

Press release

Florian Hahn, MdB, visited the corona researchers in the Innovation and Start-up Center for Biotechnology (IZB) near Munich

Five start-ups presented their projects on vaccines, drugs or corona tests

Martinsried / Munich, October, 14 2020 – Seven biotech start-ups are investigating the new SARS-CoV-2 pathogen in Planegg-Martinsried near Munich, in the Biotechnology Innovation and Start-up Center (IZB). Immunic Therapeutics, Eisbach Bio and Origenis are researching drugs to treat the new corona virus. GNA Biosolutions and Exosome Diagnostics each launched a new corona test. Ella Biotech also increased the production of components that are included in corona tests. LEUKOCARE AG is working with an Italian consortium on a vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Florian Hahn, MdB and European policy spokesman, visited five of the corona researchers at the IZB.

"The innovative power that emanates from Martinsried always impresses me. It is not without reason that more than 15 million euros of federal research funding is going to companies and research institutions in the community of Planegg during this legislative period," informs Florian Hahn, MdB, on the sidelines of the discussion. "We have an incredible number of interesting research projects on our own doorstep. In times of Corona, research will once again take on a completely different significance," the politician is sure. Dr. Peter Hanns Zobel, Managing Director of the IZB, is also enthusiastic about the dynamism that the Innovation and Start-up Center is showing in its 25th year of existence. "We are delighted that our start-ups are researching at the forefront of global research and thus counteracting the corona pandemic," said Dr. Peter Hanns Zobel, Managing Director of the IZB.

The IZB started in 1995 with 1,000 m² of laboratory and office space and five biotech start-ups. Today the IZB with its locations in Planegg-Martinsried and Freising-Weihenstephan has developed into one of the leading biotechnology centers in Europe. There are currently over 50 biotech companies with more than 600 employees over an area of 26,000 m². The IZB is working on developing drugs against the most serious diseases, such as cancer, Alzheimer's or various autoimmune diseases, and with great success. "Since 2015 alone, we can look back on many successful deals with pharmaceutical companies, collaborations or company sales with a total volume of 3.8 billion Euros," says Dr. Zobel about the success of the start-ups.

In times of the Corona crisis, start-ups from the IZB are among those working on future-oriented solutions. The following entrepreneurs presented their corona research at the IZB on October 13, 2020:

1. Eisbach Bio GmbH: Dr. Corinna Lieleg, Director R&D, started the development of a novel specific agent against SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Eisbach identified small molecules targeting novel, disease-relevant functions in SARS-CoV-2. Using our innovative platform, we are developing inhibitors against two relevant and essential SARS-CoV-2 proteins, for which we have pioneering, worldwide expertise. Since these proteins are essential for the replication of the viral SARS-CoV-2 genome and to suppress the host's immune system, they represent highly promising drug targets.

2. Ella Biotech GmbH: Dr. Tim Gehrke, Senior Scientist R&D, explained that they had to drastically increase production of building blocks for corona tests to meet the rapidly growing demand.

Ella Biotech GmbH is a certified manufacturer of DNA building blocks for the analysis of pathogens. With the start of the corona pandemic in January 2020, it increased its production capacities in the field of diagnostics. Successful, rapid and unequivocal testing for the Sars-CoV-2 pathogen is possible using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) based on synthetically produced short DNA building blocks known as oligonucleotides. The products of Ella Biotech GmbH are then delivered to certified diagnostic laboratories, where they are verified for the new corona virus using qPCR.

3. Immunic Therapeutics: Dr. Daniel Vitt, CEO, explained that the company is working successfully on a medication against COVID-19. Immunic Therapeutics is carrying out a clinical development program for its drug candidate IMU-838, which is currently being tested in a phase 2 trial.

Immunic's lead asset, IMU-838, is an orally available, selective immune modulator that inhibits the intracellular metabolism of activated immune cells by blocking the enzyme DHODH. Backed by positive preclinical results demonstrating activity against SARS-CoV-2, an attractive pharmacokinetic, safety and tolerability profile and with about 650 individuals tested, to date, Immunic has initiated a clinical development program for IMU-838 in COVID-19. The ongoing phase 2 trial, called CALVID-1, is a prospective, multicenter, randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind clinical trial in patients with moderate COVID-19, designed to evaluate efficacy, safety and tolerability of IMU-838. The study received regulatory allowance from the German BfArM, the US FDA and from regulatory authorities in other European countries involved in the study.

4. LEUKOCARE AG: Michael Scholl, Managing Director described the collaborative work with a European consortium to develop a vaccine against COVID-19.

In April 2020, LEUKOCARE AG formed a pan-European consortium with ReiThera Srl from Italy and Univercells SA from Belgium to develop an adenoviral, vector-based Covid-19 vaccine. ReiThera is contributing the vaccine candidates, Univercells will be responsible for production, while LEUKOCARE is developing a liquid formulation (mixture of the active ingredient and stabilizing excipients) for the vaccine. The vaccine is expected to start clinical development in August 2020 and could be available as a vaccine as early as Q1/Q2 2021.

5. Originis GmbH: Dr. Michael Thormann, Managing Director, presented the current situation in the development of a medication against COVID-19.

When Originis and Sirion decided in 2018 to pool their respective expertise in order to identify novel antiviral therapeutics, hardly anyone could imagine the immense importance of this in 2020. With its AI-driven platform, Originis generated an arsenal of promising substances, while Sirion provided the functional test platform, ViraSense, to measure their antiviral effects. The VIRAstorm™ project, which was partially financed by the KMU-NetC, was a success. The selective inhibition of a special target led to potent drug candidates, also active on clinically relevant strains of DNA and even RNA viruses including SARS-CoV-2. The potency of the new drug candidates is on a par with Remdesivir, but unlike this, they can even cross the blood-brain barrier to deprive the virus of this area of refuge. Originis is paving the way for unique therapy options.

About the Innovation and Start-Up Center Biotechnology (IZB):

The company IZB mbH, founded in 1995, is the operating company of the Innovation and Start-Up Centers for Biotechnology in Planegg-Martinsried and Freising-Weihenstephan, and has developed into one of the top ten renowned biotechnology centers in the world. More than 50 biotech companies with more than 600 employees are currently located on an area covering 26,000 m². This is where work focuses on developing drugs against the most severe diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease and various autoimmune diseases – and there are already many successes. At the IZB Freising-Weihenstephan – 15 minutes from the airport – scientists are working on developments in the field of life sciences. An essential criterion for the success of the IZBs is the proximity to top research on the Martinsried/Grosshadern Campus. The new infrastructure measures, such as the Faculty Club G2B (Gateway to Biotech), the IZB Residence CAMPUS AT HOME, the Chemistry College Elhardt, the two kindergartens BioKids and BioKids2, as well as the two restaurants SEVEN AND MORE and Café Freshmaker, have become decisive location factors.

Successful companies that have emerged from the IZB include, for example, Medigene AG, Morphosys AG, Micromet GmbH (now Amgen AG), Octopharma GmbH and Corimmun (today Janssen-Cilag). More information at www.izb-online.de

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