the actual training of general practitioners should be improved by involving them in the trial process. Solutions such as the aforementioned must be sought and implemented in order to improve the notoriety of French clinical research.

References

(1) (2) Rochepeau Alain, The Pharmaceutical Biotechnology Industry in France, French Ministry of Research and New Technologies Technology Directorate Bio-engineering Department, January 2004, pp. 1-44.

(3) Zannad, F., Pletan Y., Difficulties with Conducting Clinical Trials in France, Therapie. 2001 Jul-Aug;56(4):341-7.

Essais cliniques en France : trop de résultats non publiés, La Revue Prescrire, Juillet-Août 2006/Tome 26 N 274, pp.533-534.

ArgosBiotech, French biotechnology industry,
http://www.argosbiotech.de/1000/CPC/gbcd_fr.htm

For more of our articles about biotech and clinical trials in the EU visit our website at www.languageconnections.com!